

# A Guide to Help Nature Reclaim its Space

***"It's up to each of us to re-wild our world, piece by piece until we have a patchwork quilt of sanctuaries that wraps its way around the globe."***

**-Mary Reynolds, Author of *We are the Ark***

Human activities such as urbanization, intensive agriculture and landscaping, and deforestation have destroyed habitats for native plants and animals and threatened biodiversity. When left alone, an area of land will re-establish itself as an ecosystem supporting plant and animal life, eventually becoming a complex community of native plants, pollinators, and habitat for wildlife.

This seven-step guide is adapted from <https://wearetheark.org/> to help you create a space for nature to recover. Many of the steps are passive on your part, and that is important! Allowing land to recover undisturbed allows progressive natural restoration processes to occur.

## **STEP 1.** ***Identify a plot of land to "rewild."***

If you want to help restore nature, start with a patch of your own! This could be in your yard at home or a community space you share with others, such as a community garden, a playground, or an outdoor space at your local library. No spot is too small!

Invite your community to join and work together to designate roles and design a plan. Be sure to communicate with landlords/HOAs and stay within their rules.





## STEP 2.

### Display a sign.

Let others know that this chosen piece of land has a purpose. The sign can help address the common reactions that might arise as the land becomes “wilder” and can explain to interested neighbors what is happening here.

Get creative! Check out the [Create a Sign for your Rewilding Project](#) activity guide to get started.



## STEP 3.

### Set the seeds free!

Many native plant seeds lie dormant beneath the soil, and just need help reaching the surface! Lightly till the surface of the area and expose the soil beneath. The soil contains a reservoir of dormant seeds from a variety of plant species that have fallen or been deposited onto the soil surface. They will begin to germinate with exposure to light.



Remove any non-native plants without the use of chemicals. If it is a small area, you can pull them by hand (*be sure to pull out the roots!*) or cover the lawn with flattened cardboard boxes, soak them, and cover with compost or soil with native flower seed mix. When the cardboard breaks down, it will add carbon back into the soil.



English Ivy (*Hedera helix*) and Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) are two examples of highly invasive, non-native plants. Download the free iNaturalist app using the QR code below, or check out field books from your local library.

Available on the  
App Store

GET IT ON  
Google Play



English Ivy



Cheatgrass



## STEP 4. *Break down barriers.*

Wildlife needs to travel to access food, water, and shelter. Remove fences or drill holes in the enclosures around your area to allow for the free movement of creatures across the land.

Talk with your neighbors. If they are willing, gradually replace solid boundaries with native hedgerows that can serve as wildlife corridors and nesting habitats.





## STEP 5. *Embrace the 'messiness.'*

There is life in the wildness! Early flowers are vital food sources for pollinators, and thorny native plants provide sanctuaries for small animals.

Leave the dead leaves, branches, and plant material. The decaying organic matter will be broken down by bacteria and fungi, returning essential nutrients to the soil.



## STEP 6. *Consider the lighting.*

Night pollinators cannot see in the blue and white toned lighting that is now standard outdoor lighting. Remove outdoor lights or replace them with lights that are red in tone which have less of an effect on nocturnal creatures.

If you must have outdoor lights, make sure they are motion activated so that they are only on during the short times that you need them.







## STEP 7.

*Sit back and enjoy – and spread the word!*

Let the land fill with butterflies, insects, wildflowers, birds, and animals as more life is restored each year.

Collectively, this network of native green spaces is helping to rebuild biodiversity worldwide. Submit your location into the **We Are the Ark database** to show how your efforts are contributing to this global movement.



# Glossary



## **Ark**

- \* **Act of Restorative Kindness** to the Earth. The Ark concept was founded by Mary Reynolds and is one example of how to “rewild” an area of land.

## **Biodiversity**

- \* The variety and variability of life forms found within a particular ecosystem. It is essential for maintaining the stability and resilience of ecosystems.

## **Native Plants**

- \* Species that have existed historically in a region that are adapted to the climate and soil conditions of that area.

## **Non-Native Plants**

- \* Species that live in regions where they did not historically or naturally exist, often brought there either intentionally or accidentally by humans.

## **Invasive Plants**

- \* Species that are non-native to the area whose introduction causes harm to the ecosystem, such as outcompeting native species for resources, altering soil composition, and reducing biodiversity.

## **Rewild**

- \* The progressive natural restoration processes an area of land goes through when left alone, or with restorative acts from humans such as removing invasive species and propagating native species.