

Redding Artists Create Earth Day Origami Sculpture



We can all use a little hope right now. A little brightness. Something to take our minds off this difficult time, as we isolate and ride out COVID-19. A project that gives people a reason to be mindful of the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day, keeping the celebration alive.

I recently heard a quote suggesting that the artist's job is to captivate its audience. Along the way if some truth is discovered, then the effort yields twice the result. Art has and gives meaning. Art empowers through participation. Art has purpose. Art is beautiful.

With that in mind, and well before the executive orders to "stay in place," the Earth Day committee for the town of Redding gathered and discussed ideas about how we should celebrate this banner year, the 50th anniversary of Earth Day on April 22.

As in years past, included in the day's proposed events would be our town-wide trash pick-up to build "Mt. Trashmore," a Redding tradition. The proposed slate also included a host of other events scattered throughout the weekend, featuring environmental actions and large groups involved in a range of activities including educational, spiritual and physical expressions of appreciation for the Earth, all culminating in a gathering on

Redding's beautiful Town Green. Sadly, with the "stay in place" order in effect, most of these activities were cancelled this year.

In addition to the proposed slate of activities and because Earth Day always falls on April 22nd, we recognized that getting people to physically participate in the preparation and celebration of Earth Day can be a challenge, given its proximity to spring vacation, spring sports and other competing activities. This year we chose to include a solitary activity — with friends and family — that could be completed at home, before the event, one that calls attention to or has environmental impact ... and is fun!

This is how the "Pollinator Pathway Origami Curtain Sculpture" evolved. The curtain installation will take place starting on Wednesday, April 22 at 9 a.m. at the Redding Town Green where the foundation has been set. We hope people visit, of course, respecting social distancing measures. Or do a drive or walk by during the installation on Earth Day, from 9 am to 5 pm.

What is the "Pollinator Pathway?" It's a wildlife corridor providing crucial habitat and nutrition for pollinators. It features healthy, pesticide-free yards and public spaces for pollinators, pets and people. It encourages planting native plants to help provide food and habitat that benefits pollinators, ensuring their survival. Redding is part of this growing movement to plant in this corridor.

Inspiration for this project came from Peggy Oki, an artist who creates origami whale curtains. As a renowned environmental artist (skate boarder, surfer and environmental activist as well) she focuses on cetaceans, ocean creatures such as whales, dolphins and porpoises. Her motto is "Allow things to unfold (origami!) and you will find your purpose in life." Her "curtains" help tell a story that a brochure might not be able to illustrate.

We hope that our "Pollinator Pathway Origami Curtain Sculpture" does the same. The challenge for our curtain project: to make sure all the elements employed have another use or are sustainable and recyclable.

For the foundation, we chose to use highway signposts: they have holes which we can run string through for the curtains to hang on. They can be driven into the ground, are very stable and the Public Works Department can take them back and reuse them once the project is completed. Paper is the content for the curtain panels: paper can be folded into origami flowers and pollinators, cut, and once soggy and having completed its mission, can be re-used to make seed paper. And finally, natural cotton string: for stringing the curtain panels together and to secure the structure as rods for the “curtain panels” to hang on.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 shut down, we used social media, the Town of Redding website, news blasts, Facebook and emails to send the message that everyone is invited to participate and make the origami “sculptures” of flowers and pollinators. Linked to the town website is an Earth Day page (townofreddingct.org/community/earth-day/) filled with links and ideas (in a PDF) regarding techniques of how to make pollinators and flowers and where and when to drop them off.

The most amazing part, what thrills me most, is to see the style, the “signature” that is unique to each person’s “sculpture.” When strung together, hung side by side, it will create an amazing effect as the curtains flow in the breeze.

Once it sits out for several days, likely in the rain, it will get soggy. At that point the sculpture will be taken down and the paper will be re-purposed and made into seed paper for later distribution, encouraging everyone to plant their own pollinator pathways in their yards.

“The environment is where we all meet; where all have a mutual interest; it is the one thing all of us share.” — Lady Bird Johnson



• Earth Day origami flowers



• Earth Day origami



• Earth Day origami shapes