

*What's Out There?***Earth is Our Home**

The earth is your home. Living things like people, plants, and animals make their home on our planet. How can you make your home a better place? *You must complete four of these activities to earn this Try-It.*

1. Clean and Green

Some of the chemicals in household products can harm people, animals, and plants. They pollute the air, water and soil when they are sprayed, go down the drain or are thrown away. How can you keep your home clean without harming the environment? Make natural cleaning products! Here are some you can try: *glass cleaner* (1/2 cup white vinegar, 4 cups of water, a spray bottle)—Mix the vinegar and the water in the spray bottle. Spray the glass with the mixture. Wipe off the dirt with a rag or newspaper. *bathroom cleanser* (baking soda, water)—Sprinkle baking soda on the sink, bathtub or in the toilet bowl. Use a wet rag or toilet brush to scour away dirt and stains. Warning: don't use this cleanser on things that scratch easily! *furniture polish* (1 ounce of lemon juice, 2 ounces of cooking oil, a plastic bottle)—Mix the lemon juice and the olive oil in a plastic bottle. Pour a little bit on the furniture and polish with a clean, soft cloth.

2. Project Recycle

Start a recycling center in your home. You will need: 4 big boxes or baskets—one will be for aluminum/metal, one for paper, one for plastic and one for glass; a sign for each box or basket—attach each sign to a box or basket. Check with an adult to get a list of items that are recycled in your community. Here is a list to help you begin:

Aluminum: soda cans, aluminum foil, pie plates, frozen food trays

Other Metal: soup cans, dog or cat food cans, tuna fish cans

Plastic: milk containers, margarine tubs, water containers, vitamin bottles

Paper: newspaper, junk mail, magazines, grocery bags

Glass: tomato sauce jars, jelly or jam jars, juice bottles, oil or vinegar bottles

Can you find other items to add to these lists? Remember to clean and rinse out each container before placing it in the correct box or basket. Take the caps or rings off the cans, bottle and jars. You can leave the paper labels on all the recyclable items.

3. Stop a Draft

Help seal up your house. Keep cold air out and warm air inside by making draft stoppers. Draft stoppers help to close up the spaces and cracks under doors and along windowsills so energy is saved. You will need: a few large pieces of cloth or old towels; yarn or twine; buttons, ribbons, lace, bells, etc. Twist the cloth or towel into a tube-like shape. Tie it with the yarn or twine. You can make your draft stopper look like an animal—use buttons for the eyes or even for a nose—or just decorate it. Place your draft stopper against the crack at the bottom of the door or against a windowsill. You have become an energy saver!

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4. **Recipe for a Miniworld**

A terrarium is a small, enclosed world made up of living things, soil, water and air. Its covering lets in light. The earth we live on is like a huge terrarium. Plants and animals need soil, water, air and light in order to survive in both a terrarium and on the earth. If any of these things are missing or are damaged by pollution, the plants and animals will suffer. Make your own terrarium. You will need:

- A clear, wide-mouthed jar (like a peanut butter jar).
- 2 handfuls of small rocks or sand.
- 2 handfuls of soil.
- 1 handful of dead leaves.
- Some moss (look for it in a forest or a vacant lot).
- Several small ferns or plants from a forest, a vacant lot, or a plant store. (Do not pick protected plants or over-pick an area. Ask permission to gather materials if you are not on your own property.)

Follow these steps to make your own terrarium:

1. Cover the bottom of the jar with the sand. Then cover the sand with the same amount of soil. Spread it out on top of the sand. Next, place the dead leaves on top of the soil.
2. Using a pencil, tongs, or a chopstick, make holes in the covering. Then plant your plants. Use the moss to fill in around the plants after you have tapped the soil down gently.
3. Water your miniworld with a squeeze bottle or sprinkle water with your hands. Do not put in too much water—the covering should not be soaked.
4. Place the lid on your jar. Keep the lid closed. Your miniworld should now have everything it needs. Place the jar in a place that has good light, but not in the direct sun.

Each day, watch for changes in your terrarium.

5. **Earth's Caretakers**

Adopt a special outdoor place in your community for two or three months. Pick a community for two or three months. Pick a place where there are always people around. Make sure you have permission to work in the area you have chosen. Remember to wear work gloves and have the right tools for the job. Here are two ideas:

Help the Street Trees on Your Block—loosen the soil in each tree pit (the square where the tree is planted). This will allow more water and air to get to the roots. Do this a few times during the spring, summer, or fall.

Plant Flowers—The spring is a great time to grow flowers in your neighborhood for everyone to enjoy. Plant them around street trees, at a school, or at a nursing home. Go back to water them and pull out any weeds every week or two.

This badge can be found in the book *Try-Its for Brownie Girl Scouts*, page 98. This text has been reproduced with permission from Girl Scouts of the USA—this document may not be copied or reproduced in any way.