

July 4: Red, white, blue . and green!

By Helen Nicely Special to the Tribune

Posted: 06/23/2015 05:02:34 PM PDT

MercuryNews.com

This July 4th, try a "green" approach to celebrating--avoiding fireworks. As we enter into endless, successive years of drought, with a fire risk much too high to sensibly allow even so-called "safe and sane fireworks," consider other ways to celebrate. By all means, watch an organized firework display. But also enjoy planting red, white and blue flowers in planters, then wait, and see all the pollinators, including hummingbirds, bumble bees, and honey bees that will join your back yard party.

Visit our local tide pools with magnifying lens, camera or smart phone, and look for a wide variety of colorful sea stars, sea slugs, sea anemones, mussels and sea weeds. We live close to some of the healthiest tide pools in the Bay Area, such as the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, and Mussel Rock. Check tide charts available free online for the day you are visiting, to plan to visit at low tide when you will find most of these intertidal invertebrates and plants.

Another "green" project to get done on the holiday weekend is to sheet mulch your once-green lawn(s), which have been nagging at you since water rationing has been imposed. Sheet mulching is easier than you think, and is more "green" to your garden as well as to the environment than tiling over or concreting your lawn area. Instead, it can be very inexpensive and takes little time to sheet mulch it. I have recently spent a few days sheet mulching my brown front lawns all on my own and I did it using free cardboard, mulch, compost, asking at local stores for boxes, looking around for free mulch from friends or online and obtaining free compost from the Earth Day giveaways that local authorities distributed. Total costs for soaker hoses and plants were in the \$100-\$200 range. The cost of fireworks would be much higher.

Those who insist on lighting fireworks may live near you, or be in your home. Be a good earth steward and take out a bucket of water to quench any accidental fires, and also, later, pick up firework debris left by the same neighbors. Firework debris includes many plastic pieces as well as chemicals, so wear gloves and dispose of these trash items carefully only when cool. Report anyone you see lighting illegal fireworks, mostly those very loud ones, to local police.

Many dog owners and parents of young children, caring for loved ones who are sensitive to loud bangs, resort to leaving home and staying in nature, near towns that strictly ban fireworks on the beaches, such as Carmel. I don't blame them, given the incredible noise and emotional disruption, harm to the environment, pollution of the ocean that carries on for months afterwards, and the unknown number of sea creatures that are harmed by chemicals and plastics ending up in the ocean, months after July 4 festivities.

Firework vendors in Pacifica are required to go out for two post-July 4 Saturdays, plus Sunday, July 5, to clean the beach areas for two hours, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Please consider joining these volunteers to clean Rockaway, Sharp Park, Linda Mar beaches and car parks. Think Green on July 4. Bee an Earth Hero!

(Helen Nicely is a member of the Pacifica Beach Coalition)