

May 2023

Ashley Gardens

Ashley Gardens of Mount Vernon | 3807E Collage way 98273 |(360) 419-9422



Celebrating May

Adopt a Horse Month

Older Americans Month

Mystery Month

May Day

May 1

Star Wars Day

May 4

Cinco de Mayo

May 5

Salvation Army Week

May 15–21

Mother's Day

May 14

International Museum

Day

May 18

Victoria Day (Canada)

May 22

World Lindy Hop Day

May 26

Memorial Day (U.S.)

May 29

Hold Your Horses

Heritage breeds are livestock breeds that were raised in an era before the industrialization of agriculture. These are the chickens, pigs, cattle, sheep, and horses that were selected and bred to thrive on small family farms. Over centuries, these breeds have developed genetic attributes that make them special: resistance to disease and parasites, the ability to forage, longevity, and reliable reproduction. May 15–21, Heritage Breeds Week, is a time to ensure that these rare breeds survive before they are lost forever.

Just as animals in the wild are threatened by habitat loss, heritage breeds are threatened by modern agricultural practices that no longer value the genetic diversity of such animals. Many heritage breeds face extinction. And just as biodiversity in the wild ensures the health of an ecosystem, biodiversity in agriculture ensures the health of that entire industry.

Since 2017, the Endangered Equine Alliance has worked tirelessly to secure the diversity of heritage horse breeds. Sometimes the most threatened horse breeds are also the most famous. Clydesdales, the big, friendly horses best known for pulling the Budweiser wagon, number less than 5,000 worldwide. These gentle giants are beloved for their beauty and versatility; they are calm and hard-working, equally suited to ride, pull a wagon, or haul timber.

Another critically threatened breed that enjoys a degree of fame is the Banker horse, the feral breed that inhabits the Outer Banks of North Carolina. These non-native horses are valued for their unique history as descendants of Spanish horses brought to America in the 16th century. Perhaps the most endangered horse breed is the American Cream Draft horse; only 400 exist worldwide. Luckily, many of these horses are actively being saved today through conservation programs. The next time you visit a farm, you might just be visiting the home of some of the rarest heritage breeds known to agriculture.

A Cheesy Tradition

The rolling hills of Gloucestershire, England, are usually quiet, except on the last Monday in May when the locals participate in one of the world's wildest competitions: the annual Cheese-Rolling at Cooper's Hill. These are the famous cheese races, where men and women, young and old, chase a nine-pound wheel of Double Gloucester cheese down a precipitous hill. The first one to catch the wheel wins the cheese, but the cheese rolls so fast—up to 70 mph!—that this almost never happens. Instead, the first one to cross the finish line is usually declared the winner.



The most famous aspect of the race is not the cheese, but Cooper's Hill. This hill is so steep and treacherous that every year injuries occur. In 2007, in a notoriously wet and windy race, 20-year-old Christopher Anderson tumbled head-over-heels across the finish line and fell unconscious. When he awoke, miraculously unhurt, he learned that he had won a victory worth its weight in cheese.

Written records date the cheese-rolling in Gloucestershire back 200 years, but even then, it was considered an old tradition, with some claiming that it began in the 1400s. Since 1988, the cheese has been handmade by local cheese-maker Diana Smart, using milk from her own Brown Swiss, Holstein, and Gloucester cows at Churcham farm. Her cheese wheels are housed in a protective wooden casing and then wrapped in traditional blue and red ribbons. Between 1941 and 1954, due to food rationing during World War II, a wooden cheese was used. The largest cheese ever rolled was a 40-pound cheddar donated by New Zealand in 1958.

The sport's reach has gone global, and athletes from all over the world now compete. Winners have hailed from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Belgium, Egypt, and Nepal. Hundreds of spectators often arrive to watch the festivities, taking their lives in their hands as they throng the hill to watch the speedy cheese and its foolhardy followers.

Wildlife Wonderlands

May is Gardening for Wildlife month, offering plenty of time to plant the flowers, shrubs, and trees that are vital habitat for insects, birds, mammals, and more. Whether you have a city balcony or several acres in the country, the first crucial step to providing habitat for wildlife is to plant native species. These are the flowers, trees, and shrubs that are best suited to survive in the local climate. These species often act as invaluable food sources for wildlife. After all, animals have evolved side-by-side with these plant species for millennia. Native plants also provide spaces for animals to hide from predators, take shelter from the elements, and build nests and dens to raise young.

One of the most important contributions native species make is to attract insects. Insects aren't just a food source for animals; they also play a vital role as pollinators. Equally important to a wildlife garden is a water source. This can be a stream or fountain, but a shallow bird bath is often good enough. If you start planting early, you might even spy the endangered monarch butterfly by May 6, Start Seeing Monarchs Day.

Berry Pleasing

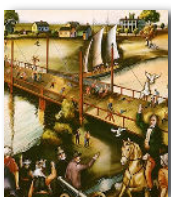


Peak season for picking strawberries is April, which makes May, as Strawberry Month, the perfect time to enjoy these luscious, red berries. In ancient Rome, strawberries were a symbol of Venus, the goddess of love and beauty, thanks to their heart shape and red color. Strawberries are linked to the myth of the death of Adonis. He was gored to death by a boar in a hunting accident, which broke Venus' heart. As she cried, her tears mingled with Adonis' blood, and when they hit the ground, they turned into strawberries. Strawberries have long been associated with love, purity, and perfection. No wonder they are a perfect May snack!

The Milwaukee Bridge War

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, began as three separate settlements, each named for its founder. Juneautown, east of the Milwaukee River, was settled by Solomon Juneau in 1818. West of the river was Kilbourntown, an area settled by Byron Kilbourn 16 years later in 1834. To the northwest, where the river emptied into Lake Michigan, lay Walker's Point, settled by George Walker in 1834. Each man believed his settlement to be the center of Milwaukee, and tensions between the settlements ran high until the Milwaukee Bridge War erupted on May 3, 1845.

Kilbourn made the first move, against Juneautown in 1835 when he laid out a street grid west of the river that completely ignored the existing grid in Juneautown to the east. Kilbourn's maps showed Juneautown as a blank, undeveloped space, an assertion he continued to make to the steamship captains traveling upriver to deliver vital goods to his west-side outpost. Kilbourn's ploy was clear: isolate Juneautown and make it reliant on a superior Kilbourntown.



Despite Kilbourn's efforts, Juneautown remained the most populous of the three Milwaukee settlements. Hostilities between the neighborhoods persisted even as bridges were built over the Milwaukee River to connect the competing districts, until May 3, 1845, when a schooner rammed and partially wrecked a Kilbourn-supported bridge at Spring Street.

Kilbournians accused the Juneaus of bribing the captain. They retaliated by damaging a bridge important to Juneautown. The Kilbournians also dismantled another Juneautown bridge for spare parts to fix their own, causing that bridge to collapse. In less than a month, four of the town's five bridges were destroyed. Throughout the summer, both sides armed themselves and prepared for battle. Miraculously, tensions calmed. Three new bridges were built under armed guard, and in January of 1846, the city of Milwaukee was formed.

A Week for Geeks

The first week of May is celebrated as Geek Week, a week to unabashedly enjoy all things related to geekdom. But what does it mean to be a geek these days? The word geek was originally applied to unskilled carnival workers considered to lack any social graces. The word was later applied to computer geeks, or the highly intelligent but socially awkward computer techs who sat in front of a computer screen all day. By the end of the 20th century, geeks were no longer considered social outcasts but now built enormous communities around alternative, pop-cultural touchstones, like comic books, fantasy role-playing games, the Japanese graphic novels known as manga, and science-fiction movies like Star Wars.

Where it was once easy to make fun of the geeks who obsessed over these offbeat, non-mainstream trends, the geeks have now united to enjoy their fandom together. Perhaps the greatest gatherings in all of Geekdom are Comic Cons, those famous comic-book conventions where geeks dress as their favorite characters and run wild together.

In It for the Long Haul



The second Saturday in May is celebrated as World Migratory Bird Day. When you get to know some of the world's more impressive migratory birds, you'll understand why this is a worldwide celebration. Consider the Arctic tern, a small bird that flies from pole to pole each year, logging 30,000 miles. To survive this epic journey, terns must find many places to stop along the way throughout Europe, North and South America, and Africa, making it crucial for countries all around the world to provide habitat for these long haulers. With these remarkable birds living up to 30 years, the total life journey of a tern is equivalent to flying round trip three times to the moon and back. That is an accomplishment worth celebrating.

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Ashley Gardens of Mount Vernon
3807 E. Collage Way
Mount Vernon , Wa 98273

Mother's Peace Day



Anna Jarvis is often credited with founding the first Mother's Day, in 1908, but it was poet and abolitionist Julia Ward Howe who made the first Mother's Day Proclamation for Peace, in 1870. Howe was already well known for authoring

"The Battle Hymn of the Republic," and her fame lent greater weight to her advocacy for peace. As a nurse during the American Civil War, Howe had seen firsthand the ravages of war. When she saw the specter of war rising yet again at the onset of the Franco-Prussian War, she spoke out for an international Mother's Day where mothers from all over the world would give counsel on how to achieve peace. She wrote: "Arise, then, women of this day! Arise all women who have hearts, whether our baptism be that of water or of tears!" Indeed, Anna Jarvis' mother had worked with Julia Ward Howe, a relationship that inspired Jarvis' Mother's Day.

May Birthdays

In astrology, those born from May 1