

# THE OUTSIDER

Illinois Extension Horticulture serving Henry, Mercer, Rock Island, and Stark



## RESOLUTION: TIME OUTSIDE

As the calendar turns over to 2022, a fresh start is upon us. Resolutions are inquired about, goals are set, aspirations are articulated, and hopes are high. But as numerous research projects have indicated, upwards of 80 percent of us abandon our well-intentioned lifestyle improvements by mid- January. Reasons for this are many and varied: habits are hard to break and hard to begin, goals are not well defined or measurable, our current environment does not support the intended change, or the expectation of perfection abruptly halts progress at the first misstep.

So what shall we do? Abandon all intentions to set 2022 goals? No, where is the fun in that? As Outsiders, we would like to suggest one intention that is measurable, and well defined but provides flexibility, and grace in its methodology. One that can be enjoyed alone or with loved ones. An activity that will provide an abundance of benefits and complements all that we are doing here at Extension and as Outsiders. Curious? Here it is:

**2022 Intention: Spend More Time Outside**



The best remedy for those who are afraid, lonely or unhappy is to go outside, somewhere where they can be quite, alone with the heavens, nature and God. Because only then does one feel that all is as it should be and that God wishes to see people happy, amidst the simple beauty of nature.

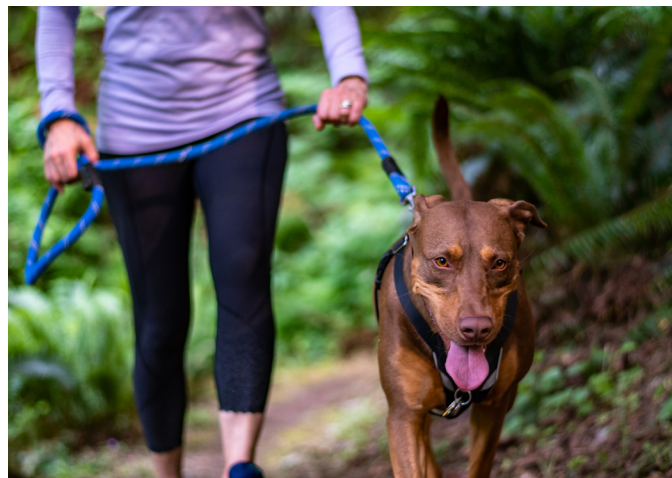
— Anne Frank



## WHAT QUALIFIES AS TIME OUTSIDE?

Anything outdoors is time outdoors. Playing soccer with the kids. Walking the dog. Raking leaves. Gardening. Bird watching. Sitting in the grass.

Of course, there are more intentional ways to engage with the outdoors than others but according to research, the key to maximizing benefits of being outdoors is to do so while disconnected from media source. This means leaving your smart phone indoors. While that may seem impossible or uncomfortable, at best, it can be done with practice and perseverance.



Take a moment and allow nature to sink in. While sitting in the grass close your eyes and listen. Breathe in deeply and just be present. If you enjoy keeping a journal, start a nature journal and record your observations.

## TIME WELL SPENT OUTDOORS

Innumerable initiatives and movements have been started, no doubt, inspired by a growing body of research that verifies the benefits of time outside and contrasts the detrimental effects of too much sedentary time indoors engaged with screens. Research shows spending time in nature has health benefits including but not limited to reducing the risk of childhood obesity, improving sleep, concentration and eyesight, and reducing symptoms associated with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder). There are many agencies and social services that offer programs including: The American Academy of Pediatrics encourages one hour of outdoor play each day. The National Park Service offers a variety of programs for youth and youth at heart at parks across the nation. The Outdoor Alliance for Kids is a partnership of over 100 organizations supporting families in the outdoors. And the non-profit 1000 Hours Outside encourages people to match the quantity of screen time with equal time outdoors or approximately 1000 hours a year.

If you break down the math, 1000 hours a year breaks down to approximately 2.75 hours per day. Yes, we admit this is a lofty goal but before you throw your hands up and stop reading all together think about the short and long term benefits. We believe it is worth considering, at least in part.



Just being surrounded by  
bountiful nature, rejuvenates  
and inspires us.

— E.O. Wilson



**Illinois Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



## TIPS TO ACHIEVE MORE TIME OUTDOORS

Our first and perhaps most useful tip for achieving more time outdoors in 2022 is to not obsess over the hours. Don't spend your time and energy focused on counting every minute but rather focus on getting outside each day. Lives are busy, weather is temperamental, and things happen. If 2.75 hours is not a reasonable expectation for you and your family during the week, try for 30 minutes each day and a few extra hours on the weekend. Can't do a few hours on the weekend? No problem, aim to be outside for a few more minutes than the previous weekend.

Second, try new things. There are countless ways to get outdoors. Take opportunities to try new activities. See how you feel about them and keep a list of the methods that are most exciting for you.

Or, go for the proverbial low hanging fruit. This is to say, choose the easiest ways to get outdoors rather than becoming overwhelmed with the most elaborate plan. Eating a picnic in the back yard or on the porch is an easy way to get more time outdoors. Take a 15 minute walk at the end of your lunch hour. Ride your bike to the store rather than drive your car. Invite a friend over for a walk around the park instead of meeting at the movies. All this is to say, find what works for you and do more of it.

Finally, do track your progress. It is motivating to see the hours pile up and fun to challenge yourself to do a little bit more. Follow the link below to an Outsider tracker. As previously mentioned, 1000 hours is a very ambitious goal. We created our tracker to challenge you to get to 800 hours outside this year. But remember, it isn't about the time, it is about accessing all of the health and wellness benefits that nature can provide. As we all welcome in a new year, know that we are so thankful for your contributions to our community and may we all get a little more Outdoorsy in 2022.



## OUTSIDER ACTION

Try these activities to be more of an Outsider

- Use the provided tracker to record your 2022 Outsider Hours
- Join our Illinois Extension email list and watch for opportunities to join us at events this year. Sign up at [go.illinois.edu/NewsEvents](https://go.illinois.edu/NewsEvents)

Don't miss an issue - Sign up for The Outsider to be sent to your email!  
@ [go.illinois.edu/TheOutsider](https://go.illinois.edu/TheOutsider)

**SIGN UP NOW**



Emily Swihart, Horticulture Educator  
Tracy Jo Mulliken, Program Coordinator

321 West 2nd Avenue, Milan, IL 61264  
(309) 756-9978  
Email: [ESwihart@illinois.edu](mailto:ESwihart@illinois.edu)

# OUTSIDER

100

200

300

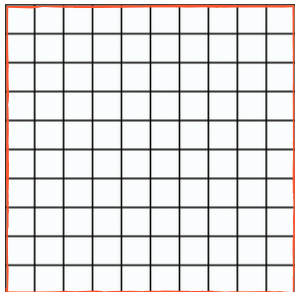
400

500

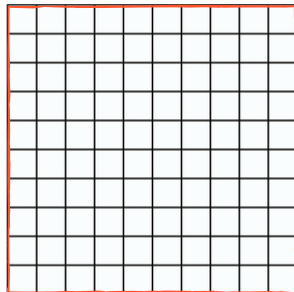
600

700

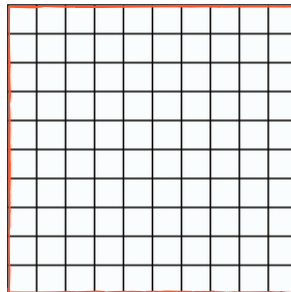
800



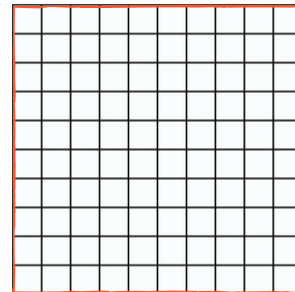
100



200



300



400

\_\_\_\_ JAN

\_\_\_\_ MAY

\_\_\_\_ SEP

\_\_\_\_ FEB

\_\_\_\_ JUN

\_\_\_\_ OCT

\_\_\_\_ MAR

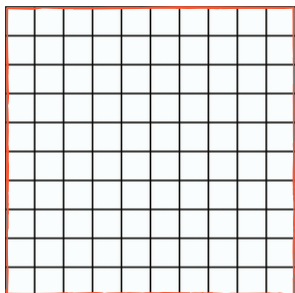
\_\_\_\_ JUL

\_\_\_\_ NOV

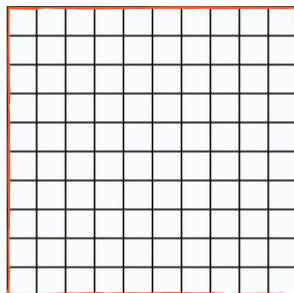
\_\_\_\_ APR

\_\_\_\_ AUG

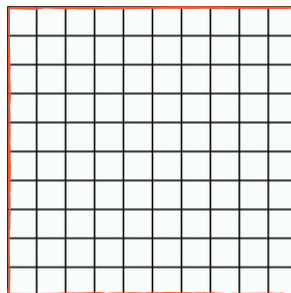
\_\_\_\_ DEC



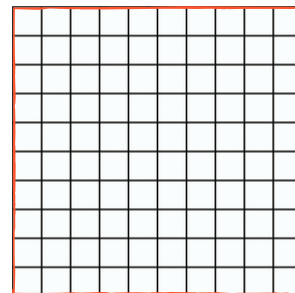
500



600



700



800

Favorite Activities:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---