

Flora & Fauna

8 Fun Facts about Clovers

March is the month of luck, and St. Patrick's Day brings with it a desire for the luckiest plant: the clover! Check out some of these cool facts about clovers from past to present.

- 1. They were used to ward off evil.**
Back in the day, the Celts of Wales used to keep clover around their homes to ward away evil spirits. However, clovers only sprout in the spring and summer, which makes you wonder what the Celts did the rest of the year!
- 2. There is no such thing as a "shamrock plant."**
The term "shamrock" is an Irish-derived word that means "little clover," which is how the clover leaf got the nickname.
- 3. There are lots of varieties of clover, but only one that is considered lucky.**
Trifolium repens, or White Clover, identified by the lighter/white-looking line that cuts across the middle of the leaves, is the only "lucky" variety of clover.

This particular plant only has three leaves, so if you do happen to find one with a tiny fourth leaf on the stem, you've found the 1 in 10,000, which is very lucky indeed!
- 4. It's an invasive nuisance plant.**
More than being the favorite snack of rabbits, clovers are a highly invasive, fast-growing plant. Gardeners usually treat clovers as a type of weed and do their best to keep it out of their yards or gardens.
- 5. Ireland may be the luckiest place in the world.**
It is believed that Ireland is home to more four-leaf clovers than any other place in the world!
- 6. More leaves = even more luck!**
Four-leaf clovers are complicated mutations of the regular three-leaf clovers. However, there also exist *five-leaf* clovers, and these are said to be even luckier than the four-leaf clovers.
- 7. There are some impressive record-breaking clovers out there.**
The record number of leaves found on a single clover is 56 and was grown in Japan. The largest *collection* of four leaf clovers is held by a single person who has almost 160,000 of them.
- 8. Some clover has surprising health benefits.**
Red clover, or *Trifolium pretense*, has been used by many cultures to treat hypertension, prevent infections, and boost the immune system.

Clean Bee

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Cleaning Corner:

How to Clean Your Pet's Toys

Rubber/Hard Plastic Toys

Wash with hot soapy water and rinse. Allow to air dry.

Chewing Ropes

Wet the toy and microwave it for a full minute to kill bacteria, yeast, and mold. Use caution when removing the toy, as it could be quite hot. Do not give it to your pet until you're sure it has cooled completely.

Alternatively, you can also place the toy in the dishwasher and run on a hot cycle with no detergent.

Stuffed Animals

Most stuffed toys can easily survive a trip through the washing machine and dryer.

March

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| 1802 | Congress authorizes the establishment of the United States Military Academy at West Point, NY |
| 1872 | Yellowstone becomes the first national park in the United States |
| 1876 | Alexander Graham Bell patents the telephone and places the world's first telephone call to his assistant in the next room. His famous words were, "Watson, come here. I need you." |
| 1880 | Wabash, Indiana becomes the first U.S. town to be illuminated by electric lights |
| 1912 | The Girls Scouts of America is founded |
| 1930 | Mrs. Charles Fahning of Buffalo, NY is recognized as the first woman to bowl a perfect 300 game |
| 1931 | <i>The Star Spangled Banner</i> is officially recognized as the national anthem in the U.S. |

Health Information: Sitting Exercises

Do you work at a desk or in a job where you're sedentary for the majority of your day? Do you sit in the car for long periods of time or simply find yourself achy from staying seated for too long?

Numerous studies show that our bodies just aren't meant to remain still for extended periods of time. A sedentary lifestyle is linked to some serious health problems, including an increased risk for Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers. To help you fight off these sitting diseases, we've gathered some exercises you can do when trapped in your chair. Note: These exercises, though helpful, should not replace regular exercise, such as a trip to the gym or a walk around the neighborhood.

- **Arms.** Cross your right arm across your chest with your palm facing behind you, and use the crook of your left arm to stretch your right arm close to your body. Repeat for the left arm, and alternate up to 10 times. This exercise will help stretch and engage your triceps up to your shoulders, as well as help blood flow throughout your arms.
- **Shoulders.** To help increase shoulder joint mobility, try this: extend your arms out in front of you and raise them up to the ceiling, then lower them back down. Do this 10–20 times.
- **Legs.** Place your feet firmly on the floor and lift both of your legs up on the very tips of your toes. After a few seconds, you should feel a slight burning in your calf muscles. Hold this position for 10–20 seconds (or until it starts to burn), and then release. Repeat 10 times.
- **Ankles.** Plant your feet firmly on the ground and push up through your toes to lift your heel and extend your ankle. Lower the heel back to the floor and repeat 10–20 times, then do the same thing for your left foot. This will help improve blood flow to your legs. It is also helpful if you find your feet start to fall asleep from sitting for too long.
- **Back.** Done properly, this exercise should engage your upper back muscles and your abs. Lift your arms up and interlace them behind your neck. Stay sitting nice and tall, focusing on squeezing your shoulder blades together and keeping your tummy tight. Hold for 10–20 seconds.
- **Core.** For a more advanced abdominal exercise, sit on the edge of your seat with your hands placed next to your hips. Draw your belly button in and slowly lift both legs off the floor, then slowly lower them back to the ground. Repeat 10–20 times to strengthen your core.

Kid Corner: Four St. Patty's Day Crafts

March is the time for all things green and lucky. Fortunately, you don't have to be Irish to join in the fun. Whether you're hosting a playdate, chaperoning a St. Patrick's Day party at your child's school, or you're just looking for something fun to do with the kids, check out these nifty crafts that will help bring around the "luck o' the Irish" this month.

1. **Handprint Shamrock.** This quick craft (which includes hands in paint!) is sure to be a hit with the kids. All you'll need is green paint, paper, and a black pen or marker. First, dip your hands in the green paint, coating your entire palm and fingers. Make four handprints in a circle on the paper, keeping your palms around the outside and fingers pointing in toward the center. Then, use the outer side of your hand/pinkie to create a green line between two handprints for the stalk of your clover. When the paint is completely dry, use your black pen or marker and trace the outline of your shamrock to make it more defined.
2. **Pot of Gold Collage.** To make this lucky pot of gold, grab some white, gold, yellow, and black paper, glue, and scissors. You might also need a printable template of a pot to help your children cut out that shape. Start by cutting out circles from your gold and yellow paper, and cut out a pot shape from the black paper. Then, arrange your gold coins around the top of the pot to make it look like the pot is overflowing with gold. When you're happy with the arrangement, glue it all down (add some glitter to really make those coins shine!). **Bonus:** If you're doing this as a class or group project, invite each child to write on a gold coin what they would buy with their very own pot of gold.
3. **Shamrock Sun Catchers** This decoration is easy to make and adds a bit of festive luck to any window. You'll need wax paper, a printed shamrock template, scissors, light and dark green tissue paper, Mod Podge, and a paint brush. First cut the tissue paper into small 1" pieces. Cut out both the inside and outside of your shamrock template so all you have is the black outline. Use a paintbrush to spread Mod Podge all over the wax paper. Cover the Mod Podge with tissue paper. Apply your shamrock cutout on top using Mod Podge or glue. Once dry, cut off the excess paper around the outside of the shamrock. Lastly, hang your decoration in the window for good luck!
4. **Rainbows.** For this craft you'll need paper plates, scissors, cotton balls, a variety of colored streamers, and tape/glue. First, fold your paper plate in half and then cut along the crease line. Then, using your tape, attach long strips of colored streamers to the flat edge of the paper plate you've just cut. You can line the colors up traditionally (red, orange, yellow, etc.), or you can be creative with your colors! Finally, glue the cotton balls all over the white paper plate so it looks like the rainbow is coming from the clouds. **Optional:** Use a hole punch to create a hole near the top of the arch in your paper plate, then use a piece of yarn to hang your colorful rainbow from the wall or ceiling!

In the US, corned beef and cabbage is the traditional dish served on St. Patrick's Day. Thanks to this easy-to-make slow-cooker recipe, you can set it up in the morning and enjoy a sensational feast for dinner!

Ingredients:

- 4 large carrots, peeled and cut into matchstick pieces
- 10 baby red potatoes, quartered
- 1 onion, peeled and chopped
- 4 cups water
- 1 4-pound corned beef brisket with spice packet
- 6 ounces beer or beef stock
- 1/2 head cabbage, coarsely chopped

Directions:

1. Place the carrots, potatoes, and onion into the bottom of a slow cooker. Pour in the water and place the brisket on top of the vegetables.
2. Pour the beer or beef stock over the brisket. Sprinkle on the spices from the packet.
3. Cover and set the cooker on low for about 8 hours.
4. An hour before serving, stir in the cabbage and cook for 1 more hour.

Slow Cooker Tips: Do not open the slow cooker or stir/baste the brisket while cooking. This lets heat and moisture escape and slows the cooking process.

Linen Closet Organization Tips

Spring is fast approaching, and that means it's time to start cleaning out and organizing the house! For whatever reason, the linen closet is one space that never seems to stay organized for long. If this is the case for you, don't fret! We've compiled some fool-proof ways to get your closet back to a nice and tidy space.

- **Map out each shelf.** Before beginning, designate each shelf in your linen closet to a certain cause. For example, make one shelf a "first aid" shelf for bandages, gauze, etc. Another shelf could hold towels, cleaning supplies, and bed sheets. Organizing your shelves in this manner will help you know where to look for certain items when you need them.
- **Purge.** Now that you have an idea where you'll put all your supplies in your linen closet, purge everything you don't need to keep in the linen closet. Mismatched towels and bed linens, old grubby wash cloths, etc.
- **Roll your towels.** This tip is particularly helpful for those big, fluffy towels because they're easier to grab rolled up. However, towels of any size can be rolled for neat efficiency.
- **Use clear containers.** This is an easy way to not only keep your closet organized, but keep smaller items tidy. For instance, if you keep any hair clips, makeup, safety pins, or Q-tips in your linen closet, they'll stay in the container rather than become scattered throughout the whole closet.
- **Stash sheets in pillow cases.** This is an awesome, space-saving tip. By tightly folding your sheets and keeping them in one of the pillow cases, you'll not only create more space in your linen closet, but you'll decrease the chances of losing a rogue pillowcase.
- **Add a sneaky curtain.** If you honestly can't keep one section of your closet organized (maybe the extra toilet paper and tissues just *looks* messy no matter what), hide it with a curtain! It only has to cover one section, and it can make your linen closet look chic and highly organized. We promise, it'll work.

Carpet Talk:

How to Remove Common Spots and Spills on Carpet

Accidents happen and sometimes they happen in a carpeted area of your home. The faster you can respond to a spot or spill, the easier it is to clean. Follow these handy tips for removing some common spots. If it's more than you can handle, give the professionals a call!

- **Glue.** Take a sharp knife and carefully scrape the glue off. If the glue has dried, cover it with a clean, white cloth. Rub an iron set on the lowest heat setting over the cloth. The glue will turn back into liquid and will be absorbed into the cloth.
- **Jelly/Jam.** Scrape off any excess jelly from the carpet, being careful not to spread it. Blot the area with a damp clean white towel until it disappears.
- **Coffee and Soft Drinks.** First, thoroughly blot the area with a clean white towel (don't rub!). Mix a cleaning solution of 1 Tbsp liquid dish soap, 1 Tbsp white vinegar, and 2 cups warm water. Use a clean white cloth to sponge the stain with the mixture. Blot the area with a dry cloth until the spot disappears.
- **Pet Urine.** Blot up as much urine as possible. Sprinkle baking soda over the area and let it sit for 5 minutes. In a bowl or spray bottle, mix 2 cups white vinegar with 2 cups water and apply to the area. Gently blot the area with a clean white cloth.

