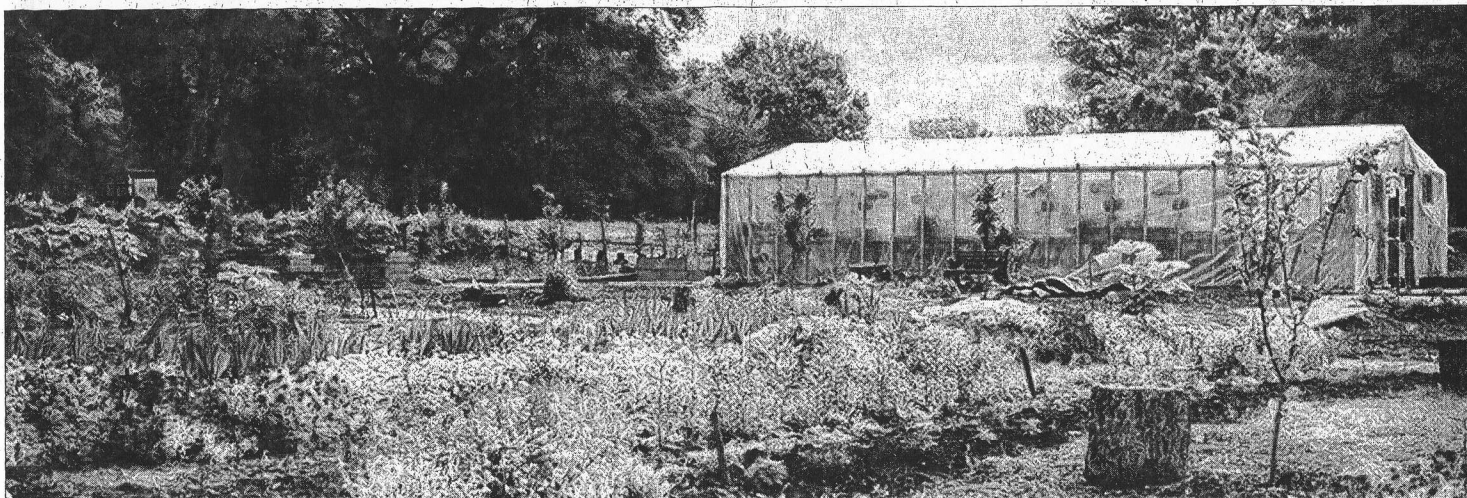


# SATURDAY OPINION



Whatever our motivations — children, religious beliefs, better business — we can all find reasons for caring about our planet, the author states. CONTRIBUTED

## GUEST COLUMN

# An earthy legacy in Atlanta

By John A. Lanier

By its very nature, the earth is resilient.

Ohio's Cuyahoga River, which famously caught fire 45 years ago, has recovered. Now, more than 40 species of fish are found in the river, and bald eagles are able to nest nearby.

Ecosystems are quick to rebound from all types of natural disasters, too. Just think about how quickly new grasses sprout up in the cracks of Atlanta's concrete sidewalks. But the earth is also finite.

My grandfather, the late Ray C. Anderson, had some thoughts on how we could do things better, and the example he set gives us an answer:



John A. Lanier is the director of the Ray C. Anderson Foundation ([www.raycandersonfoundation.org](http://www.raycandersonfoundation.org)).

"Do something, then do something else." Ray was rather insistent with this call to action. And like the earth, Ray was resilient.

Ray was a small-town Georgia boy who created the world's largest manufacturer of modular carpet, Interface. He also made it a global leader in sustainability. Yet sustain-

ability is still a stranger in most American homes. And concerns over the expense of sustainable methods mean that it has not yet won the allegiance of corporate America.

Will more businesses take the lead and inspire responsible planning? Will your family bring sustainability to your home and others?

We've seen companies prosper using sustainable methods. The result: less waste, lower expense, higher profit.

We believe the ethical concern for sustainability has not received adequate attention. Why should we care?

Whether you are motivated by a concern for the well-being of your chil-

dren, aspirations for a higher yield for your business, or by religious beliefs, we all can discover our personal reasons for caring.

Atlanta is a great place to celebrate Earth Day. And it's a great place to live. Consider:

- Trees Atlanta has been protecting Atlanta's urban forest since 1985 and has planted 100,000 shade trees across the city.

- Fernbank offers UrbanWatch Restoration field trips.

- Permaculture Design Certification programs teach Atlantans how to design ecosystems that improve fertility and abundance.

- Peachtree Road United Methodist Church in

Buckhead hosted a Caring for Creation Conference, a national conference promoting environmental stewardship.

These are just a few examples why our city among the trees can be the nation's champion for sustainability. Let me cite a few more examples:

- A 2011 Brookings Institution study found Atlanta is home to the most diverse clean metropolitan economy.

- Georgia Tech's Scheller College of Business launched its Center for Business Strategies for Sustainability.

- Emory University's Center for Ethics launched its new Culture, Religion, Ethics and the Environment program, or CREATE.

These are great initiatives. But we can make our sustainability efforts even smarter: Here are a couple of concepts we can support:

- Third-party solar financing would make our electricity bills cheaper and our environment cleaner.

- With the water challenges we face in Georgia, rainwater harvesting makes sense. (In just four years, rainwater harvesting systems are expected to meet their costs, sending savings straight to the bottom line.)

Let's do something together to improve our quality of life. And let's start right here in the homes, neighborhoods and businesses of Atlanta.