

Editor's notes:

*There's rain that's rain
And rain that's sleet
And rain that turns to snow.
There's April showers
Just in time
To make the flowers grow.*

-- Jean Roberts

Some scholars believe that April, first termed "Aprilus" is derived from the Latin root word "aperire," meaning "to open" because this is the time of year when flowers open. Others contend that the month is named after Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. Whatever the reason, we love to see the more warmth and sunshine that this month brings. April is also packed with notable dates; here are a few of them:

Daylight Saving Time Begins, April 2 -- This is the last year in which DST begins on the first Sunday in April. Next year (2007), Daylight Saving will begin on the second Sunday of March and run until the first Sunday in November (as opposed to the last Sunday of October).

Palm Sunday, April 9 -- This sixth Sunday of Lent recalls the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem with his followers shouting "Hosanna" and scattering palms in his path. In the Roman Catholic and some Protestant churches, ceremonies of the day include the blessing and distribution of crosses made from palm leaves.

Passover, April 13 -- Passover, which commemorates the delivery of the Jews from slavery in Egypt, starts at sundown on April 13 and continues for eight days. It is one of the most important religious holidays in Judaism and is begun with a Seder, a ceremonial evening meal taken on the first night.

Anniversary of Canada's Constitution Act, April 18 -- On this day in 1982, the Canadian government enacted a new set of fundamental laws and civil rights to replace the British North America Act of 1867. The new constitution was signed by Queen Elizabeth at Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

Administrative Professionals Week, April 23-29 -- This week, formerly known as Professional Secretaries week, was first established in 1952. It honours office support staff in business and government. The IAAP (International Association of Administrative Professionals) says that while many workers are still called secretaries, other titles have become more popular, such as administrative assistant, office coordinator, administrative specialist, executive assistance, and office manager.

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Earth Day, April 22 -- The Earth Day Network sponsors this day to spur awareness of environmental issues. This year's theme is "Solutions to Climate Change," aimed at stopping global warming.

April Fool's Day

April Fool's Day, April 1, or All Fool's Day, has been celebrated for more than 400 years, though its origins are uncertain. It probably began as a celebration of the vernal equinox which occurs on March 21. It was the English who popularized the observance during the 18th century.

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In 1983, Joseph Boskin, a history professor at Boston University, received widespread publicity for his claim to have discovered the origins of April Fool's Day. He said the celebration began during the Roman Empire when the emperor Constantine was told that the fools and jesters of the court could rule the kingdom better than he could. In response, Constantine supposedly appointed a jester as ruler, who promptly decreed that only the absurd would be allowed in the empire on that day. Although the Associated Press picked up the story and it ran in many newspapers, Professor Boskin had the last laugh because none of it was true -- it was his own April Fool's Day prank.

Here are some other famous April Fool's Day pranks played round the world:

England, 1957 -- The British Broadcasting Company aired a very convincing documentary about a spaghetti farmer, and showed footage of peasants pulling strands of pasta from trees. Many viewers called in to find out how they could grow their own spaghetti trees.

Sweden, 1962 -- Back then, Sweden had only one TV channel, which broadcast in black and white. For April Fool's Day, the station's technician appeared on the news to tell viewers that they could have colour reception by pulling nylon stockings over their sets. Hundreds of thousands of thousands of Swedes complied, but colour transmission didn't actually come to Sweden until 1970.

France, 1986 -- The French newspaper, the Parisian, shocked its readers with the news that the Eiffel Tower would be dismantled and reconstructed in the new Euro Disney theme park being built east of Paris.

Canada, 2002 -- A Canadian gossip website alleged that Finance Minister Paul Martin was resigning to breed cattle and ducks. As the rumour spread, the Canadian dollar fell. It recovered when Martin announced that he had no plans to resign.

Easter -- Sacred & Secular

Easter is the most important event of the Christian faith. It celebrates Jesus Christ's resurrection, following His crucifixion. It represents His victory over death and the new life all Christians gain in his name.

Some scholars say the word Easter comes from an early English word "Eastra," which was the name of a pagan goddess of spring. Others point to an early German word: "Eostarum," which means dawn.

Easter is the culmination of a six-week period of solemn religious observance, beginning with the start of Lent, a time of fasting and penitence. Many of the events of Christ's last days are marked in the week before Easter. Palm Sunday, one week before Easter, commemorates His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Maundy Thursday recalls His Last Supper, arrest, and imprisonment. At the last supper, Christ washed the feet of His disciples and on Maundy Thursday, many Christian leaders follow this practice, including the Pope.

Easter Sunday is a joyous occasion. Many churches hold outdoor sunrise services, welcoming the dawn as a symbol of Christ's light coming back to the world.

Easter eggs: It is not coincidental that Easter comes around at the beginning of spring. And eggs have been a symbol of spring and new life long before the birth of Christ. In fact, ancient Persians gave each other eggs at the spring equinox.

The Easter Bunny: The bunny is of German origin. A 16th century German text refers to a rabbit delivering eggs, acting as something of a springtime Santa, leaving coloured eggs for good children only. Rabbits are one of the most fertile animals, producing many young and serving as symbols of abundant new life in the spring season.



Easter Outfits: Worshippers often wear special new clothes to church services on Easter Sunday. This may stem from the old practice of having the newly baptized wear new, white clothes.

Easter Lily: The white lily has long been associated with Easter because its colour traditionally symbolizes purity and joy, and also because it is a bulb, "buried" and "reborn."

Easter Foods: Lamb is served at Easter dinners in recognition of the fact that Christ is often referred to as the "Lamb of God." The twisted shape of the pretzel, once a Lenten food, recalls arms crossed in prayer. And hot cross buns are traditionally served on Good Friday.

Really?

If you're feeling foolish this April Fool's Day, consider these not-so-smart predictions and proclamations from people who should have known better:

"I think there is a world market for about five computers."
-- Thomas Watson, founder of IBM, 1943

"This 'telephone' has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us."
-- internal memo at Western Union, 1876

"There is no likelihood man can ever tap the power of the atom."
-- Robert Milikan, Nobel Prize in physics, 1923

"Video won't be able to hold on to any market it captures after the first six months. People will soon get tired of staring at a plywood box every night."
-- Daryl Zanuck, 20th Century Fox executive 1946

"Everything that can be invented has been invented."
-- Charles Duell, Director of the U.S. Patent Office, 1899

"Heavier than air flying machines are impossible."
-- Lord Kelvin, president of the Royal Society, 1895

"Rail travel at high speeds is not possible because passengers, unable to breathe, would die of asphyxia."
-- Dionysius Lardner, professor of natural philosophy and astronomy at University College in London, 1830

A Little April Foolishness

- When everything is coming your way, you're in the wrong lane.
- I almost had a psychic girlfriend, but she left me before we met.
- How do they get deer to cross at those yellow road signs?
- A fool and his money are soon audited.
- What happens if you get scared half to death twice?
- Shin: a device for finding furniture in the dark.
- Time may be a great healer, but it's a terrible beautician.
- I am in shape. Round is a shape.
- We have enough youth; how about a fountain of smart?

