

10 COMMANDMENTS FOR EARTH



- Remember that your earth, and all that lives in it, is precious
- Don't imagine that your soil can't be as good as anything you may see on 'Gardeners' World'
- Do not denigrate soil by calling it names such as dirt or muck; it's a precious asset
- If you have a garden or allotment, spend some time out there at the weekend as part of your recharging of the spiritual, mental and physical batteries
- Spend some special time each week cherishing your soil and keeping it healthy; speak well of it for it offers the gift of life
- Do not squeeze the life out of your soil by tramping on it when it's wet; this is the most effective way of rendering it sterile and useless
- Do not imagine that the grass is greener on the other side of the garden fence; obtain satisfaction from improving the quality of your own soil
- Avoid importing soil conditioners, especially peat which is best left in its bog habitat, where it supports wildlife and locks up carbon which would otherwise add to greenhouse gases and hasten climate change; supply your soil with organic matter by composting your own kitchen waste and most of the content of your 'green bin'
- Don't tell people your soil is bad or useless; any soil can be improved with a little advice and care
- Do not get in a state because your soil is not as good as some others you come across; there's plenty of advice available on how you can improve the quality of yours

(by David Hogan)



Devon Churches Green Action

GARDENING FOR GOD

"One is nearer God's heart in a garden, than anywhere else on the Earth", it is said. So if this is true, are there ways of gardening that are more acceptable to God? Are there Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Moslem or other religious approaches to how we garden?

The archetypal garden is, of course, Eden. This was a place of diversity and plenty – which reappears again in the Book of Revelation, and where the plants served to heal the brokenness of life. And in between lies Gethsemane. All these are seen to be special locations for the purposes of God's people.

But are there lessons to be learned for practical gardening in our time? The Biblical emphasis is that the land and the earth are divine gifts, from which humankind is made and all life is sustained.



So the main significance of gardening is to make provision, not only for ourselves, but for those who do not have access to the land (Deuteronomy 15:11; Leviticus 19:33), non-human creatures (Leviticus 25:11) and for our children's children in the future (1 Chronicles 28:8) The earth has to be treated gently as a part of God's covenant with humanity and the rest of life (Genesis 9). It should not be taken for granted, desecrated or polluted.

We may therefore pose some key questions for people of faith who work the land:

Is your way of farming or gardening leaving a rich and sustainable legacy for future generations?

*Do you wantonly or unconsciously destroy or sterilise the soil by the unnecessary use of concrete, tarmac or chemicals?
Could you minimize or eliminate such practices?*

Are you maintaining a healthy balance of different habitats for plants and animals?

Do you encourage diverse wildlife as well as a range of vegetables, fruits or flowers?



Do you avoid the use of peat and other products which are taken from other countries where their loss is leading to environmental damage?

Are you able to re-use and re-cycle in your husbandry – compost, seed-swaps, rain or grey water or garden furniture, etc.?

Do you consciously avoid gardening one day a week as a time of rest and re-creation?

Gardening has many benefits – physical exercise, contact with the seasons, social interaction, fresh food, space for relaxing, encouraging wildlife, and having fun!

If we experience at least some of these, maybe we are sharing in the work of God who creates all things in heaven and on earth.

10 TIPS FOR GARDENING

- **Go organic** – feed your soil with natural fertilizers, etc. horse manure or compost
- **Use natural pest control** – for example, spray a mixture made with water and eco-friendly washing up liquid on aphids
- **Use a watering can** rather than a sprinkler or hose – you will use less water
- **Collect the rainwater from your roof** in a water butt (or two)
- **Retain moisture in your soil by mulching** around the base of plants. You can make a mulch using organic materials such as manure, hay or straw, a thin layer of grass cuttings, or locally produced bark or wood chippings
- **Make compost** – instead of throwing away all your garden waste, vegetable peelings, paper and cardboard, compost them. You can use the compost to form a layer of mulch on top of the soil, which will keep it cool and help reduce moisture loss. Making compost helps to lock carbon up in your soil, which means fewer carbon emissions, and compost in soil acts like a sponge, holding onto water and nutrients and reducing the need to water and fertilise
- **Grow food instead of grass**
- **Plant vegetables** amongst your flowers
- **Plant a tree** (or two)
- **Don't water your plants little and often**, as this encourages shallow rooting. Do it occasionally but thoroughly, which will make them more resistant to drought



(extracted from 'Climate Change: things you can do to make a difference' by Jon Clift and Amanda Cuthbert)