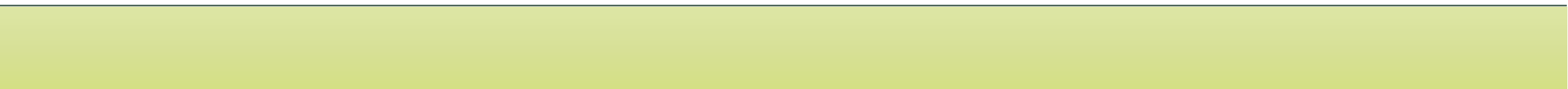


Climate Conversations Earth Day & Planting for Creation Care

St Mark's Creation Care Ministry

April 2025



Agenda

- **Land Acknowledgement:** Saint Mark's Cathedral acknowledges that we gather on the traditional land of the first people of Seattle, the Duwamish People, who are still here, and we honor with gratitude the land itself and the life of all the Coast Salish tribes.
- Opening Prayer
- Framework
- Discussion
- Actions
- Sharing and Q&A
- Closing Prayer

April is the month when we celebrate Earth Day, and it's often the start of the planting season. We'll start with a discussion of the origins of Earth Day, ideas for celebrating Earth Day differently, and opportunities for a refreshed Earth Day in our community. Since some of the frequent actions for Earth Day are planting, we'll move on to discuss planting. While it can seem difficult to plant when you live in the middle of the city, especially if you have a small garden or no garden at all, it is possible to do lots with crops, flowers, and trees wherever you live. We'll discuss how and where to plant, good ways to have small gardens and even how to support farmers, whether you live in a house or an apartment.

Opening Prayer

We thank God for His beautiful creation. May we commit to being the good stewards God calls us to be. May we be aware of our carelessness and our wastefulness. May we commit to the changes that we need to make, especially each April 22 we celebrate Earth Day.

Holy God, earth and air and water are your creation, and every living thing belongs to you. Give us the will and the courage to simplify the way we live, to reduce the energy we use, to share the resources you provide, and to bear the cost of change. Forgive our past mistakes and send us your Spirit, with wisdom in present controversies and vision for the future to which you call us, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



Scriptures Tell us to Care for Creation

- Genesis 2:15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.
- Leviticus 25:23–24: The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants. Throughout the country that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land.



Earth Day has a Long History

- Before 1970, a factory could spew toxic smoke into the air or dump toxic waste into a stream. There was no EPA, no Clean Air Act, no Clean Water Act.
- Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, sold 500,000 copies in 24 countries and raised public concern for the environment
- In the spring in 1970, Senator Gaylord Nelson created Earth Day to push this issue onto the national agenda
- Nelson and Denis Hayes organized the first Earth Day event on April 22, 1970
 - 20 million Americans participated
- The EPA was formed in 1970
- Today, more than one billion people celebrate Earth Day annually in more than 193 countries



Earth Day Theme

- Earthday.org leads Earth Day activities
- The theme for Earth Day 2025 is OUR POWER, OUR PLANET
 - It invites everyone around the globe to unite behind renewable energy, and to triple the global generation of clean electricity by 2030.
 - How? Join Earth Action Day and encourage all to take action (www.earthday.org)



Earth Day Actions

- Beach or park cleanup
- Picnic in a park
- Set up DIY birdhouses or bee hotels
- Create nature art – collect leaves, flowers and sticks, and create art
- Hike
- Volunteer in a community garden
- Plant a tree



550

cities and towns will join the Earth Action Day Events, driving local climate action.

100

colleges across the U.S. will mobilize students for Earth Action Day.

1,000,000

schools will integrate Climate Education into their curricula, empowering future generations.

7,500,000

pounds of garbage will be removed through The Great Global Cleanup.

550,000

trees will be planted by The Canopy Project.

Planting has a Positive Impact

- Gardeners are both stewards and guardians of our environment, and can make a difference in the fight against climate change (NWF)
- Home gardeners can be part of the solution to climate change by using sustainable practices
 - Sustainable gardening and landscaping can slow warming by reducing carbon emissions and increasing carbon storage in soil and plants
- Gardens can help maintain biodiversity and remove carbon emissions from the atmosphere



Gardens make Neighborhoods Comfortable

- Gardens enhance air quality, as natural filters
 - Plants absorb pollutants such as CO₂, nitrogen oxides, and particulates
 - Gardens create healthier living environments, particularly in urban areas where air pollution is more concentrated
- Home gardens help reduce the urban heat island effect - cities have higher temperatures due to concrete and asphalt absorbing and retaining heat
- Gardens provide shade and release moisture through transpiration, cooling neighborhoods
 - Strategic planting of trees and shrubs can enhance these cooling effects.
 - Positioning trees near buildings reduces the need for air conditioning



Garden Impacts depend on Techniques

- A University of Michigan study found that fruits and vegetables grown in urban farms and gardens have a carbon footprint 6 times greater than conventionally grown produce
 - 0.42 kilograms of CO₂ equivalents per serving, 6x the 0.07 kg CO₂e per serving of conventional produce
- Inputs: infrastructure (such as raised beds or pathways), supplies (compost, fertilizer, etc.) and irrigation (water)
- Best practices include:
 - Extend infrastructure lifetimes
 - Use urban waste as inputs



The 4 Rs for Gardening

- Reduce – the use of resources in your garden wherever possible
- Reuse – household materials and seasonal items year on year
- Recycle – your garden waste, plastic, glass and metals
- Reinvest – help stimulate demand for recycled products by buying recycled items



Regenerative Gardening is Beneficial

- Limit digging – keep the soil intact
- Cover bare soil – mulch or cover crops
- Diversify your garden, for biodiversity
- Fertilize with compost
- Grow perennials
 - Plants that survive more than one year can sequester carbon and protect soil structure
 - Their roots extend further into the ground, supporting your garden's water-holding capabilities



Discussion & Breakout Session

Questions:

- What are experiences for Earth Day that stand out for you?
- Do you have an indoor or outdoor garden, and if so what do you grow?
- What practices do you use or consider, to make your garden more eco-friendly?



Plant with Creation Care in Mind

- Growing a range of plants in your garden builds resilience and can increase biodiversity
 - If extreme weather such as flooding or drought damages some plants, others will be fine
 - As weather patterns shift, some insects that depend on particular flowers might suffer, so plant a diverse variety of pollinator-friendly plants with different flowering times



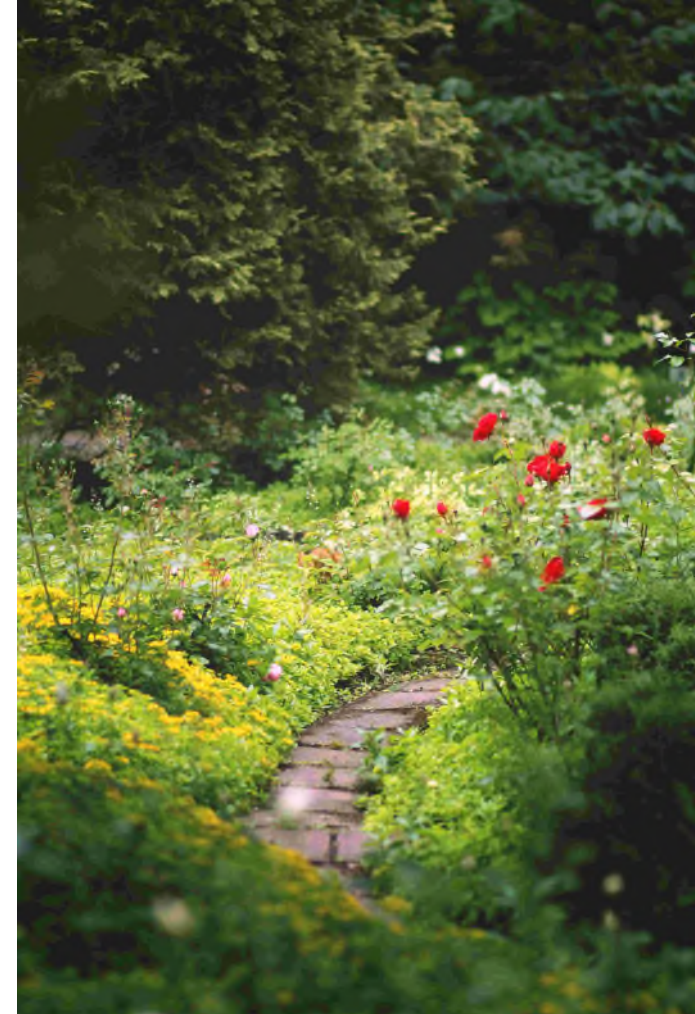
Select Plants Carefully

- Reduce the threat of invasive species expansion by planting native plants
 - Native plants help maintain pollinator connections and ensure food sources for wildlife
 - Non-native plants can outcompete native species for habitat and food
- Native plants are the ecological basis upon which life depends.
- Native plants store carbon, require less water, are low maintenance and provide vital habitat for wildlife



Consider Less Lawn and More Plants

- Plant lawn alternatives
 - You can start by replacing just a small portion of lawn
 - Start by planting where grass does not grow well
 - Replacing the lawn will reduce mowing, decrease fertilizer and herbicides (which also take energy to produce) and provide essential spaces for wildlife habitat



Care for the Garden in Eco-Friendly Ways

- Avoid using chemicals in the garden
 - If required, use products with a lower carbon footprint, such as homemade organic fertilizers
 - Practice Integrated Pest Management
 - Adopt a combination of good plant biosecurity, and biological, cultural and chemical controls to minimize the spread of pests and diseases
- Reduce water consumption
 - Mulch, install rain barrels, adjust watering schedules and use drip irrigation



Replace Fertilizers with Alternatives

- Compost kitchen and garden waste
 - It provides an excellent source of nutrients for your garden, reducing the need for chemical fertilizers
 - Composting waste can reduce pollution, especially methane
- Harvesting peat to use for composts is an environmental disaster, both for the biodiversity of the area from which it is harvested, and on a global climate scale
 - Peatlands store huge amounts of carbon
 - Look for and use peat-free composts



Use Eco-Friendly Tools in the Garden

- Eco-friendly tools allow gardeners to work more efficiently while adopting sustainable practices that contribute to a healthier planet
 - Choosing the right equipment reduces waste and conserves resources
- Electric or manual gardening tools are excellent alternatives to gas-powered options
 - Electric mowers and trimmers produce fewer emissions and operate more quietly
 - Tools like ergonomic hand weeders or durable compost bins made from recycled materials encourage long-term use and minimize landfill waste



Sharing, Discussion and Q&A

Questions

- What do you do or what can you do to select plants better for your garden?
- What techniques can you use to care for your plants in more eco-friendly ways?
- How can you use your garden to inspire others to be eco-friendly?



Make a Difference

Our goal is not just an environment of clean air and water and scenic beauty. The objective is an environment of decency, quality and mutual respect for all other human beings and all other living creatures. - Gaylord Nelson

Earth Day gathered up those strands, and dozens more, and knitted them together in the public consciousness as "environmental" issues. The nation was pretty startled when 20 million people hit the streets. Congress, which had adjourned for the day to go back to its districts, was blown away. – Denis Hayes

That first Earth Day was a very big tent with a broad set of values that underpinned it. The tent has become narrower in ensuing decades, and while remaining firm in our values and goals and objectives, we need to be more welcoming. – Denis Hayes

Closing Prayer

Almighty God, as we observe Earth Day once again this year we pause to acknowledge you as the Maker of heaven and earth. We celebrate the beauty and the goodness of all that you have made. Everywhere we go, everywhere we look, we see the beauty of your creation - in the budding trees, the blooming flowers, the clouds in the sky, the colorful birds, the mountains, the ocean, the forests, the plains, and even the deserts. All this beauty is but a dim reflection of your own beauty. Thank you, God, for giving us a chance to see such beauty, and may we be careful not to miss what is there to see. May we never forget that the earth belongs to you and that we have a responsibility to do all we can to preserve and protect your good earth. Amen

