

*Suggestions for Honoring God's Creation*

## LAWN & GARDEN



*The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.*  
*GENESIS 2:15, NIV*

- Avoid pesticides and fertilizers. According to National Geographic's *The Green Guide*, Americans spend over \$38 billion annually to keep their lawns lush and neatly manicured. The money goes toward purchasing chemical pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides, many of which are making lawns toxic.
- Landscaping doesn't have to cost a fortune. In spring and fall, start a plant exchange board at your church. Ask if your town offers free mulch and compost, and check out demolition sites that may want to get rid of bricks and stones.
- Reduce the size of your yard. Gas-powered lawn mowers lack catalytic converters, which are used in automobiles to treat exhaust before it escapes. As a result, a gas-powered mower emits as much pollution in one hour as a car does traveling 100 miles. Combined with emissions from other gas-powered garden equipment, gas mowers account for 5 percent of air pollution during the summer months.
- Install rain barrels. A 2,000-square-foot home can collect as much as 36,000 gallons of rainwater in one year by using rain barrels to capture water from downspouts—more than enough to meet the average American family's water needs.
- In many regions, only an inch of water per week is necessary to maintain a healthy lawn. Keep a cat-food-size can outside to monitor rainfall. If rain fills it to the brim each week, you don't need to water at all.
- Use drip irrigation. Instead of using regular sprinklers, water your flower bed and garden using drip irrigation or a soaker hose. This method saves water by minimizing evaporation and watering only the base of your plants. Water savings: up to 70 percent of the water typically used.
- Use a shut-off nozzle. To prevent waste when the water is turned on and your hose is not being used, fit your garden hose with a shut-off nozzle. Water savings: up to 6.5 gallons per minute.
- Plant a native garden. Conserve water by replacing little-used grass areas like your front yard with a native garden. A native garden can reduce street noise and offer more privacy for you and your family. Water savings: up to 75 percent of the water typically used. Growing indigenous plants with low water requirements could save you up to 550 gallons of water per year.
- Use mulch. Mulching your plants reduces the amount of water lost through evaporation, limits weed growth, and improves soil conditions. Water savings: 70 percent of water typically lost through evaporation.
- Reclaim your water. Collect water that has been used for bathing, washing dishes, and other household duties, and use it to water your plants. Water savings: up to 300 gallons per month.
- Cover your pool. When you're not going for a swim, cover your pool to reduce water lost to evaporation. Water savings: 90 percent of water typically lost through evaporation.
- Compost food scraps. Composting can reduce household waste by as much as 70 percent.
- Check out community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs in your community. If you don't know of any CSAs in your area, call the local extension office or 4-H club. Gather some like-minded friends and buy shares.



Know people with green thumbs who would like to expand their gardens? Ask if they would be interested in starting a church-based CSA next spring. Or turn over some sod this fall in a sunny spot for your very own vegetable patch. Start small, and expand as your knowledge and skill grow.

- According to the American Journal of Public Health, children who live in homes that use chemical weed and insect killers are four times more likely to develop cancer than those who do not. Skip expensive and harmful chemicals, and get rid of pests the natural way. Adding French marigolds, borage, dill, nasturtium, garlic, parsley, thyme, onion, sage, and fennel to your garden will help repel insects without harming the watershed.
- Earth-friendly pesticides:
  - Basic insect spray—Repels insects; kills fungi and mites. Mix two tablespoons of dishwashing liquid soap into one gallon of water. To target fungi, add one to two tablespoons of baking soda. Add sulfur to kill mites.
  - Peppermint tea—All-purpose insect spray; ant repellent. Brew peppermint leaf tea. Cool and place in a properly labeled spray bottle.
  - Garlic spray—Repels insects. Mix two teaspoons of garlic juice, one teaspoon of cayenne pepper, and one teaspoon of liquid soap in one quart of water.
  - Banana peel repellent—Repels aphids. Place banana peels around roses and other plants.
  - Lemon spray—Repels white flies and soft-bodied insects. Also gets rid of fleas. Boil three lemon peels in one quart of water. Let cool, remove peels, and put solution in a properly labeled spray bottle.
  - Lemongrass wasp repellent—Place lemongrass in a vase on your picnic table to keep wasps away.
  - Vinegar spray—Combats fungal disease and black spots on roses. Combine three tablespoons of apple cider vinegar with one gallon of water.
- Is there a home for battered women, an addiction center, a halfway house, a teen center, a Head Start program, or a prison near you that could benefit from a garden? Investigate. Make some inquiries. Listen to their needs, and then join forces with friends and dig in.



## OUR MISSION

*Blessed Earth is an educational nonprofit that inspires and equips faith communities to become better stewards of the earth. Through outreach to churches, campuses and media we build bridges that promote measurable environmental change and meaningful spiritual growth.*

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