

Planting a Tree; Growing our Future

Who plants a seed . . . beneath the sod
And waits to see . . . believes in God!

From the poem "Heart Belief"
Attributed to John Tyndall
19th Century Irish Physicist



This year the United Church of Christ has set a [goal of planting 50,000 trees](#) across the country between April 17th and April 26th to celebrate love of Creation, and as a positive action toward minimizing climate change. This is also a good way to make a commitment to the Earth in honor of the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day (April 22nd) and to observe Arbor Day (April 24). Interfaith Power and Light is asking us to report the number of trees we plant on their website: <https://www.faithclimateactionweek.org/for-love-of-trees/>.

Under our current "Safer at Home" guidelines to stop the spread of the Corona virus, we cannot likely participate in community planting events, or even get out and purchase nursery stock. However, many trees and shrubs can be planted throughout the growing season, so we can get more trees in the ground and sheltering our planet when the threat of contagion is over.

Trees help make our Earthly home cooler; provide habitat for songbirds, pollinators, and wildlife; and so much more. According to the [Arbor Day Foundation](#):

"As trees grow, they help stop climate change by removing carbon dioxide from the air, storing carbon in the trees and soil, and releasing oxygen into the atmosphere. Trees provide many benefits to us, every day. They offer cooling shade, block cold winter winds, attract birds and wildlife, purify our air, prevent soil erosion, clean our water, and add grace and beauty to our homes and communities."

Planting trees and shrubs native to our particular area is the best choice. Native species are usually well suited to the local soil conditions, precipitation levels, and temperature ranges. They provide the nuts and berries and attract the insects that sustain our native bird species. Although ornamental trees and shrubs from other regions can be used, there is always the danger of them becoming invasive over time (such as [Buckthorn](#) and [Japanese Knotweed](#)), crowding out native varieties and taking away the habitat and food needed by native wildlife. In fact, [it is not legal to plant or grow some specific, highly invasive species in our state.](#)

Where can you find recommended species to plant? Local Land and Water Conservation Offices and University of Wisconsin-Extension advisors can provide lists of native trees and shrubs well-suited to each area of the state, and there are many on-line resources on proper planting methods. The new rootstock needs to be planted in the right growing conditions for varieties chosen. It is also very important that the new plantings be protected from deer and other grazing animals, and receive sufficient watering and weeding.

There are ways to get trees planted without doing the work yourself! Here are 4 options from [Global Ministries](#), a shared ministry of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ):

- For \$1 a tree, the [Arbor Day Foundation](#) will [plant numerous trees on your behalf](#) in a national park. Fires, diseases and insects have taken their toll on natural settings. Your donation will help to rebuild these areas.
- For \$12 a tree, the [Organization of African Instituted Churches in Kenya](#) will [plant trees on your behalf](#) in areas identified as priority regions for reforestation in East Africa.
- For \$12 a tree, the [Green Church Project of TEE in Zambia](#) will provide trained Climate Ambassadors to [plant trees on your behalf](#) in communities and on church grounds around the country.
- For \$20 a tree, [Keep Hope Alive](#) will [plant olive trees on your behalf](#) on Palestinian lands where these trees have been the target of Israeli military attacks.

Please consider doing some plantings to help heal the Earth this spring and summer, when the weather is warmer and the threat of Corona virus infection is over (hopefully). This is another step toward restoring and sustaining our Earthly home. If you plan a tree-planting event, the Wisconsin Conference Creation Care Team has a worship service order celebrating “The Gift of Trees” and two tree puzzles available on our resource page: <https://www.wcucc.org/creation-care-worship-resources/>.