

Contemplative Gardens



It starts on an African farm



As your church starts to use the land more creatively, why not create a contemplative space in your church garden. It does not have to be a large space or a well-stocked garden, just somewhere where you can sit and be. A space where you can enjoy the world around you and appreciate God's creation.

Use this guide to awaken your senses and prompt your prayers for farming families in rural Africa.

Introduction

We have five senses: sight, sound, smell, touch and taste. As you contemplate your church garden, take time to focus on each sense, one by one. When you are ready, use the prayer prompts to pray for our neighbours in rural Africa who use their garden spaces to feed their families.



Sight

- Look around you. What do you see? How many different colours do you notice?
- Take in the bigger picture of your garden: look up, look down, look into the distance and look close up.
- Take a petal and study the intricacies of its design. You could use a magnifying glass to look really closely.
- How does this make you feel?

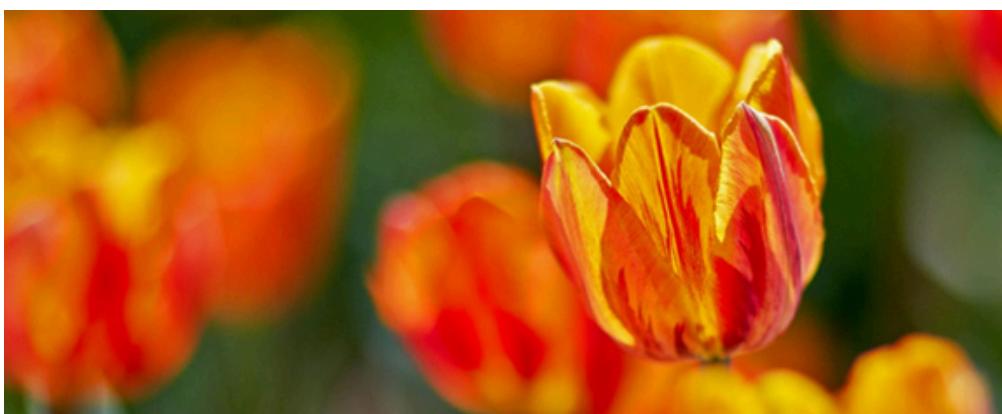


Awaken your senses



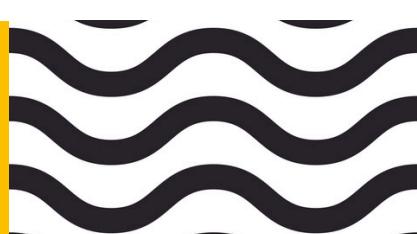
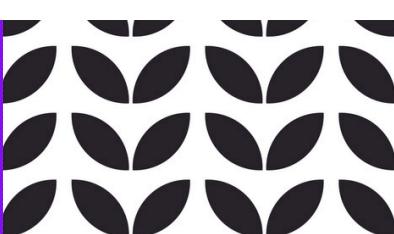
Sound

- Start by listening to your own breathing.
- When you are ready, count how many different sounds you can hear around you. How many different bird songs can you hear? You could use a bird identifier app on your phone. There are lots of very good ones available.
- What words can you use to describe the sounds.
- How do the sounds make you feel?



Smell

- Enjoy the aromas in and around your garden.
- Many of your plants will have their own scent, whilst others will appear to be fragrance free. Try to identify those with a scent that make you happy.
- The scent of fresh flowers has a long-term positive effect on our mood. Take your time to enjoy these scents.
- If it has been raining recently, you'll be able to detect that unique earthy smell. Breathe it in slowly. How does it make you feel?





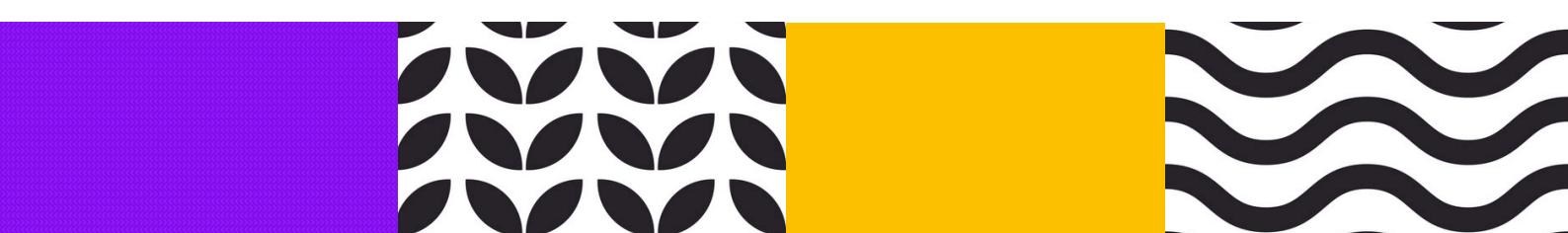
Touch

- What can you touch in your garden? A delicate dandelion head, some smooth pebbles or the different textures of leaves on plants and shrubs. Find as many different textures as you can.
- Pick up a handful of soil. Look at it closely. Consider the power that you hold in your hand. This soil contains enough nutrients to make plants grow and it has the power to feed us. Consider what that means to you and to the farming families you support in rural Africa.



Taste

- Depending on the time of year, you'll be able taste different berries, leaves or petals (make sure you know what is and is not poisonous). Did you know that primroses, honey suckle, hibiscus, pansies and dahlia are all edible? As you taste the flavours in your garden, think about how you would describe them.
- We can grow so much in our gardens, even in the smallest spaces. If you are unable to taste anything from your garden at the moment, think about what you could grow there in the future. Alternatively, take time to sit in your garden with some cake, a cup of tea and just enjoy the experience!



Meselech's garden

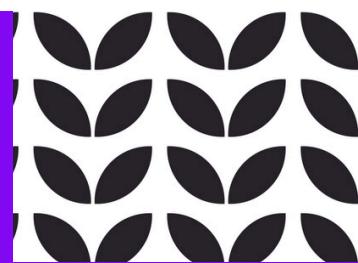


Meselech, Ripple Effect farmer, Ethiopia

Meselech lives in Ethiopia, an area dominated by erratic weather conditions which affects what farming families can grow in their gardens. With determination and hard work, Meselech has put in place practical farming solutions which she has learnt from her training with Ripple Effect.

"With the help of people like you, since joining the project, we have begun to diversify our farm and we are growing many other vegetables such as Swiss chard, onion, potato and carrots. In addition, the crops before weren't productive. Now we know how to manage and make our soil more fertile. So, we're not only growing new crops but we're also improving the yields of the crops that we were growing before." Meselech, Ripple Effect farmer, Ethiopia

As you contemplate your garden, remember Meselech and rejoice with her that she has transformed her life and is creating ripples amongst her own community!



Let's pray



"God looked at everything he had made, and he was very pleased." Genesis 1:31

Let's pray

- **Praise God for everything you have noticed in your garden today.** Thank him for the space you have and what it means to you.
- **Praise him for Caroline and her hard work.** Thank him that she is now able to grow enough to feed her family. Pray that he would continue to bless the work of her hands.
- **Pray for those who do not work with Ripple Effect** but who are learning from their peers who are. Thank God for the ripples of change being created in these communities.
- **Pray for those living on the front line of the climate crisis.** Pray that with training from Ripple Effect, they would be able to transform their gardens into flourishes green spaces, despite the erratic weather conditions.

Twin your garden and plant hope for a family in rural Africa.

Garden Twinning is a charity gift that plants hope for a family in rural Africa.

Twin your church garden, with Ripple Effect and your donation of £120 (£60 for an individual garden) could help families living in rural Africa, with three years training in sustainable organic farming. Starting with small kitchen gardens, families can grow enough to eat, set up small businesses, send their children to school and go after their dreams.

[Find out more at rippleeffect.org/twin-my-community-garden](http://rippleeffect.org/twin-my-community-garden)

For further information please do get in touch with Ann Hatton:

 ann.hatton@rippleeffect.org

 01225 874 222

