

# eco- congregation



**an environmental toolkit for churches**

Module 9

## **planting and conserving eden**

*Practical ideas and advice to care for church  
grounds and land*

*Eco-congregation (England & Wales) is a project of  
A Rocha UK, 13 Avenue Rd, Southall, Middlesex UB1 3BL Registered Charity 1089276*

# Module 9 – **planting and conserving eden**

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## **Setting the scene**

From **Genesis**:

*'The Lord took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and look after it.'*  
Genesis 2:15 (Revised English Bible [REB])

to **Revelation**

*'The leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations.'*  
Revelation 22:2b (REB)

God's word reveals that the world is a part of God's continuing creation and that the people of God have a particular responsibility to care for the earth.

With varying degrees of success and failure, the people of God from Adam and Eve to Christians today, have tried to live up to this calling. At the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, environmental issues are one of the most important issues facing the world. In the face of many environmental challenges it has never been so important for churches to demonstrate their care for God's creation in practical and spiritual ways, including managing the land around their church premises.

## **Conserving or planting Eden?**

Many churches are responsible for a piece of land. Some churches have a long established churchyard containing a rich variety of plant and animal species. This is particularly likely in ancient churchyards that have not been subject to modern land management practice including pesticide and herbicide applications. It is important to conserve these habitats, particularly where the church is a wildlife 'island' surrounded by development or intensively cultivated land.

Other churches, often those more recently built in urban areas, may have little more than a pocket-handkerchief yard covered in tarmac or concrete, a suburban-style front garden, or a larger area of land around the premises with little wildlife or community value. For these churches it may be more appropriate to undertake some landscaping and planting rather than conserving what already exists.

This module contains a section entitled 'Putting it on the church agenda' to help churches get started. There then follow two distinctive sections. The first, 'Conserving Eden', is for churches that should manage/conservate their churchyard because it is already a valuable wildlife habitat. The other, 'Planting Eden', is for churches that wish to increase the value of their church grounds for conservation and church/community purposes.

The patch or area of land around churches can be viewed as a millstone, a mixed blessing or an area full of potential. 'Planting and conserving Eden' is designed to inspire and help churches to care for their 'patch' so that it may witness to God the creator and be a place for the congregation and local community to find and enjoy the love of God.

For further inspiration, look at <b>Module 6 'Exploring God's green word'</b> , which contains a Bible study based on Gardening stories.
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## **A traditional Jewish story**

A Rabbi was walking down a road when he came upon an old man planting an olive tree. The Rabbi stopped and asked him, "How many years will it take for the tree to bear fruit?" The old man stopped work, straightened up his back, paused and answered him, "I think around forty years if the summers are good and the rain comes." The Rabbi questioned him further, "And are you so fit and strong that you expect to live that long and eat its fruits?" The old man answered, "I found a fruitful world because my forefathers planted for me, so I will do the same for my children." And with that, the old man continued planting the tree.

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## Putting it on the **church agenda**

There are almost as many different ways of working successfully in churches as there are churches. The trick is to identify the most positive way for your own church! What follows are some suggestions to help you get going, but you will need to tailor these according to the circumstances of your church, the size of membership and the nature and size of the churchyard/plot that you are dealing with.

**Step 1:** Gather together a small group of people to start to make some plans. Consider inviting people because of their personal skills and interest, their church responsibilities (e.g. it makes good sense to involve anyone who has responsibility for the church grounds!) and a representative from organisations that could usefully be involved (e.g. from church uniformed organisations or a local school).

**Step 2:** Review the area of land/your church patch and, if possible, undertake a survey noting details of plants and animals that are present or use the site (try to include the less obvious things such as insects or lichens on gravestones and walls). Seek expert advice if you suspect that your area might have conservation value because of the animals or plants present. Often a local Wildlife Trust may be able to help. At this stage you will be able to decide whether it is more appropriate to adopt a management strategy to conserve a valuable habitat or whether to consider some form of landscaping or gardening project. The latter might involve creating areas that are visually attractive, a wildlife haven, places for contemplation, a safe place for children to play or an education resource.

**Step 3:** Consider some of the ideas in the Conserving Eden and Planting Eden sections, and draw up a set of plans for your site, including estimates of cost and plans for maintenance.

**Step 4:** Consider and consult other appropriate people/organisations on desirable management practices/uses for the site and sources of grants, technical support and even labour (e.g. church body, local authority, wildlife trust, local school).

**Step 5:** After consultation, present these plans to the appropriate church decision-making body.

**Step 6:** Gain support by involving and informing as many people in the church as possible. This spreads the load, informs others of what is happening and why, and builds support for and a sense of pride in the church. To spread the word write articles for the church magazine. People may wish to support the work through:

- raising funds
- donating items, e.g. benches, equipment/tools, plants/cuttings
- drawing up a list of useful resources and asking for offers
- giving an item or plant in memory of a loved one
- consulting the local community about the plans
- involving appropriate groups, e.g. a youth group, school, allotment society
- sharing the news with the community through the local press

**Step 7:** Get cracking by putting your plans into action.

**Step 8:** Review your scheme after a year.

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## **Conserving Eden**

### **The Living Churchyard Project**

Many churches have graveyards, some of which have been used over hundreds of years. The Living Churchyard Project encourages churches to care for their graveyards as places of respect where loved ones are laid to rest and as wildlife havens. The following good practice drawn from the Living Churchyard Project can be applied to churchyards or gardens with or without graveyards:

- α **Value your walls and old stones** (but don't scrub them clean!). Filled with niches at different levels, they can be a haven for a variety of plants and animals
- α **Trees and shrubs** are visually attractive and provide a range of vertical habitats. When planting trees try to choose native species - you could also encourage children within your church to plant some seeds. Take care not to plant trees too close to your church building or drainage system
- α **Hedges** are like the edge of a woodland for wildlife. They provide places of refuge, nesting sites, song perches and a rich crop of berries, seeds and insects and can be under planted with wildflowers. Native hedging, if bought 'bare-rooted', is quite cheap and many nurseries and garden centres stock wildflowers or wildflower seed. Do remember it is an offence to dig up plants in the wild
- α **Hay piles and compost heaps** cut down on the waste that churches put out for collection and can provide nest materials, food and, for some species, a venue for their home. Use the compost pit for garden, flower and vegetable waste but avoid composting meat or fish as these can attract vermin
- α **Feeding stations and nest boxes** can be provided to attract wildlife
- α **Buildings**, including the church itself, can act as a safe habitat for a range of species for perching, nesting and roosting. Bats, owls, kestrels, house martins, swifts and swallows are among the species that often nest or roost in and around churches
- α **Mowing regimes**: the frequency of grass-cutting influences the type of wildlife that can flourish. Whilst close and regular mowing allows a few plants to survive, leaving grass uncut until late summer (e.g. July) encourages a wide range of flowers to grow. If you don't cut the grass, a thick matted layer will develop which will provide a valuable habitat for a variety of insects, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians. However, in time, such an area is likely to become overgrown with brambles and shrubs, so it will need some management. To encourage a rich diversity of life in your churchyard, designate certain areas for different mowing regimes
- α **Dead Wood** can be a home and a supermarket for a variety of plants and animals. In particular, rotting wood attracts fungi and mini-beasts that are one of nature's recycling mechanisms as well as being a food source for other species

The Living Churchyard works in association with County Wildlife Trusts and can provide guidance and resources to turn your churchyard into a living churchyard. There is information available on Churchyard habitats and surveys, management, planning and conservation techniques, resources and educational ideas.

**Contact: Caring for God's Acre** 6 West Street, Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 8ES  
01568 611154 e mail : [info@cfqa.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:info@cfqa.fsnet.co.uk) Web [www.caringforgodsacre.co.uk](http://www.caringforgodsacre.co.uk)

Local Wildlife Trusts may also be able to offer support: contact details in the '**Directory of useful organisations**' at the end of this module. The '**Further resources**' section of this module has details of additional publications on wildlife conservation in churchyards.

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## **Veteran trees**

Old or veteran trees often harbour rare insects, fungi and other species. This is in part due to their size, for thick wood rots in a different way to thinner wood, and in part due to their age, as other species have a greater opportunity to colonise them over time. Britain has more veteran trees than any other country in Europe. Churches are important guardians of veteran trees as a significant number of these Methuselahs are located in churchyards. Churches can play a vital conservation role by looking after these ancient trees. For advice contact the Arboricultural Officer from your local authority, local wildlife trust, or church advisory body.

### **For further information:**

*Veteran Trees: a guide to good management* by Helen Read. Publ. 2000 by English Nature, Peterborough

*Veteran Trees: a guide to risk and responsibility* by Caroline Davies, Neville Fay and Charles Mynors. Publ. 2000 by English Nature, Peterborough

Or go to the Natural England site ([www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)) and type veteran tree management into their search facility. You can download a handbook from the site.

## **Bats**

### **Bat facts...**

- Bats are not blind, but they can also "see" in the dark by listening to the echoes of their high frequency calls
- They have good steering - they won't get caught in your hair!
- Bats do not build nests; they hang up or creep into cracks and crannies
- In winter, when insects are scarce, bats hibernate in cool parts of buildings, caves and hollow trees
- In Britain it is illegal to disturb bats or the places where they roost
- Bats can live for up to 30 years
- Bat populations are threatened by loss of habitat, affecting roosting sites and feeding grounds
- Britain's commonest bat, the pipistrelle, is only 4cm long and weighs about 5 grams - less than a 2p coin!
- Of the 16 species left in Britain, 6 are Endangered or Rare and 6 others are Vulnerable

The "Living Churchyard" project and The Bat Conservation Trust jointly prepared an information leaflet on bats. Copies of the leaflet are available through either organisation and the Bat Conservation Trust can provide specific advice.

### **Contact:**

The Bat Conservation Trust, 15 Cloisters House, 8 Battersea Park Road, London, SW8 4BG Tel. 0845 1300 228, Email: [enquiries@bats.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@bats.org.uk), Web: [www.bats.org.uk](http://www.bats.org.uk)

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### **Biodiversity Action Plans**

The Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is a national programme that identifies threatened species and habitats and develops a conservation plan and seeks to enact it. BAPs can operate at different geographical levels including in parishes and across local authority areas.

A number of organisations, including local churches, have taken a lead in getting a BAP underway. In practice local BAPs are often given a more appealing name. Organisers may take a lead by encouraging participation from key groups and individuals, for example: gardening clubs, wildlife groups, schools and youth organisations. Getting a local BAP organised may involve organising walks and talks to stimulate interest and conducting a local survey. This can identify significant and sometimes vulnerable species and habitats. The group can then work with and encourage gardeners, land-owners and farmers to be more mindful of wildlife, press the local authority to look after common ground, including verges, in an environmentally sensitive way and identify any sites that merit special care.

**For more information contact:**

Your local authority Biodiversity Officer, LA21 Officer or local Wildlife Trust (details in 'A directory of useful organisations' at the end of this module.

### **Story from Trossachs Church, Perthshire**

**Trossachs Church** is the second place of worship for **Callander Kirk** and is situated in the beautiful Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park. While the weekly place of worship for the congregation is in the middle of Callander town, Trossachs Church is used for a monthly afternoon service and for many weddings. Callander Kirk was one of four Scottish churches that took part in the Eco-Congregation pilot scheme. During this time, the car park at Trossachs Church was extended to provide for people attending weddings. A landscape architect was employed to create a plan for the extension and people from both within and outside the church contributed wildlife expertise. The final result is sympathetic to the landscape and includes areas of especial benefit to wildlife.

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## **Planting Eden**

### **Stories from Churches...**

#### **Greening Herringthorpe United Reformed Church**

Ruth Holdsworth writes about environmental projects at Herringthorpe URC...

In 1999 we invited the Brownies to help create a very small wildflower meadow in an L-shaped area of mown grass. In the autumn they planted wild flower plants grown from seed, and scattered a meadow seed mixture. By Spring 2000, the strongest plants had established, so the grass was cut around them (with shears – it is a small area!). Several circles of grass were removed, and plantlets, which had been over-wintered in pots, were added. We talked about what we were doing and why, before the Brownies enthusiastically got to work. They are beginning to see this as their special area that they are helping to create. The following is the story in their words:

*We planted flower because to bring Insect's back. We are helping the inviroment, Because people are cuting tree down and they are no places for the Insect's. I like planting flower (**Danielle 8**).*

*We were planting plants to ceep the wild life from going dead. I injoyd planting the plants the smell of wild pant is strange (**Alice**)*

*We planted some flower in a little area to help the Insect's eat and growe We did a wetter area in a canen of our area (**Kirsty Jane, 8**)*

*At Brownies we planted some flowers so as to make a little meadow. We wanted to make hedgehogs and butterflys come to the garden (**Stephanie 8**)*

*We planted some wildflowers and plants to try and encorag butterflies, bugs and other wildlife. I think we have helped alot of people because our children and our grandchildren will know all the different plants (**Hannah 10**).*

Ruth continues... our EaRTH Group (Environmental and Resources Thinking at Herringthorpe) have:

- stacked pruned branches so that they provide a wildlife habitat and rot down slowly to enrich the soil
- planted a 'woodland edge' with a hedgerow, wild flowers and native bulbs
- pruned neglected hedges in early spring after the berries have been eaten and before birds start nesting, to encourage them to thicken and become a more valuable wildlife habitat. In addition the hedges were under planted with a variety of native species including hawthorn, hazel, guelder rose, and blackthorn
- sited some bird boxes in strategic locations

We hope that our church has set a good example of small, simple and effective steps that many of our church members and those within our local community who use the premises may replicate in their own gardens. To encourage this we have produced an attractive and colourful wall display highlighting what we have done to benefit wildlife and that it was done as a sign of our need to care for God's creation.

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### **Sprucing up an alley**

**Earle Road United Reformed Church in Liverpool** is bordered by an alley which is a favourite spot for fly tipping. Determined to rid the church of an association with this blight and associated nuisances, a couple of members have made it their business to remove rubbish as soon as it appears and to deal with graffiti and weeds. The church has also installed some plant troughs on the walls giving the church an attractive and cared for look. Members have been rewarded with the sight of a grey wagtail – a change from the usual pigeons.

### **The ‘Broken Window’ theory**

A theory now known as the ‘Broken Window’ theory has identified that if a building shows signs of neglect or vandalism, such as a broken window, then the situation can quickly get worse. Broken windows and graffiti can breed rapidly! Rapidly dealing with such blight gives an impression of the building being used and cared for, which reduces further incidences and is good for the surrounding neighbourhood.

### **Grasshopper strips and homes for hedgehogs**

The churchyards at **St Francis, Silver End and St Mary and All Saint’s Rivenhall** have been managed for the benefit of wildlife for many years. Mowing regimes have been adopted to encourage wildflowers, part of which is mown with strips to accommodate grasshoppers. The churches have provided habitats for hedgehogs and have nettle areas to encourage butterflies. Recent installations include two nest boxes.

Cosy homes for hedgehogs – an Eco-tip published in the magazine of **St John the Evangelist, Hurst Green**:

Choose a quiet corner of the churchyard, preferably in thick undergrowth or a bramble patch. Build a small cave – you can use six concrete building blocks, four as sides and two on top. Next, form an entrance tunnel with an old piece of drainpipe at least 400mm long. Then, half fill your cave with dry material such as dead grass and ferns. Finally, cover the home with a thick layer of earth, turves or compost, so that just the entrance to the tunnel shows. Rent? The hedgehogs will repay gardeners in the spring by consuming slugs and snails!

### **Woodland Workshop at St Luke’s, Formby ([www.stlukes.merseyside.org](http://www.stlukes.merseyside.org))**

**St Luke’s Church of England in Formby** is set amidst the pine coastal woodland adjacent to the Sefton Coast. The churchyard is managed according to a conservation plan developed with the Sefton Coastal Authorities, providing a range of habitats including trees for the red squirrels, an understorey and grassland areas in the graveyard that bloom with bulbs and primroses in Spring. Once a month, a group of volunteers get together to work in the churchyard, maintaining the quality of its habitats. The group has also visited local ‘grotspots’ removing litter and trimming back trees which were hampering access by emergency vehicles, such as fire engines, to the woodland.

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### **In the beginning... by the children of Gildersome Baptist Church**

Gildersome Baptist Church is set in a dormitory village of Leeds and has around 40 members and some vibrant children's work. In the 1990s the chapel had decayed to such an extent that it became hazardous to use and the extensive churchyard had become overgrown with brambles and a focus for anti-social behaviour. The Church took a decision to restore the chapel and grounds for worship and as a resource for their community. The sale of some land to a Housing Association levered in some funding to restore their building. However, the church's first project was to tackle the grounds. They obtained grant funding and adopted a multi-agency approach working with local schools, environmental groups and an employment/training organisation. The following is part of the story told in the words of their children:

In the beginning, when God created the universe, the earth was formless and desolate.

*For years our graveyard was nearly impossible to walk through. You had to fight your way through thick brambles, stinging nettles and long grass. Once you finally reached the centre, which is a family grave with a willow tree in the middle of it, there was an old settee, broken chairs, bottles, cans and hypodermic needles everywhere. Bark had been stripped off the tree and nails were hammered into it trunk.*

Then God commanded, "Let the earth produce all kinds of plants, those that bear grain and those that bear fruit" – and it was done.

*We have begun to transform our graveyard into a beautiful church garden. The rubbish and brambles have been cleared away and the Sunday School have looked around the Hollybush Conservation Centre to see their ideas for a wildlife areas. Wild flowers are being planted so that our garden will be both good to look at and good for the local wildlife such as insects, spiders, mice and birds. At the bottom of the garden near the willow arch there is a bog garden which the Sunday School children are going to look after.*

Then God commanded, "Let the water be filled with many kinds of living beings, and let the air be filled with birds."

*In our church garden we already have planted some plants and hope to plant some trees to encourage more birds to live in the area. We are also hoping to make a series of small ponds to create habitats for frogs and toads.*

The God commanded, "Let the earth produce all kinds of animal life: domestic and wild, large and small" – and it was done.

*With the right environment insects and mini-beasts can live around the garden and some of them may even eat some of the plants in the garden and in turn these bugs could be eaten by other bugs!*

God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. By the seventh day God finished what He had been doing and stopped working. He blessed the seventh day and set it apart as a special day, because by that day He had completed his creation.

*Each Sunday we go to church and Sunday School. At the moment our chapel is being refurbished. Once it has been refurbished we will be able to fully enjoy the garden and our church.*

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### **Going batty in Barnstaple**

**Barnstaple Parish Church** developed a wildlife garden from a derelict area by clearing undergrowth and creating wildlife niches including bat and bird boxes designed by a church member and wood piles for insects. Additionally, a water butt and composter were donated and installed. Miss Mary Pearson, the co-ordinator of the work, reported that sixteen volunteers worked on the project and gained pride in their achievement and fellowship from working together. The church's children also planted some tubs at the front of their church using their own made compost as a contribution to Barnstaple in Bloom.

### **Wildlife, a 'slightly' wild meeting and wild acclaim** ([www.stchads.co.uk](http://www.stchads.co.uk))

Suzanne Dalton from **St Chad's Far Headingley** in Leeds writes about their churchyard conservation project:

*In May 2003, we invited representatives from the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT) to recommend improvements to our churchyard maintenance regime. This land (of several acres) is part of a "green corridor" in suburban north Leeds. They found that the close-mown grass in front of the church entrance contains several ancient and rare hay meadow species (evidence of former farmland). The YWT suggested that part of this area (with clearly defined edges) should grow until the end of summer. Our min-hay meadow flowered with a wonderful selection of grasses, Ox-Eye daisies and other species. The grasses are food for insects, including "brown" butterflies. Other areas of grass are cut at different settings, or left "rough". This gives a mosaic of habitats in the churchyard. A new nettle patch provides a food source for caterpillars and the compost heaps and piles of fallen branches are considered an integral part of the churchyard management scheme – not eye sores! The Youth Group made and monitors bird boxes, and constructed some hibernation dens. We have bird species lists in the church porch; parishioners are encouraged to add their sightings.*

*A "Geological Trail" leaflet identifies points of interest in the church and churchyard. From 2004 we plan to organise geological and general churchyard walks. Articles in the parish magazine keep the congregation in touch. There was some opposition from the "neat and tidy" brigade, and quite a lively PCC meeting, but the general response has been overwhelmingly supportive.*

St Chad's entered a YWT Living Churchyards Award 2 ½ months after beginning their project and were thrilled to receive a Highly Commended in the "Newcomer" category. The award was featured in their local paper.

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### **Pride and Perseverance in Ponteland** (and the importance of good signage!)

Our Minister recognised me as an Eco-enthusiast when he first met me – perhaps it was the wild disarray of my front garden set alongside neatly mown lawns and manicured flower beds of neighbouring houses. Would I be interested in the launch of Eco-Congregation and help to green the life of **Ponteland URC**? You bet I would. Would I like to contribute to the quarterly newsletter? Yes I'd try. And so our mission to green the life of our church began.

I wrote articles for the church magazine, got them approved by the Eco-Team and hoped to raise more than a giggle in response, and as time passed it became necessary to decide what we would do to achieve an Eco-award.

One of our church members had planted some flowers in an uninspiring patch of ground between the church and an access road to a car park. The Manse is on her road and the Minister's study window looks onto the area in question. Ill health caused our gardener to retire and I took on the role. Twenty nine species had been planted and I could still find fourteen of them and planted a further four varieties. A member of the congregation helped by cutting a meandering path through the area so the wild plants could be viewed. The next day there was an early morning phone call from the Minister, "Are you sitting down?" A newly appointed council worker had demonstrated his enthusiasm for grass cutting and the "wild life area" was mown short and flat – not a plant to be seen. Disaster.

We are not giving up – a sign has been erected informing passers by that the area is a special site for God's wild creation, a collection of new plants has been amassed and seeds have been sown. We eagerly await Spring to see the contribution of Mother Nature in our work.

*Miss Penny Hewitt*

### **Scruffy verge to community wildlife haven** ([www.stmarys-nunthorpe.org.uk](http://www.stmarys-nunthorpe.org.uk))

The transformation from the scruffy grass verge, which was littered with fast food packaging and dog mess, to a wildlife garden was miraculous. It all started at a meeting of the green group (the parish ecology group) where we were organising a litter pick for the car park and verge. Feeling that this was not the answer I suggested that we should make a long-term change to the car park as it was an eyesore and also repellent to wildlife.

To combat the problems we decided to plant a garden to encourage birds and insects. A parishioner who was taking a garden design course drew up a fantastic plan and a collection of people armed with spades gathered to put the plan into action by initially removing the litter and turf. The project escalated as, due to its content we had to remove the top layer of soil. Many supported the project with time, plants and money, including Christian Ecology Link who provided a small grant. The planting took two days, aided for one day by pupils from Nunthorpe Primary School. Once the garden was finished signs were made asking people not to walk across it or let their dog foul it.

The garden is a tremendous success, not only has it provided a valuable habitat for wildlife but has brought the community together and spread the message that God's environment is important for a younger generation.

*Jennie Adams **St Mary the Virgin, Nunthorpe in Cleveland***

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### **Building homes for birds**

The Girls Brigade of **Christ Church Ross-on-Wye Methodist/United Reformed Church** constructed a number of bird boxes and installed them in the garden of a local home for the elderly to bring much pleasure to residents.

The youth group of **Trinity United Reformed Church, Wigan** invited two local wardens to an evening session to tell them about birds and nesting. The youngsters then wielded hammers and nails to create six nest boxes fit for a variety of bird families. Whilst not sure of the theological implications, the boxes were erected on Good Friday – a poignant process involving hammering nails into wood. The church was rewarded with the sight of a pair of blue tits who must have reserved their home straight away and had moved in within three weeks.

The brownies at **Dalbeattie Parish Church** were helped to build nest boxes for birds by a local RSPB member. He had put together a flat pack for each one with pre-drilled holes, so that each six could put their own together using screws. The boxes were put up in the church grounds. The brownies and Sunday School also had a sunflower growing competition in the church grounds. The resulting seeds were used to feed the birds at their feeding station.

### **Trees for the Community**

**Zion United Reformed Church, Northallerton** only have small churchyard so they chose to extend their environmental work as a gift for the wider community. Two initial projects were undertaken:

- ◆ The church initiated the planting of bulbs, plants and eleven trees at a local nursing home for the elderly, with assistance from the Head Teacher and five pupils from the Applegarth Junior School.
- ◆ The Church planted 200 native trees along the banks of a beck adjacent to a football pitch to act as both a windbreak and wildlife haven. The planting was helped by the local ATC whose Chaplain is Zion's minister.

Both projects were part-funded by a grant from their District Council and both ventures have fostered the good relations between the church and a number of community groups.

### **Winter work, Spring beauty**

The environmental group of **St Matthew and St James, Mossley Hill, Liverpool**, worked over a number of months to restore the Victorian woodland garden around their church. They planted over 1500 bulbs (snowdrops, narcissi and fritillaries and alliums) purchased with a grant from Merseyside Environmental Trust, sited compost heaps and have formed paths through the newly accessible woodland area. Their next task is to sow a mixture of grass and wildflower seeds to establish a meadow area.

### **Garden ministry**

**St Pancras Roman Catholic Church** is situated centrally in Lewes, Sussex, enclosed by a small walled garden. A member of the church's green team works to conserve and enhance the value of the garden as a wildlife haven, as well as providing a place for outdoor fellowship and occasional worship.

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### **Ideas and initiatives**

#### **Planting trees for special events**

- Eco-Congregation was dedicated to God at St Paul's Cathedral on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2000. To mark the occasion, a weeping mulberry tree was planted in the Cathedral garden as a symbol of the role of Eco-Congregation to help and encourage churches to care for God's creation in both practical and spiritual ways. If you visit St Paul's, do look for the tree and make your own dedication.

Christian Ecology Link has produced a leaflet entitled 'Planting Trees for Special Events'. The leaflet includes the following stories:

- to celebrate baby Eleanor's Baptism, an apricot tree was planted in her family's garden in Ripon. Eleanor and the tree are growing together
- to commemorate their Confirmation, a group of young people in Reading planted a tree in the churchyard after the service. The Bishop helped to dig the hole
- in 1990, members of Christian Ecology Link planted an oak tree in the grounds of High Leigh after the final Communion Service at that year's Conference
- in thanksgiving for Jack's life, a donation to the Woodland Trust (contact details in the directory of useful organisations at the end of this module) helps to maintain a grove of chestnut trees in Sussex

What events are coming up in the life of your church that you would like to collectively remember by planting a tree?

Would any members of your church like to plant a tree to mark a significant event?

**Contact:** CEL, 3, Bond Street, Lancaster, LA1 3ER, UK.  
Tel: 01524 33858, Email: [info@christian-ecology.org.uk](mailto:info@christian-ecology.org.uk),  
Website: [www.christian-ecology.org.uk](http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk),

#### **The Yew Tree for the Millennium Project**

Yew trees are a familiar sight in churchyards. Research has shown that whilst many are comparatively young, some pre-date the church that they live in the shadow of and in places have been found to be between 2,000 and 4,000 years old. The Conservation Foundation, which promotes a number of positive environmental ventures, devised a programme to take cuttings from yew trees that were attested to be 2000 years old or older, and hence alive in the time of Christ. These were propagated and distributed at special services held in Cathedrals and other places from Autumn 1999 to Spring 2000, for planting in churchyards. The programme has been an overwhelming success, with more than 7,000 yew saplings planted as a symbol of hope for the new millennium. Following the success of this project, the Conservation Foundation has initiated a follow-up 'Parish Pump' scheme. Through this scheme churches are encouraged to undertake a variety of conservation initiatives.

**Contact:** The Conservation Foundation, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR  
Tel: 020 7591, 3111 Fax: 020 7591 3110, Email: [info@conservationfoundation.co.uk](mailto:info@conservationfoundation.co.uk)  
Website: [www.conservationfoundation.co.uk](http://www.conservationfoundation.co.uk)

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### **A Quiet Garden...**

The garden may be viewed alongside the church or chapel as a place to meet God and also to appreciate the beauty of the earth. The gospels record that Jesus valued finding moments of quiet to approach his Father in prayer. He did so during his busy lakeside ministry around Galilee and most poignantly in the Garden of Gethsemane as he prepared for the hour that was coming. The garden was also the place where Mary of Magdala became the first person to meet the risen Christ. Could a quiet corner be set aside around your church as a place of prayer for the church and local community?

The Quiet Garden Ministry was established in 1992 with the opening of the first Quiet Garden in Buckinghamshire. In 1994 the Quiet Garden Trust was established to promote places where people could come for prayer, silence and reflection. For more information and guidance about quiet gardens or to join their network, contact the Quiet Garden Trust at the address below.

The Remembrance Quiet Garden at Haydon Bridge, Northumberland came into being when a new Methodist Church was built on the site of the old.

*“On Easter Day 1998 as we gathered for worship for the first time, I looked out of the window and saw a mass of rubble outside”, writes Dorothy Taylor. “This concerned me, but the church had no money to do anything about it immediately. As I prayed I felt God calling me to channel my grief of losing my dear husband into something positive and turn the rubble into a Remembrance Garden. By our official opening in September the rubble had been transformed into a beautiful garden, with two lovely seats provided by my daughter, in memory of dear family members.”*

*“I was led into the Quiet Garden ministry by the local Anglican vicar’s wife, who approached me when looking at the garden. I am sure God used her as a further step in His plan. I now have a team of five who pray together that we will be used by God in this ministry.”*

**“Come with me by yourself to a quiet place and get some rest”**

Mark 6:31

**Contact:** The Quiet Garden Trust, Stoke Park Farm, Park Road, Stoke Poges  
Buckinghamshire SL2 4PG  
Tel: 01753 643050, Fax: 01753 643081,  
Email: [quiet.garden@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:quiet.garden@ukonline.co.uk) Website: [www.quietgarden.co.uk](http://www.quietgarden.co.uk)

### **Sacred Land Project**

The Sacred Land Project was a millennium celebration project running from 1997 to 2002. It was sponsored by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-UK) and involves all major religions. In the UK, the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) has continued the Sacred Land Project, helping communities to recover and improve ancient and sometimes lost sites throughout Britain, undertake environmental enhancement of sacred sites still in use and create new sacred/special places, particularly in urban areas. Currently they are working mainly in Manchester and on the Cistercian way in Wales, but they are open to ideas from other communities.

**Contact:** The Sacred Land Project, ARC, 3 Wynnstay Grove, Manchester. M14 6XG  
Tel: 0161 248 5731, Fax: 0161 248 5736, Email: [info@arcworld.org](mailto:info@arcworld.org)  
Website: [www.arcworld.org/projects.asp?projectId=9](http://www.arcworld.org/projects.asp?projectId=9)

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### Green Burials

#### **The Arbory Trust – Woodland Burials**

The Arbory Trust in the Ely Diocese of the Church of England has been established to meet the growing demand for Christian woodland burial sites. The Trust, which adopted the slogan 'Go wild when you die', has purchased a 40 acre field with plots for up to 2000 people. People may opt to have their body or ashes buried in a cardboard or wooden coffin or casket, that will biodegrade relatively quickly. The use of preservatives is discouraged. Graves are marked by a wooden plaque instead of a gravestone and a register of names together with a location map of plots is kept at a memorial lodge on the site. Following burial, the site is planted with saplings leading to the creation of a mixed deciduous woodland.

Compared with conventional burials, 'Green' or 'Woodland' burials save the use of gravestones that are often imported from quarries thousands of miles away, and convert land into a place of peace, beauty and a sanctuary for wildlife. Compared with cremation, they save on energy use and offer an intimate and peaceful site for burial and a place that can readily be revisited. They also encourage people to choose coffins or caskets that are readily biodegradable and can cost less money than many conventional funerals. Choosing a green burial is a fitting legacy to leave for future generations.

**Contact:** The Arbory Trust, Bishop Woodford House, Barton Road, Ely, Cambridge CB7 4DX Tel 01223 303874 Web: [www.arborytrust.org](http://www.arborytrust.org)

#### **Story from Baldernock: caring for the earth through life and death**

**Baldernock Parish Church** is a two hundred year old building on a medieval site of Christian worship in a semi-rural location six miles from the centre of Glasgow. The picturesque church has an attached graveyard. The combination of needing to extend the existing burial provision for the parish and the church's participation in Eco-Congregation, stimulated members of the congregation to explore the possibility of having provision for 'green burials'. Initially the Church initiated a parish survey through the local Community Council to discover if residents would value provision for a 'green burial' option alongside the conventional personal plot with a gravestone. One third of the parish responded with 80% indicating that they would welcome the availability of a 'green burial' option.

As a consequence, an approach was made to East Dunbartonshire Council where the appropriate department expressed interest and subsequently allocated part of a new and large cemetery being developed for the densely populated adjoining area, for meadowland burial. With meadowland burial the site is managed with a mowing regime to promote the growth of native wildflowers. Now the council has plans to extend the existing cemetery at Baldernock Church. The congregation and parish are working hard to ensure that this extension will also have an area designated for meadowland burial, especially as the chosen site is on a hillside rising above the church and they believe that a traditional cemetery with upright shiny gravestones would be an eyesore in what is otherwise an area of outstanding natural beauty.

For details of existing green burial sites contact:

**The Natural Death Centre**, 12a Blackstock Mews, Blackstock Road, London N4 2BT  
Tel: 0871 288 2098, Fax: 020 7354 3831, Website: [www.naturaldeath.org.uk](http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk)

# Module 9 – **planting and conserving eden**

## **Wildlife facts and trends**

In Britain many of the lowland meadows that once danced with nature's tapestry of flowers have been lost through intensification of agricultural practice. In urban areas, many gardens have been replaced with parking spaces and development has squeezed out many green spaces. Even roadside trees are threatened by the regular digging of service trenches with inevitable root destruction. Within this picture, churches and the land around them are an important haven for wildlife.

- Many of the 15 species of bats in Britain have declined in number in recent years and some are now extremely rare
- The Holly Blue Butterfly is found in many churchyards because its main food plants are the holly and the ivy, which are often found together around churches
- Between 1945 and 1990 over 700,000 Ha (1,730,000 acres) of rural land were urbanised. This is an area larger than Greater London, Berkshire, Hertfordshire and Oxfordshire combined. The trend is continuing
- 300 of the 1700 species of lichens in Britain are found only in graveyards
- Between 1969 and 1993 the population of 19 species of birds including the corncrake and capercaillie fell by over half
- Between 1947 and 1993 418,000 km (260,000 miles), which represents over half of our nations hedgerows, were grubbed up
- Once common birds like the house sparrow and skylark have dramatically declined in numbers over the past 25 years. The fall in the skylark has been linked to switching from spring to autumn sowing resulting in crops that are less suitable for nesting
- The number of farmland birds fell by 42% and woodland birds by 15% in the period from 1970 to 2002. Farmland bird populations increased by 5 per cent between 1998 and 2002. Woodland birds decreased by 3 per cent over the same period.
- It is not all bad news for the numbers of some bird species increased. These include (with the likely explanation): red kite (reintroduction, nest protection), marsh harrier and osprey (protection from human persecution), bitterns (management and creation of reedbeds), sparrow hawk (recovery from pesticide poisoning effects during the 1960's as a consequence of regulation/legislation)

The above could be used to set the scene for churches or used in magazine articles!

## **For peat's sake**

Peat bogs are valuable ecological habitats formed from decomposing plant material over hundreds or thousands of years. In recent decades drainage initiatives and strip mining have resulted in the loss of 94% of peat land. Gardeners account for around 70% of peat use. However, there are alternatives to peat available for horticultural use. The Wildlife Trusts have produced a free guide "**For Peat's Sake, where to buy peat-free products**" giving details of which peat-free products can be found in the major national chain stores. The guide can be downloaded from their website.

**Contact:** The Wildlife Trusts, The Kiln, Waterside, Mather Road, Newark, Nottinghamshire, NG24 1WT. Tel. 0870 036 7711  
Email: [enquiry@wildlifetrusts.org](mailto:enquiry@wildlifetrusts.org), Website: [www.wildlifetrusts.org](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org)

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## Further Resources

*New Natural Death Handbook* available from the Natural Death Centre, 12a Blackstock Mews, Blackstock Road, London N4 2BT Tel: 0871 288 2098, Fax: 020 7354 3831, Website; [www.naturaldeath.org.uk](http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk) Price £14.99. The book contains descriptions of more than 120 woodland burial grounds and has advice about arranging a green funeral.

*Responsible Care for Churchyards* ISBN 0-7151-7564-5 Publ. Church House Publishing £1.25

*Wildlife in Church and Churchyard: plants, animals and their management* Nigel Cooper, 1995. London, Church House Publishing, for the Council for the Care of Churches. ISBN 0-7151-7574-2 £6.95

Church House Publishing books are available from Church House Bookshop, 31 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BN Tel 020 7799 4064 Fax 020 7340 9997 Email [bookshop@c-of-e.org.uk](mailto:bookshop@c-of-e.org.uk) Website [www.chbookshop.co.uk](http://www.chbookshop.co.uk)

Good websites for information on managing churchyards for conservation include:

[www.caringforgodsacre.co.uk](http://www.caringforgodsacre.co.uk)

[www.yorkshire-wildlife-trust.org.uk/livingChurchyards.htm](http://www.yorkshire-wildlife-trust.org.uk/livingChurchyards.htm)

*For a variety of leaflets on gardening for wildlife including planting, ponds, bird feeders, bird boxes and a free guide to the birds in your garden, contact:*

RSPB Wildlife Enquiries, The Lodge, Potton Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL. Tel: 01767 693690 Email: [wildlife@rspb.org.uk](mailto:wildlife@rspb.org.uk) Web: [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)

*For other leaflets on gardening for wildlife including gardening for butterflies and how to encourage nature's predators for natural pest control, contact:*

Scottish Natural Heritage, Great Glen House, Leachkin Road, Inverness, IV3 8NW Tel: 0146 725000 Fax: 01463 725067 Email: [enquiries@snh.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@snh.gov.uk), Web: [www.snh.org.uk](http://www.snh.org.uk)

## A directory of **useful organisations**

### **A Rocha International**

3 Hooper Street, Cambridge CB1 2NZ Tel/Fax: 01387 710286 Email: [international@arocha.org](mailto:international@arocha.org) Web: [www.arocha.org](http://www.arocha.org)

### **Bat Conservation Trust,**

15 Cloisters House, 8 Battersea Park Road, London SW8 4BG Tel: 0845 1300 228 Fax: 020 7627 2628 Email: [enquiries@bat.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@bat.org.uk) Web: [www.bats.org.uk](http://www.bats.org.uk)

### **British Butterfly Conservation Society,**

Manor Yard, East Lulworth, nr. Wareham, Dorset BH20 5QP Tel: 0870 774 4309 Fax: 0870 7706150 Email: [info@butterfly-conservation.org](mailto:info@butterfly-conservation.org) Web: [www.butterfly-conservation.org](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org)

**British Lichen Society** (issues a 'Lichens in Churchyards' leaflet), c/o Dept. of Botany, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD Email: [bls@nhm.ac.uk](mailto:bls@nhm.ac.uk) Web: [www.thebls.org.uk](http://www.thebls.org.uk) (this includes information on churchyard lichens)

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### **British Trust for Conservation Volunteers,**

Sedum House, Mallard Way, Potteric Carr, Doncaster DN4 8DB

Tel: 01302 388 888

Email: [information@btcv.org.uk](mailto:information@btcv.org.uk) Web: [www.btcv.org.uk](http://www.btcv.org.uk)

### **British Trust for Conservation Volunteers Wales - Gwarchodwyr Cefn Gwlad, Wales**

Regional Office, The Conservation Centre, Forest Farm Road, Whitchurch, Cardiff CF14 7JJ

Tel: 029 2052 0990 Fax: 029 2052 2181 Email: [wales@btcv.org.uk](mailto:wales@btcv.org.uk)

### **The Council for the Care of Churches** (which issues leaflets on bats in churches),

Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3NZ

Tel: 020 7898 1866 Fax: 020 7898 1881

Email: [enquiries.ccb@c-of-e.org.uk](mailto:enquiries.ccb@c-of-e.org.uk) Web: [www.churchcare.co.uk](http://www.churchcare.co.uk)

### **Natural England** Northminster House, Northminster, Peterborough PE1 1UA

Tel: 0845 600 3078 Fax: 01733 455103

Email: [enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk) Web: [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)

### **Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group,**

Stoneleigh Park, Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV8 2RX

Tel: 02476 696 699 Fax: 02476 696760 Email: [info@fwag.org.uk](mailto:info@fwag.org.uk) Web: [www.fwag.org.uk](http://www.fwag.org.uk)

### **Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens**, (a network with mailings & details of funding).

The Greenhouse, Hereford Street, Bristol BS3 4NA

Tel: 0117 923 1800 Fax: 0117 923 1900 Web: [www.farmgarden.org.uk](http://www.farmgarden.org.uk)

### **Groundwork UK**

Lockside, 5 Scotland Street, Birmingham B1 2RR Tel 0121 236 8565 Fax 0121 236 7356

Email: [info@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:info@groundwork.org.uk) Web: [www.groundwork.org.uk](http://www.groundwork.org.uk)

### **Groundwork Wales**

20 Centre Court, Treforest Industrial Estate, Treforest, Pontypridd, CF37 5YR

Tel: 01443 844866 Fax: 01443 844822

Web: [www.groundworkwales.org.uk](http://www.groundworkwales.org.uk)

### **Henry Doubleday Research Association (HDRA)** now called Garden Organic

Ryton Organic Gardens, Coventry CV8 3LG Tel 024 7630 3517 Fax 024 7663 9229

Email: [enquiry@hdra.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@hdra.org.uk) Web: [www.gardenorganic.org.uk](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk)

### **Natural Death Centre** (a charitable project with information on burial gardens, cardboard coffins, inexpensive funerals, living wills and advance funeral wishes)

12a Blackstock Mews, Blackstock Road, London N4 2BT

Tel: 0871 288 2098, Fax: 020 7354 3831, Website; [www.naturaldeath.org.uk](http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk)

Email: [mike@naturaldeath.org.uk](mailto:mike@naturaldeath.org.uk) Web: [www.naturaldeath.org.uk](http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk)

### **Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB),**

RSPB Wildlife Enquiries, The Lodge, Potton Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL.

Tel: 01767 693690 Email: [wildlife@rspb.org.uk](mailto:wildlife@rspb.org.uk) Web: [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)

RSPB Wales Headquarters, The RSPB, Sutherland House, Castlebridge, Cowbridge Road East, Cardiff. CF11 9AB

Tel: 029 2035 3000 Email: [cymru@rspb.org.uk](mailto:cymru@rspb.org.uk) Web: [www.rspb.org.uk/wales](http://www.rspb.org.uk/wales)

### **The Wildlife Trusts National UK Office**

The Kiln, Waterside, Mather Road, Newark Notts NG24 1WT

Tel 0870 036 7711 Fax 0870 036 0101

Email: [enquiry@wildlifetrusts.org](mailto:enquiry@wildlifetrusts.org) Web: [www.wildlifetrusts.org.uk](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org.uk)

### **The Woodland Trust:**

The Woodland Trust, Autumn Park, Dysart Road, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 6LL

Tel 01476 581111 Fax 01476 590808

Email: [enquiries@woodland-trust.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@woodland-trust.org.uk) Web: [www.woodland-trust.org.uk](http://www.woodland-trust.org.uk)

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## **Local Environmental Bodies**

In many areas there are local environmental bodies that have resources and may be able to help with both practical advice to plan and sometimes even to implement schemes. For example, in Scotland, **Forth Environment Link** serves the Stirling area and seeks to work with a number of local bodies including schools and churches, offering education resources and opportunities, practical advice and support.

Libraries often have details of environmental organisations working locally. For those in the Stirling area contact: Forth Environment Link, 7 Stirling Business Centre, Wellgreen Place, Stirling, FK8 2DZ. Tel 01786 449215

Email [resources@forthenvironmentlink.org](mailto:resources@forthenvironmentlink.org) Website [www.forthenvironmentlink.org](http://www.forthenvironmentlink.org)

## **About Eco-Congregation**

Eco-Congregation is an ecumenical environmental project for churches in Britain and Ireland. It provides free resources, support and an Award scheme to help churches to consider environmental issues in the context of their Christian life and mission and to take positive action. Eco-Congregation was originally developed by the environmental charity ENCAMS on behalf of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI). It is now overseen by CTBI and delivered by a partnership of organisations.

In England, Eco-Congregation is managed by A Rocha UK and supported by a grant from the Methodist Relief and Development Fund. The office base is at:  
Groundworks Sheffield, The Innovation Centre,  
217 Portobello, Sheffield, S1 4DP

Tel: 0114 263 6421

Email: [ecocongregation@arocha.org](mailto:ecocongregation@arocha.org)

Web: [www.ecocongregation.org/englandwales](http://www.ecocongregation.org/englandwales)

In Scotland, Eco-Congregation is managed and delivered through a partnership between Keep Scotland Beautiful (an Associated company of ENCAMS) and the Society, Religion and Technology Project (SRT) of the Church of Scotland. It is endorsed by Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) and is supported financially by the Scottish Executive's Sustainable Action Fund. Contact

Tel: +44 (0)131 556 2953

Email: [ecocongregation@srt.org.uk](mailto:ecocongregation@srt.org.uk)

Web: [www.ecocongregation.org/scotland](http://www.ecocongregation.org/scotland)

Churches in Wales are supported by Eco-Congregation based at Groundworks Sheffield.