

## Growing Point

*Garden lessons in the Bible*

### Week 3: Tilling and Keeping the Garden

*The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. - Genesis 2:15 NRSV*

In Genesis, God told Adam and Eve to till *and* keep the garden of Eden. This was Adam and Eve's job. It is **our job** too. Sometimes today, we call this job environmental stewardship. But, what does it mean to till and keep the earth?

God did not just say till. And God did not just say keep. **God said both till *and* keep.** So, to understand our job, we need to understand what both of these words mean.

**Till** can also be described as **work, care for, or serve.** *Work* means to move or manipulate the soil to meet our needs – in our case, grow food. *Care for* suggests we need to be careful, and that if we aren't, bad things can happen to the earth. When you *serve*, you are not in charge and you do not set the rules. Instead, you do things in a way that will benefit whomever or whatever you are serving. So, when we till the earth we should move the soil around carefully in ways that will benefit the earth.

**Keep** includes the concepts of **preserve and watch.** *Preserve* means do not destroy. If we care for and serve the earth, we will preserve it. *Watch* means to be observant – with all your senses. Know the soil well. Watch how it is different from one place to another. Watch what plants like what kind of soil. Watch how and if different actions change the soil. Watch what happens to the plants when the soil changes.

Use what you learn to guide how you work the soil so that you do it in a way that will care for, serve and preserve it. Be a good gardener and till and keep the earth.

## Soul Water

*Nurturing your soul through prayer*

Nurturing God,  
Thank you for gardens.  
Thank you for their beauty.  
Thank you for the food they provide for us.

God, you tell us that it is our job to till and keep the garden.  
If we do not till and keep the garden, the soil will not be happy.  
If the soil is not happy, the plants won't be happy.  
If the plants aren't happy, they won't provide any yummy food for us to eat.

We are good gardeners.  
We till and keep the garden, just as Adam and Eve did in Genesis.  
We till the soil.  
We move it carefully in ways that will make plants grow well in it.  
We keep the soil.  
We watch it and learn from what we see, hear, smell, feel and taste.  
We use what we learn to guide how we work the soil.

Amen

### Ideas

- Keep this prayer on your dinner table and say together before you eat this week.
- Use this prayer in conjunction with bedtime prayers.
- If you have a garden at home, share this prayer before you work in your garden together.
- Write your own prayers about tilling and keeping the earth.

## Seeds for Thought

*Additional Resources to Nurture Soil & Soul*

Week 3: Tending the Garden

### Questions to Ponder

- What kind of soil do you think vegetable plants like best – sand, clay, or black soil? Why?
- Get to know the soil in your yard. Observe it. Look at it. Feel it. Smell it. Is it the same all over the yard or are some areas different?
- If your soil is too sandy for the plants you want to grow, how do you think you could care for and work it to make the plants happier? What if it has too much clay in it?
- What types of things can you do to care for and keep the garden? What could you do that would hurt the soil in the garden?
- Where does soil come from? Think about what happens to big rocks over time. Think about what happens to all the leaves in the fall. Think about what happens to your kitchen scraps. Think about what happens to plastic bags. Think about what worms and sow bugs do.
- God calls us to tend and keep the garden of Eden – the whole earth. What are some ways that you could care for and preserve the earth?
- MCC has solar panels and it collects rain water in giant rain barrels. How do you think these practices care for and preserve the earth?
- What is one thing that you could change at your house that would help your family do an even better job caring for and preserving the earth?

## Snack Recipe

### Sautéed Radishes

8 bunches of radishes, all colors and sizes

3 T. butter

2 T. Garlic chopped

4 T. chopped chives

1. Clean radishes.
2. Cut off the upper leaves and coarsely chop them.
3. Cut off the remaining greens and roots and toss them.
4. Cut radishes in quarters.
5. Heat butter in a large skillet over medium high.
6. Add radishes. Cook about 2 minutes.
7. Stir in greens, garlic and chives.
8. Cook until wilted (about one minute).
9. Season with salt and pepper.
10. Serve on a pita or a cracker.

# Earth Explorations

*Nurturing Connections to the Soil*

## Week 3: Tending the Garden

### Build Your Own Worm Composter

(reprinted from the Salt Lake Tribune  
[www.sltrib.com/athome/ci\\_9381044](http://www.sltrib.com/athome/ci_9381044))

Here's an idea: Start a project with the kids that will teach them something important about how the Earth sustains itself. Set up a container for vermicomposting.

Vermicomposting turns kitchen waste into compost. You put worms in a container, provide the right environment, then toss your leftovers in with them.

Why vermicomposting? It reduces waste. It makes you more mindful of how much you throw away. It's a project the whole family can do together. And in a few months, you'll have compost for your garden.

### What you need

**Worms:** Regular earthworms don't do the trick; for this, you need red wiggler worms. You'll find them at garden and supply stores that focus on organic gardening, or you can order them online (WormWoman.com sells a pound of worms - that's about 1,000 of them - for \$19, including shipping.)

**A plastic container:** One that's 16-by-20 inches is best. Make sure the lid is tight.

**A drill:** To drill holes in the container.

**Old newspapers:** To shred and fill the container.

**Soil:** To fill the container.

**A cool, dark place:** To store the container. A kitchen cabinet is perfect.

### How to start

Drill a few holes in your container so air can get in. After all, the worms have to breathe. Use a small drill bit so the worms can't crawl right through them. Drill a row of holes - spaced every couple of inches - around the sides of the bin, about 3 inches from the top.

Place a couple of inches of soil along the bottom of the container.

Tear up some old newspapers - shred them into long, thin strips - and place them in the bottom of the container. The paper needs to be moist, so spray or drip water on the pieces until every strip is damp. Fill up the container with damp newspaper until it's about two-thirds full.

Add the worms. Pour them in. A pound is perfect for a container this size.

Add a couple of inches of "dry" newspaper strips on top. Now what?

### Putting Your Worms to Work

You're ready to put your worms to work. Put about a pound of food scraps into the container every five to seven days. (Start out with less the first couple of weeks, just to give your worms a chance to feel at home.) Each time you do this, you'll push aside the newspaper bedding to make a space, deposit the scraps, then cover them over again with paper. Add some dry paper as needed on the top.

### What to compost?

Worms eat such things as eggshells, banana peels, orange peels, coffee grounds (and filters), plate scrapings and leftovers. They "don't" eat meat, bones, dairy products or oils and sauces.

It'll take six to nine months for you to have a decent amount of compost. That's when you can dump out the container's contents and separate the worms from the compost.