



Spirit & Place Festival

# NATURE

## 2025 THEME

The phenomena we call “nature” includes plants, insects, animals, and everything living thing in between. Sometimes we call it Mother Nature, the environment, or wilderness.

But Nature (with a capital “N”) is the whole system of existence, arrangement, forces, and events not controlled by humankind. Let’s call that the Universe or Creation.

Fascinatingly, nature also refers to something – or someone’s – basic and inherent features. Their character, essence, or substance.

**Whether exploring the literal aspects of nature such as earth, wind, fire, and water, or deeply philosophical or religious ideas about “human nature” or “the nature of . . .” the theme of NATURE welcomes you to delve into the elements of life.**

Using the arts, humanities, and religion, Spirit & Place encourages you to explore the theme with a broad lens and to create moments of reflection, delight, and wonder for our Central Indiana community.

## THEME PROMPTS

### Synonyms for Nature

- Mother Nature
- Creation
- Environment
- Elements (water, wind, fire, earth)
- Land, Landscape
- Wilderness
- Countryside
- The Universe
- Essence
- Character
- Classification
- Species

## OUR CIVIC TOOLS

### Arts

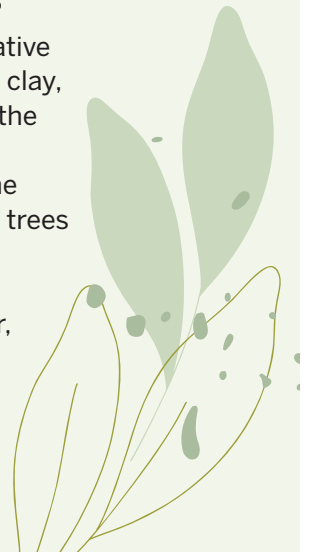
When combined, art and nature allow us to examine the natural world through a unique lens that not only inspires the artist, but creates moments of connection and understanding for those engaged with the art.

- Artists across cultures and centuries have amplified the natural world through their work. In what ways is today’s art amplifying messages about nature?
- Artists often use nature in their creative process. How does the use of wood, clay, water, graphite and even fire shape the creative process?
- How does the movement of wind, the flow of water, and the rootedness of trees inspire and inform artmaking?
- How have artists, past and present, used nature as tools, subject matter, or inspiration?



INDIANA UNIVERSITY INDIANAPOLIS  
**SPRIT & PLACE**

SPRIT & PLACE IS A COMMUNITY  
INITIATIVE HOUSED ON THE  
CAMPUS OF IU INDIANAPOLIS.





## HUMANITIES

Combining the cultural and natural worlds is a way to engage others in deep reflection on what it means to be human in the world – both philosophically as well as ethically and morally as stewards of the natural world. The humanities can also help us tackle “the nature of . . .” a myriad of questions and concerns people are eager to grapple with in meaningful ways.

- How might poetry and literature be used to delve into our relationship with the environment?
- How do different cultures relate to nature?
- What lessons can we learn from nature regarding adaptation, systems, and emergence?
- How can the environmental humanities help us understand our beliefs, values, and choices when addressing the climate crisis?

## RELIGION

Almost all the world’s religions address the Earth’s creation and view that creation – nature – as an act of divinity. Sacred scriptures and teachings have a lot to say regarding our interactions with and responsibilities toward nature.

- What do the world’s religions teach about nature and why does it matter?
- Do sacred teachings on nature across traditions share commonalities? What are their differences?
- How have religious traditions and theologies affected our view of nature?
- How might spiritually inspired music, visual art, dance, and theater connect us to nature?



**Fire** shows that sometimes things have to burn to make new growth possible. **Water** reflects, not only the birthing of new beans, but also new ways of being. **Earth** provides a material connection to deep time and origins of all life. **Air** brings us closer to our ancestors and the spirit world so that we can manifest that which is yet to be imagined. Together the elements teach us about regenerative and intergenerational cycles of life.

— IMAGINING AMERICA 2023  
CALL FOR PROPOSALS



## FUTURE FESTIVAL THEMES

**2025** — Nature  
**2026** — Connections  
**2027** — Wonder

Application guidelines for the 2025 Spirit & Place Festival will be released in January and event applications will be due in late spring. Contact [festival@iu.edu](mailto:festival@iu.edu) to learn more or visit [spiritandplace.org](https://spiritandplace.org).