NATURE

Surveys from the 2024 Spirit & Place Festival asked attendees to share what they thought of when considering the NATURE theme.



Concrete Examples & Senses

Concrete examples of things found in nature dominated the responses. **Trees, flowers, animals, butterflies, forests, stars, lakes, streams, rain, sunshine, air, and even fungi** were mentioned repeatedly. So were the **five senses**: Smell (dirt, wet grass, flowers), sight (seasonal color changes), sound (forest sounds, flowing water), touch (bark, smooth stones), and taste (plant-based foods). Going deep on a single "something" found in nature might be a good way to structure an approachable public event that leans into (sense) memories and emotions people feel towards nature. (And for those who loved the NOURISH theme, exploring indigenous, foraged, and place-based foods – Upland persimmon? – could be a lot of fun.)

Beauty, Peace, & Spirituality

The words **beauty** and **peace** appeared numerous times. People feel in awe of nature's beauty and experience a deep inner peace when presented with the wonders of the natural world. Many expressed these sentiments in a **religious or spiritual** way (e.g., "glories of creation," "God is in all things," "beauty of God's world," "God's handiwork," etc.). Faith communities and artists might find success if they collaborate to create exhibits and events that showcase the reverence and amazement found in nature.

The Outdoors, Parks, & Green Spaces

Hiking at Eagle Creek, strolling through Garfield Park, kayaking on White River, walking through labyrinths, gardening, and otherwise **being outside** was mentioned in a variety of ways. ("Being outdoors in the elements with zero technology.") Planning outdoor events in November is a risk, but **trails, walking, hiking and outdoor spaces** resonate with the public and data backs this up: Outdoor festival events – even in cold/wet weather – have never failed to attract an audience!

Philosophical

While many concrete examples were given in the survey, several people had more philosophical responses. NATURE made them think about:

- Something that is bigger than me, but that I am a part of.
- What true meaning is for a human being and to connect with humans.
- Human nature.
- Nature reminds me I am not the center of the universe. I am a small part of a big creation. I am in community just by being alive.
- The setting and environment of a community. Emotions. Practices. Beliefs.
- Greek notion of physis.

Events examining the nature of . . . "something" have an audience appeal. Individuals drawn to these kinds of events might also be the ones who prefer lectures and panel conversations more than hands-on events.

Climate Change & Creation Care

Not surprisingly, several responses mentioned the **global warming/climate crisis** and the need for more **preservation and conservation efforts.** As referenced above, spiritually minded individuals also wrote about **God's creation.** There is a strong opening here for congregations and others to explore the idea of **Creation Care** and the interconnectedness of religion and environmentalism.