

“It is the people who must save the environment. It is the people who must make their leaders change. And we cannot be intimidated. So we must stand up for what we believe in.” – Wangari Maathai

PLANTING IDEAS



International Action Guide

For the documentary:

‘Taking Root: the Vision of Wangari Maathai’

We hope that you are as inspired as we are by Wangari Maathai. Her love for Kenya, her stewardship of the environment, and her holistic approach to change compelled us to make this film.

This guide is meant to honor you and the knowledge that you hold about your community, region and nation. We’ve included a variety of ideas. Use what seems most promising for you.

- Filmmakers Lisa Merton and Alan Dater

About the Film

Produced and directed by Alan Dater and Lisa Merton, 'Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai' weaves a compelling and dramatic narrative of one woman's role in the turbulent political and environmental history of her country. Founder of the Green Belt Movement that began in Kenya, Wangari Maathai was the first environmentalist and first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Maathai discovered her life's work by reconnecting with the rural women with whom she had grown up. They told her they were walking long distances for firewood, clean water was scarce, the soil was disappearing from their fields, and their children were suffering from malnutrition. "Well, why not plant trees?" Maathai suggested. These women found themselves working successively against deforestation, poverty, ignorance, hunger, embedded economic interests, and government corruption, until they became a national political force that helped bring down Kenya's 24-year dictatorship. 'Taking Root' is an awe-inspiring profile of Maathai's courageous journey to protect the integrally connected issues of the environment, human rights, and democracy.

For more information, go to www.takingrootfilm.com

International Edition DVDs and Partners

In 2011, work began on a project to translate 'Taking Root' into 22 languages and get it into the hands of grassroots environmental activists all over the world. In the same year, Wangari Maathai passed away, making the film an even more essential means of carrying on her work.

'Taking Root' is currently available on an **International DVD** with soundtracks dubbed in **Spanish, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole** as well as in the original English. A DVD with soundtracks in Arabic, French, and Kiswahili will be available in the fall of 2012, with editions in Hindi, Chinese, Indonesian, Russian, and Bengali to follow.

International Partners are grassroots organizations that use the film to inspire community environmental work. They may also serve as regional distributors to similar organizations.

For more information on becoming an International Partner and/or multi-language DVDs, contact: takingrootfilm@gmail.com.

The Green Belt Movement

The Green Belt Movement is a highly successful grassroots organization that encourages rural women and families to plant trees and address local issues in community groups. Based in Kenya, its mission is to mobilize community consciousness – using tree planting as an entry point – for self-determination, equity, improved livelihoods and security, environmental conservation, and related issues such as good governance and human rights. Wangari Maathai founded the movement in 1977 to address the challenges of deforestation, soil erosion, and lack of water by the simple act of planting trees. By protecting the environment, people are made powerful champions in the sustainable management of scarce resources such as water, nutritious food, equitable economic development, good political governance, and ultimately, peace. To date, more than 40 million trees have been planted across Kenya, thousands of acres of indigenous forests are being restored and protected, and hundreds of thousands of people and their communities have stood up for their rights to live healthier, more productive, purposeful lives.

The Wisdom Of Wangari Maathai

Wangari Maathai's tree planting efforts grew into civic education, and her message evolved into big-picture concepts like democracy and governance. Below are some of her core philosophies:

Connect tree issues to community concerns.

In Kenya, the disappearance of trees is connected to the drying up of streams, the loss of sources for firewood, malnutrition of children and many other life and death issues. What does the absence or loss of trees mean to your community or country?

Connect local issues to regional and national issues.

Wangari Maathai linked problems in her local community to the national problems caused by Moi's dictatorship, the commoditization of natural resources, and the colonial legacy in Kenya that eroded traditional values that had protected the environment. What environmental issue in your community is rooted in a national—or global—issue?

Connect issues to systemic causes.

Understanding how local networks work—and don't work—can help you identify effective solutions. Identify three different local issues and establish how they are related to one another.

SEE 'METHODS OF THE GREEN BELT MOVEMENT' on Page 5

"Trees bring rain. When they sway in the wind they purify the air. When the leaves drop to the ground, they hold the soil no matter how hard it rains. I was sure planting trees was good for my needs. I give young men lumber to build their houses, too."

—Naomi Kabura Mukunu
Chairperson, Kirangari Mwireri Women's Group
Mirichu, Kenya

Getting Started

The first meeting can be informal — a screening of "Taking Root" in someone's home or a local gathering place. Use the film to start a discussion and grow a movement from the bottom up. Download screening tips at www.takingrootfilm.com

- △ Brainstorm ideas for projects you want to start or get involved in.
- △ Identify tree-related and other community issues that are important
- △ Make connections between your issues
- △ Then start small. Identify one concrete thing you can accomplish as a group
- △ Keep going! Follow through on your ideas and find out where they lead

Possible Ways to Use the Film

Schools and Universities:

Show the film in a school for students (age 12 and up). Teach students about local trees and the environment. Decide which trees are best for your area (see checklist below). Start a tree nursery in the schoolyard, campus or neighborhood. Involve the parents, teachers, and community in the conversation and the tree planting.

Affected communities:

Show the film in a home or community gathering place. Discuss local issues (such as food security) connected to the environment, how tree planting and other ideas from the film could be part of the solution. Decide which indigenous trees would be most beneficial for your community. (See ‘Checklist for Planting Trees.’) Collect seeds from the trees you want to plant. Spread the conversations, start the tree planting, and track the results. In many places, people may need/benefit from the Green Belt Movement systems of **10 steps for Tree Planting** and **Civic and Environmental Education**. (For more information, see p. 5)

Environmental Groups and other NGOs:

Show the film to activists. Discuss how the work of the Green Belt Movement connects to your work. How might your organization use the ideas in the film to expand or improve your work? How might you share the film with others? Organize a tree planting campaign (see checklist) and/or civic and environmental education. (See more information on Green Belt Movement methods, page 5.)

Checklist for Planting Trees

- ✓ **Choose trees suited to local climate conditions** • Take into account the amount of rainfall, temperature, wind and soil conditions. Be sure the type of tree doesn't poison the soil or otherwise interfere with other plants, animals or the environment. **Indigenous trees are usually best.**
- ✓ **Choose trees that give back to the community** • Choose trees that conserve or improve the soil and water cycle; contribute to the well-being of important plants, birds or animals; provide fruit, nuts, or other elements that people can benefit from without hurting the tree.
- ✓ **Plant trees that are easy to plant and maintain** • Plant trees that can grow without too much water, with little or no fertilizers or soil additives, pruning, etc.
- ✓ **Plant the right tree in the right place** • Plant trees where the shade, canopy layers and root system are beneficial, not where the tree will cause problems (such as having the branches tangle in electric lines or roots crack through buildings or pavement) or be pulled out or damaged by people or animals. In areas where there are strong winds or heavy snow, plant trees far enough from buildings to prevent damage from falling snow, falling branches or the tree being uprooted.
- ✓ **Learn from local experience** • Talk with others in your area about what trees grow best and are most beneficial there. Local elders who knew the land before deforestation may have the best information about this.

Methods of the Green Belt Movement

GREEN BELT TREE-PLANTING CAMPAIGN: 10 STEPS

1. Information dissemination to raise public awareness and establish contact with local groups.
2. Group formation: establish goals and methodology, identify resources, etc.
3. Locate a suitable tree nursery site
4. Physical establishment of the tree nursery: choose suitable trees (see Checklist, p. 4) and planting methods, get started.
5. Report on the progress of the nursery to all stakeholders.
6. Promote tree planting to the community and dig holes for transplants.
7. Establish a 'Green Belt' of at least 1000 trees on public or private land.
8. Plant trees.
9. First follow-up (check within one month to be sure trees were planted correctly and are growing).
10. Additional follow-ups (recommended at three months and six months) to ensure that seedlings are progressing and established. If payment is arranged for established trees, it is recommended that this be done at six months or later.

*Excerpted and adapted from The Green Belt Movement: Sharing the Approach and the Experience by Wangari Maathai
(New York: Lantern Books, 2003)*

CIVIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION (CEE) SEMINARS, now called COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND EDUCATION <http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/what-we-do/community-empowerment>

In Kenya, as in many parts of the world, deforestation is linked to political, economic, and basic food security and water issues. These same issues may in turn involve human rights, governance, violent conflict, and community empowerment problems. The Green Belt Movement has developed CEE seminars to engage ordinary people to address the intersection of the issues that affect them. Seminars range in topic from addressing a community's basic needs, to human rights issues and resource management. The Green Belt Movement is in the process of developing a manual for other communities to conduct CEE seminars.

"Civic Education is really the entry point...Even if you enter with trees, until people understand their rights, especially their environmental rights; how to stand up for their rights and have the courage to stand up – until then, even the planting of trees is not safe. People can always be intimidated. They can always be pushed back."

- Wangari Maathai, as quoted in Hope's Edge, by Frances Moore Lappé and Anna Lappé

For more information: www.greenbeltmovement.org