Trees, animals, birds, plants, forests, mountains, lakes and rivers — everything that exists in Nature are in desperate need of our kindness, of the compassionate care and protection of human beings. If we protect them, they in turn will protect us.

- Amma

GreenFriends is a global grassroots environmental movement which promotes environmental awareness and local participation in conservation efforts throughout the world.

GreenFriends is one of the projects of Embracing the World, a not-for-profit international collective of charities founded by internationally known spiritual and humanitarian leader, Mata Amritanandamayi (Amma)

To join the Pacific Northwest GreenFriends Litter Project, write Karuna at pnwgreenfriends108@gmail.com

For The Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration Project write:

Ananya ammasananya@comcast.net

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Dear Green Friends and Family

Joyful spring greetings to you all! We hope that you are enjoying the beauty or the emerging light. The warming sunlight is now feeding us in many ways after a long winter fast. The sun helps our bodies to make vitamin D which is so important for our minds and bodies, maintaining a strong nervous system, strong skeletal system and protecting against many diseases. Many of us are short of it, particularly at this time of year. I was reminded on the beach yesterday what a wonderful gift of nature it is to let the sun shine on our skin and in our eyes. We need a good dose of it here in the North.

We have been going for dips in the ocean and lakes here as often as possible all winter long. Now with the warming of the air, the earth and the water it is easier and more enjoyable for to go for a plunge. Practicing ritual ablutions is not only for those fortunate enough to bathe in the waters of the sacred Ganges River. Our bodies need to shed excess positive ions by contact with living bodies of water and the living earth, which grounds us and drains away static charge and stress. There is no better time to practice yoga, or meditate, than after a barefoot walk in nature, or a refreshing splash in the water, even just the toes! We can absorb important trace minerals through our skin by bathing in salt water. All waters are Mother Ganga Herself.
PNW GARDENING

The dark green of herbs that have begun to grow are a tonic for our bodies and organs. None more powerful than those picked fresh from the garden. Stinging nettle shoots are the best. Even clean spring dandelion greens are very nutritious. Overwintering parsley and kale are coming to vigorous life again and filling our salad bowl. Raw, juiced or lightly steamed, they are full of nutritious and purifying chlorophyll, another miracle food that can work wonders for our health. It will soon be time to start thinning the greens that are getting taller in the greenhouse. A yummy chore!

Bees have miraculously found their way to the first flowering fruit trees in the orchard, in between the raindrops, following the intoxicating fragrance of the blossoms. An islander has discovered that bees eat certain fungi which maintain their immune systems and help them to fulfill their vital role in the life cycle. They are not only collecting pollen but harvesting their own medicines from the plants they pollinate. Every living thing has a place and purpose in creation.

These simple gifts are offered to everyone, to fulfill our lives in so many ways. It’s no wonder that Amma encourages us to spend time in nature and grow a garden! It is up to us to choose to invite these blessings into our lives, and to value them for the many gifts they bring. The Divine Mother showers this abundance on us constantly, it is for us to receive it, cultivate it, imbibe it and share it.

~ Mark Braaten on Salt Spring Island
Today, I want to discuss just a bit about seed stratification. This is an old term that might better be termed "cold conditioning," except that when I say that horticulturalists don't know what I'm talking about, so "stratification" it is.

Nature herself provides changing temperatures and natural precipitation which together leach germination-inhibiting compounds from seeds and bring recalcitrant germinators to life. We sometimes try to mimic these conditions by placing the seeds in moist medium (sand/peat) in the refrigerator for a prescribed period, and this sometimes works.

I put a small handful of Pleurisy Root seeds in moist medium in the fridge 60 days back, and removed them last week to plant, kept them in my pocket (in the plastic bag) for a week 'cause I was so busy I never planted them, and yesterday when I planted them, they all had tails! It's not always that easy. Sometimes if you cold condition and then plant in the greenhouse, the temperature extremes are too much and the planting will perish.

It is often smarter to move the planting into an intermediate temperature environment (e.g., shade house, unheated greenhouse, below benches in unheated greenhouse, etc.). The living room coffee table, although some may claim it is a "cool, shady place," is good for balancing teacups but a terrible place to germinate seeds. If it works there, frankly, it would have worked anywhere!

Seeds grow in nature, and the rarer ones need to feel nature before they will respond. Pulsatilla is a great example. Seeds placed in cold storage never do very well, but if you put them in outdoor conditions and let nature work on them, great results will follow. Seed must be recent and fall-sown.
PNW Gardening

Like many species, one begins to see activity in the seed planting about the same time the adult plants are flowering in the garden. This is one of those lesser-known cooperations between mother and child which is very apparent if one tunes into it.

**Pulsatilla**, official (Official Pulsatilla) (Wind Flower, Pasque Flower)(Anemone pulsatilla)

Family: Crowfoot (Ranunculaceae)

Herbaceous perennial. Native to Europe. The plant is diminutive but brazen, sending up large, showy purple flowers early in the spring, before most plants are half awake, giving way to upright, feathery seed heads straight out of Dr. Suess. Low doses of the fresh plant tincture are used to calm nervous disorders associated with menopause, PMS or insomnia. We provide seed from the new harvest only, as the seed has short life span. Lay seed on its side in moist medium and expect germination in 30 to 90 days--very slow going at first, which is typical with seed of plants that are themselves long-lived.

In the case of Pulsatilla, I have 15-year-old plants that are going strong. They don't spread very readily, but the clump enlarges every year, self-mulching with its own leaf detritus. Plant prefers full sun to part shade and dryish, well-drained soils. Thick bark mulches are a helpful adjunct. A classic low-dose botanical, the plant is acrid and should be treated with great respect.

Article by Richo Chec, Horizon Herbs, Williams, Oregon


[https://www.horizonherbs.com](https://www.horizonherbs.com)
PNW GARDENING

Nature’s Miracle (Haiga) by Karuna Poole

**Hello little one**
I am so pleased to meet you
what a gift you are

as you look at me
what is it that you feel
are you afraid

when I look at you
delicate beauty I see
natures miracle

Article was originally written for [Living, Learning and Letting Go](#) blog. To read the story behind the picture and poem read [Keep Your Eye on the Prize](#).

Picture is from the ruins located at Ta Prohm in Angkor Wat, Cambodia

Photo credit: [Yidian](#)    To see Google Images for Ta Prohm [go here](#)
The Gift of a Rainbow
Though the rain may fall in the midst of a storm
The sun will lay upon the earth her blanket of warmth
This is the tempo to which nature plays her years
And through this progression a rainbow appears

Solidarity
In love, in faith, in honesty
Hearts beating together as One;
Amma’s vision

In love, in faith, in honesty
Amma’s children in unison
Seven colors uniting as One
A rainbow alliance of love
Amma’s vision
Seattle has started a pilot cigarette butt collection program. MID (Metropolitan Improvement District) has teamed up with TerraCycle to install 15 cigarette butt recycling containers in downtown Seattle. They were placed in areas of high foot traffic or outside of bars. If the program is successful more containers will be installed.

“TerraCycle takes the waste collected from these receptacles and produces a variety of industrial products, such as plastics pallets, and any remaining tobacco is actually recycled as compost. For every pound of cigarette waste collected, TerraCycle and partners donate $1 toward the Keep America Beautiful Cigarette Litter Prevention Program, as well as $1 back towards the Metropolitan Improvement District.” For more information go here and here.
Saving the Earth's Resources
Living with the Principle of Ahimsa in the Modern World?
by Vandita Smith (Halfmoon Bay, B.C.)

Ahimsa (Sanskrit: is a term meaning ‘compassion’ and ‘not to injure’. The word is derived from the Sanskrit root hiṃs – to strike; hiṃsā is injury or harm, a-hiṃsā is the opposite of this, i.e. cause no injury, do no harm. Ahimsa is also referred to as nonviolence, and it applies to all living beings - including all animals - according to many Indian religions. (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

In this universal society, with large differences, there tends to be a lack of awareness, with ever growing gaps between rich and poor. The once-named middle classes of the western world are now often struggling with no pension or job security. The financial security of post-war time has left us, and quality of life in some ways is not as good as the previous generations. Technology brings us together on one level, only to sink us into subconsciousness on another. A friend recently posted a photo called the Zombie Walk showing people in a city, heads lowered, staring at their cell phones. The world has changed very quickly, with resources pumped into never-ending production. Corporations work on cutting costs, coming up with individual packaging that you need and forever newer gadgets and endless must haves, usually with absolutely no regard to ethics or the environment.

This is Kali Yuga, the age of materialism. I recently read an ominous prediction about this age we’re in. This is an excerpt from Swami Paramatmanandas’s Talks, Volume 1, pages 161-162. A sage, many thousands of years ago predicted: “When, through the evil effect of Kali, the bodies of men get reduced in size and emaciated, the righteous course chalked out by the Vedas gets lost. Then religion is replaced by heresy to a large extent and rulers turn out to be thieves. When men take to various pursuits like theft, wanton destruction of life and so on, cows are reduced to the size of goats and begin to yield as much milk. Annual plants get stunted in growth, and trees are mostly reduced in size. Clouds will mostly end in flashes of lightning rather than rain. And dwellings will mostly look desolate for want of hospitality to strangers”

There are some uncanny correlations with this prediction in our world today. Examples of this are that crime rates
seem to be rising; due to the spraying of Glyphosate (a potent descaling agent), corn is now 2 lbs per bushel lighter due to loss of minerals; soil is being depleted; animals fed on bioengineered crops seem to be getting weaker and sicker; people eating these animals or crops seem to be getting sicker and weaker too; governments are being swayed by powerful corporations lacking in ethics; the public voice does not seem to be heard, and our dependence on petroleum is encouraged and continues unabated.

Peace Out is a powerful documentary which is important to learn about what is happening in North America – “In northern BC and Alberta, there has been an explosion in resource extraction activities, with mega-projects like the Site C dam, hydro-fracked shale gas wells, a nuclear power plant and the tar sands. The economy is booming, but with it comes heated debate and conflicting claims about the impact on the environment. In this thought-provoking and beautifully made film, Vancouver-based director Charles Wilkinson talks to experts from both sides of the divide, presenting an even-handed look at the issues as he probes the deeper causes of environmental exploitation.”

https://www.knowledge.ca/program/peace-out

It can be painful to become aware, to look hard at yourself, to really see what is happening in the world. Recently I was doing the peace prayer and explained to my 2 1/2 year old daughter that I was praying for people who had no food. She said, as if to reassure herself, that they have food, but I said no, there are people that have no food today. She went and immediately made imaginary food for them and offered it to the shrine photo of Amma.

To really begin to have the quality of Ahimsa means to wake up and see things as they are. It’s more complex now, a grey area, but that’s where awareness lights the way. What impact is our every action having? Is it non-harming to ourselves, to nature, to others? Picture on left: By Own work (Own work) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

We have a guest staying at the moment and we went for ice cream today at a small local café. I asked for the china bowls, they had them on the shelf and stainless steel teaspoons, and we were the only customers; it was quiet. I was told no because they don’t have a dishwasher. We were given plastic cups and a plastic spoon and told that they use paper cups. I asked if they recycle and she told me no. I felt a wall go up, there was no point saying more. My 2 ½ yr old
daughter is more aware about the environment than many adults. Sadly, by the time she grows up, I don’t know what state it will be in. This artist shows the scale of our consumption. Numbers may not mean much, but these artworks convey a powerful message - http://www.chrisjordan.com/gallery/rtn/#plastic-bags

It’s easy to idealise, but firstly we can’t afford not to re-use, secondly to compost, or lastly to recycle. There is no room for materials that don’t decompose, but how can we stop companies using unnecessary, excessive non-recyclable packing? One Vancouver couple, Grant and Jen, pledged to buy no more ‘stuff’ and produce no more landfill waste for a year, and they made a documentary. Here are the details - http://www.cleanbinmovie.com. It was interesting and inspiring to watch. It’s not easy, but they did well. Grant remembered how his Grandfather had one razor his whole life but he himself used disposables. This couple also did another documentary on the absolutely shocking food waste issue in Canada - http://www.foodwastemovie.com/about, which is true throughout the Western world.

A few nights ago I listened to Anakha Coman, who is a mindfulness teacher in the corporate world. You can listen to the interview for free here. What was very interesting about Anakha’s interview was the effect of mindfulness. Mindfulness is needed for Ahimsa, as it increases awareness. If you can be mindful, the effects on the environment and others are very powerful and positive. Mindfulness in others is palpable. People experience it through you, so this is a powerful tool to bring positive change around us. Mindfulness also brings peace and presence.

On another positive note there have been some local developments recently. A scheme to reduce landfill waste by composting more will be put in place in the near future. Food waste in landfills has a very negative effect on the environment. The UK website Next Generation Food estimates that each tonne of food waste is equivalent to 4.2 tonnes of CO2. http://www.treehugger.com/green-food/the-impact-of-food-waste-on-climate-change-and-just-about-everything-else.html

A local man on the Sunshine Coast B.C., Buddy Boyd, runs a recycling depot in Gibsons aiming for zero waste, but he has very little support and makes very little money. His goal is “to replace the Draconian 19th century solid waste management plan. “That thing is hideous. It’s outdated, it’s outlived, and it’s useless,” Boyd said during his presentation to the Council. “Solid waste management planning for communities is akin to designing buggy whip factories.” Since he spoke at the council there have been assessments about how to reduce what goes into the landfills here.

Personally, as a family, we are trying to work out ways to reduce our impact on the planet. I peered into our garbage
can before it was emptied this week and there were only 3 regular part full grocery bags of garbage, just covering the bottom of the mostly empty garbage can. We compost food waste, recycle, and reuse. It’s hard to get away from plastics, but we’re working on it. We have a lot of recycling, and I’m working on reducing that. My next project is to begin to make my own household cleaners using old cleaner bottles, and also make my own laundry detergent. We’re planning to make our own vegan milks to avoid the tetra packs, and will try to buy in bulk. We recently adopted a rescue cat and are feeding it local wild caught meat to avoid buying numerous cans. I always ended up getting a hole in my right hand cleaning glove, but always saved the left ones, until I realised I could just turn the left one inside out to make a right handed glove, so now they last longer. It’s these small things that make a difference, to what goes into the landfill.

Styrofoam pieces continue to wash up and get embedded in the seaweed and attached to the logs at our tiny local beach. My daughter and I pick them up, along with whatever other garbage gets washed up. Here is an example of what I picked up one day recently. It’s a little painstaking as the pieces are so light and small and get caught amongst the rocks.

We have ambitious garden plans this year to plant more than ever, and use more local wild food. Here is a photo of my daughter picking kale that has lasted through the mild winter in small amounts. We have just started to plant our first seeds for a summer and fall harvest. There are hard realities but, as Amma says, we need to be like lions not sheep. Mindfulness gives great strength; it enables us to live with the principle of Ahimsa, like a candle flame in the darkness.

*Amma, may we have the strength and positivity of heart to hold tightly to our inner wisdom, and the courage to follow it.*
“Reduce. Reuse. Recycle.” We hear these phrases all the time, although the most emphasis is often placed on the "recycle" part, we could all make larger efforts to reuse materials before they need to be recycled. After all, "waste is a design flaw," as reported by Sophie Thomas, of the UK’s RSA Organization. In the building design, construction & demolition industry up 70% of the materials are recyclable or reusable. While we’ve made a small dent in the amount of materials that are recycled, King County hasn’t done nearly enough. According to Kinley Deller at the DNRP/SWD, the Seattle-area manages to salvage just 7-9% of the reusable or recyclable building materials from these job sites.

Doors, windows, lighting... have you ever really looked at or thought about what kind of doors your home has or if the windows in your house are “wavy” or regular glass? Probably not, right? Why would you!? Most of these items are just everyday objects which we give little thought to... until one day something breaks. All of a sudden, those regular old doors are near impossible to find, can’t be replicated (since we don’t have access to old growth timber forests anymore), or are just so expensive to custom order for an inferior product. Luckily, that’s where building salvage saves the day!

Earthwise Architectural Salvage started in the early ’90’s as a hobby of then demolition contractor, Kurt Petrauskas. It never failed that every day he was working on a project which yielded tons of not only perfectly reusable, but often precious, historic, non-renewable materials to be thrown in the landfill. In his efforts to correct this huge waste problem, he started saving the materials he could use for personal projects in his garage. Eventually, the inventory became so large he started having monthly sales, and now 24ish years later, Earthwise has grown to two locations
Saving the Earth’s Resources

in the Pacific Northwest with thousands of items to treasure hunt through and be inspired by. Our crews specialize in the reusable removal of historically significant and vintage building materials.

The beauty of salvage is really that the materials we save from demolition and remodel projects are not like the ones made abroad or sold at the big box stores today. Craftsmen likely handmade these items with meticulous care from materials sourced locally that we just don’t have access to anymore – like the old growth timbers mentioned earlier. In many instances, processes and methods used in some industries have changed over time for reasons relating to social standards; vintage enameling and porcelain methods are a perfect example: these original finishes are incredibly durable but no one follows the same process now due to the hazardous effects on workers and the environment during the making.

This brings to light the fact that Earthwise often finds and sells higher quality materials at about half the cost of buying new, plus when you buy salvage you’re not contributing to the waste stream or using non-renewable resources such as water, because even those products rated “sustainable” or “renewable” still contribute to these issues. By choosing to use salvaged materials, you are extending the life and story of not only that piece, but also you are preserving the ways of the past in a sustainable future of stewardship to be appreciated for years to come.

For more information about Earthwise Architectural Salvage go to: [http://ewsalvage.com](http://ewsalvage.com)
For the fourth year in a row, the PNW Litter Project participated in Kick Butts Day. Kick Butts Day is an annual celebration of youth leadership and activism in the fight against tobacco use. The event is organized by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and sponsored by the United Health Foundation. Our way of supporting that event is to host cigarette butt pick up work parties.

The weather forecast for the week prior to our Saturday, March 13 event was dismal. Even the day before, they predicted an inch of rain would fall on that day. We are prepared to pick up cigarette butts in showers, but were not inclined to work in that kind of rainstorm.

We have had numerous work parties where the weather has been dramatically different than the forecast, so we decided not to cancel; we would wait until that morning to decide. The night prior to the work party AcuWeather said we would have a clear period between 8 and 9 a.m. When I got up the morning of the 13th that clear period had changed to 10-11 a.m. (our work party was scheduled for 10:00-11:30).

Even though it wasn’t raining, it was still cold and windy, and everything was very wet. Still, thirteen hardy souls showed up ready and eager to work. In the next 1 ½ to 2 hours we picked up 20 pounds of cigarette butts! They were sent to TerraCycle to be turned into plastic pallets.
One of the things that caught my eye during this work party were the cigarettes imbedded into the grates that were covering the storm drains. Investigators in a San Diego State University study once discovered that if you put fathead minnows and top smelt in a liter of water that also contains a single cigarette butt, half of the fish will die. Just slight movement of the butts in the grate sent them into the storm drain. Imagine how many cigarette butts will end up in the waterways when the storm drains are blocks long.

By the end of the work party, the wind had died down and the sun came out. There was no rain for the rest of the day! I felt like Mother Nature had showered her grace on us. (The next day the predicted rainstorm came, dropping a record setting two inches of rain in one day!)

**Work Party Reflections from Yashas:**

I loved that the weather was a little blustery. Being outside is always a joy, regardless of the weather -- but I gradually forget this until I again am out when it isn't "nice". I loved the fact that we were collecting something useless, toxic and repulsive and it would be turned into something of permanent use and value. I loved seeing the wheels turning in the minds of passersby, each one nudged another baby step toward taking care of the environment.
PNW Litter Project

Tacoma Kick Butt report from Satyavati and Mike:
In honor of today's kick butt event, Mike and I each have 2 hours each of picking up of butts here in Tacoma, at the Tacoma Community College.

The 36 lbs. of butts were picked up between February and March 18. One young man waiting for the bus sitting in the smoking shelter said to me (Satyavati), "Tell me that you get paid to do this". "No, I am a volunteer. We come here every month to keep the butts out of the landfill," I responded.

Response from Arati in California (after hearing about Kick Butt work party):
I feel so moved every time I read about this 'Picking up butts' seva that you all do. There is something about how a little cigarette butt on the ground can seem so innocuous, it looks so small ... and yet the damage it causes is enormous! Seeing the images of the butts collecting in the grills makes the repercussions of randomly discarding them so visible and vivid. A moment of gratitude for no longer smoking (it's been over 30 years!) and that I no longer contribute to damaging the environment in this way. I rarely see butts these days. I am setting an intention that when I do I will find something to pick it up with so I can put it in the trash. I am guessing better there than in a storm drain or where a bird might pick it up. Thank you and Jai Ma to all of you.
From: Karuna in Seattle

I found this picture on my son Sreejit’s Twitter page. He is on Amma’s North India tour and is posting lots of pictures. This one was taken in Hyderabad. Looks like they could use some litter pick up help from Amala Bharatam or us! Maybe someday we can help with an Amala Bharatam project!

PNW Litter Project Stats

Thirty seven litter project members and their guests reported picking up 42 hours of litter in March 2015. The average pick up time was 2.67 hours; the range was 2 minutes to 16 hours and the median was 1.5 hours.

Members of the project have picked up litter for 6291 hours since the project began in July 2011.

TerraCycle credited us with turning in 139,534 cigarette butts in 2013 and 55,200 in 2014 for a total of 203,724 butts since we started sending them to TerraCycle in January 2013. TerraCycle has credited us for 16,550 butts so far in 2015. (In addition to the butts we turned into TerraCycle we also have a 5 gallon jar of cigarette butts we use for the litter project display)