



Nature on its own is indeed beautiful and clean. The hills and rivers do not need us to clean them. In fact it is nature's water which cleans us; it is trees which purify air for us. Because we have littered, we have spoilt its pristine beauty.

Amma

Contents

Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

January Work-Party Report
February Work Party Invite

Recycling

Metal Recycling Drive
Electronics Recycling Drive
TerraCycle changes

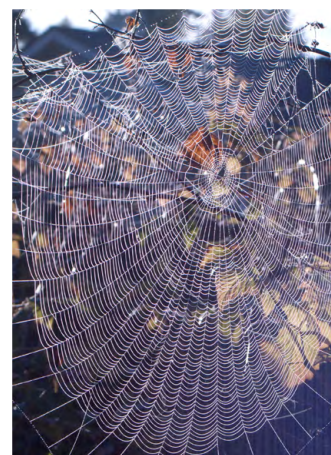
Litter Project

Olympic Peninsula Work Party
Litter Stories
Litter Project Stats

Rudhraksha Farming in Amritapuri

Vermicomposting

Life Cycle of a Worm



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)

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Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration Project

January Work-Party Report

by Ananya

Even though the weather was a bit wild and the Seahawks were about to play their last play-off game, a few brave souls went out to the Freeway Estates work party on Sunday, January 19. There were about 12-15 volunteers working to lay the ground work for the permaculture garden area. This work party was mostly about digging holes for kiwi trees and moving pieces of sod from the grass area that is being removed.

Our group has continued our quest to learn more about permaculture along with this concept of using WSDOT land for food production. We fell in love with this idea when we first found out about it. Lucky for us, the folks at Freeway Estates love teaching us and having us work with them. In fact, they have agreed to have a special bi-monthly work party on Saturdays instead of Sundays so it doesn't interfere with the Seattle satsang time. We will update you on the details once they are finalized.



February Work Party Invitation

Amma's GreenFriends Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration Project will join the next restoration work party at the Warren G. Magnuson Park - Forest Remnant Zone on Saturday, February 15, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. If you are around that day and looking for an enjoyable and rewarding way to do a little bit for environmental restoration, please join in on this work party. You will be helping to save one of the best forest sections of Magnuson Park. Work may include removing invasive plants such as bindweed or blackberry, spreading of wood chip mulch, and planting. There will also be a chance to learn a bit about native plants while working. Dress appropriately in layers. You may register at the website below if you like.

Meet in Magnuson Park at the northeast end of the trail which runs through the wooded area located north of NE 65th Street and about 300 feet east of Sand Point Way NE. The Northeast trail end is on the west side of Sports Field Drive NE about 500 feet north of NE 65th Street.

For more detailed information, please e-mail Pa at drsail53@gmail.com or Ananya at ammasananya@comcast.net

Hope to see you there!

GreenFriends Recycling

Metal Drive

We will have a metal recycling drive from Sunday February 23 through Sunday March 2. You can bring the metals to satsang on those Sunday's or put them in the bin behind the Seattle Holistic Center (7700 Aurora Ave. North, Seattle) anytime that week.

This is a great opportunity to clean out your basements, storage units, storage closets, garages, etc. Think curtain rods, hub caps, screws, keys, locks, nails, anything metal that is non electronic (we will have an electronics recycling drive at a different time.) Feel free to get metal from neighbors and friends as well.

We will take the metals to a recycling depot. Money raised will be donated to the PNW MA Center.

Electronics Drive

We will also be coordinating an electronics recycling event sometime in mid-March. Friendly Earth is an environmentally responsible electronics recycling organization. They will be dropping off containers for us to fill with our electronics recycling items such as, computers, cell phones, television sets, speakers, stereos, and video players (DVD, VHS, etc.) Start searching for those old electronics items, and get ready to bring them to this event. By doing so, you will be following one of Amma's New Year's directives and doing something about the environment.

Friendly Earth partners with leading nonprofit organizations, schools, and other businesses to dispose of electronic waste (e-Waste) responsibly. Friendly Earth will never export into other countries (like China, India, Africa, etc.) or dispose (landfills, incinerators) of electronics that have been collected through their organization. It is against Friendly Earth's ethical and moral standards to ever ship anything out of the country or into landfills.

More details about this event will follow soon.

TerraCycle Update

Time to try again with Terra Cycle! For the next month, let's all focus our efforts on collecting the following two items: 1) Cereal or cracker bag lines and 2) energy (or granola) bar wrappers. Please focus on collecting these two items. After we've gotten in the habit of collecting those, we'll consider adding another item.

You can drop them off at Seattle Satsang on Sunday's, at Karuna's (3212 25th Avenue S, Seattle, or Visala's (8201 Greenwood Ave North, Seattle).

OlyPen Satsang Litter Work Party

A cool New Year's Day morning swim in Puget Sound followed by trash pick up has now become an annual tradition for the Olympic Peninsula Amma satsang, AKA Olypen. We picked up trash behind the Port Townsend Food Coop this year. At first it was a little slow, but then as we progressed up the hill we hit the jack pot and ended up filling Eswar's pick-up truck with beer cans and bottles that had been thrown into the bushes. It was a lot of fun and a blessing to serve our beloved Amma in this way. It was hilarious to watch "all these grownups" get so excited to find a big cache of cans. We were like little kids on an Easter egg hunt. Jai Ma!



Other Litter Project Stories

From Gwendolyn in Burien:

My son, Matthew, has created a little project at school at lunch recess. He hands out bags for people to clean up the playground. He is in the 6th grade at Cedarhurst Elementary in Burien.

From Geoff in Pt. Townsend

Last weekend, Shanti and the girls found a bunch of garbage on North Beach. We recruited Vandya and Eswar and their two big Golden retrievers and on Sunday, January 19, we all spent two hours cleaning up North Beach. Apparently a certain tide or current washed up a bunch of old trash from down the beach at the end of Cook Road. People used to dump trash there illegally until the road was washed away by storms. The trash consisted of beer cans, computer parts and construction materials. A lot of people walking on the beach stopped to thank us for cleaning up and some even helped us carry it back to the truck.



From Seattle's Kalavathi who is now in Amritapuri :

I'm in the midst of the 2-week yoga training intensive here. Yesterday we had a special GreenFriends seva project day. First we all (50 or so of us) went out and cleaned up the neighboring beach, then in the afternoon we planted basil plants for the garden. It was so cool because in the past the villagers have just stared and not participated. But yesterday, some of the villagers that were present jumped in and were lending a hand. Mahita (in charge of Amritapuri Recycling Center) said we really made a difference in the hour and a half or so that we were out there.

From Portland's Amar who is now in Amritapuri:

[Amar is working at the Recycling Center in Amritapuri. All of the trash and litter from the ashram is brought there. They recycle at a level that is far above anything that happens in the PNW. For example Amar works with the paper that comes in. There are 22 different kinds of paper and his job is to separate them all out. I asked him to describe this process. ~Karuna]

Other Litter Project Stories-cont



There is room enough at each of the two paper-sorting tables for up to four devotees, two on each side. On the right of each side are two high wooden boxes labeled Note 2 and News 2, and behind them, two more, labeled Note 1 and News 1. On the left of each side are four more boxes, labeled Text 2 and 1, and Color 2 and 1. 8-1/2 x 11 inch pages will fit into all of them. 1's are pristine, but 2's can be a mess; as long as the resulting stack can be bundled, it's alright.

Behind us, on both sides of the table, hang two tiers of large sacks, labeled Oily, Plastic Paper, Plastic Board, Cardboard, Brown, Text 3, News 3, Random, Color 3, and Note 3. The 3s are scraps--too small to go in the boxes, where things have to lie flat and be bound into

stacks. We also have a basket for soft plastic and another, larger one for hard items; and, underneath the table, a large bin for items to be burned.

In two-hour shifts, we sort 55-gallon bin-loads of paper, one after another until there are no more. It usually takes about three hours to sort all the paper generated by all the ashram residents in a day's activities. A lot of it comes from the various prepared food outlets, so it's often soiled. A crew of devotees, working early in the morning, drives around to the various recycling stations, collects everything and brings it to the Amrita Recycling Center, where many more devotees pre-sort it into large categories, like Paper and Hard Items.

It is very labor-intensive to achieve our 97% success rate and it could not be done without a lot of volunteer labor, such as we have at Amritapuri. It is dirty, often smelly work and my initial reaction was revulsion. But, when your objective is to bring your ego to heal, you often volunteer for distasteful work, and the workers here take the work seriously and try to do their best every day.

PNW Litter Project Stats:

As of January 31, 2013, we had **348** members.

Forty one members and their guests reported picking up **124.38** hours of litter during January 2014. Those members average pick up was: **4.6 hours**; the range was **2 minutes to 58 hours** and the median was **2 hours**.

Members of the project have picked up litter for **4,813** hours since the project began in July 2011.

TerraCycle credited us with turning in **139,534** cigarette butts in 2013.

Rudraksha Farming at Amritapuri

Many of us are familiar with rudraksha seeds, which are in the mala necklaces and bracelets we wear.



But what do we know about rudraksha's? I sure didn't know much. I had heard that in India they were considered sacred, but that was the limit of my knowledge. When I was in India this year, I was told that there were rudraksha trees in the ashram! I had never heard that before. Later I learned that the ashram has published a book about rudraksha seeds. It is called *Rudraksha: Seeds of Compassion*. I will share some information about rudraksha seeds from that book, and will then tell you about the rudraksha trees growing in the ashram.

In *Rudraksha: Seeds of Compassion*, it says that the ancient Vedic texts claim the rudrakshas came from the tears of Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva is considered the Supreme Being, Absolute Consciousness. The book says that it has been said that when one looks at a rudraksha seed, it is like looking into the 3rd eye of Shiva. It goes on to say that when Shiva's third eye opened light came out and desire was burned to ash. So the rudraksha symbolizes "the dissolution of desires and the awakening of truth."



A rudraksha seed is divided into 1-21 segments. These are also known as faces or mukhi. While all rudraksha seeds have healing properties, the properties change depending on the number of mukhi. The five mukhi rudraksha seed is the most common form. It can help with regulating blood pressure, heart problems, stress, mental disability, obesity, anger management, diabetes, piles, neurotic and behavioral problems.

Rudraksha Farming at Amritapuri-cont

There are some rudraksha trees scattered throughout the ashram, such as the one in the foreground of the picture with the pink building. That tree is fairly close to the main auditorium and the café.



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The tree in the background of this picture is the first rudraksha tree at the ashram to produce fruit. Normally it takes a rudraksha tree at least seven years to bear fruit, but this started in six. That is especially remarkable since the tree grew in tropical Kerala and it's native habitat is in the Himalayas!



Rudraksha Farming at Amritapuri-cont



Each morning, the ripe fruits from the fruit-bearing rudraksha tree are harvested. You can see one day's harvest in the straw hat. The fruits are then opened and the seed is taken out, soaked and then brushed until it is clean.



The Rudraksha Farm across the backwaters is also producing new rudraksha trees. Here are some small saplings still in pots



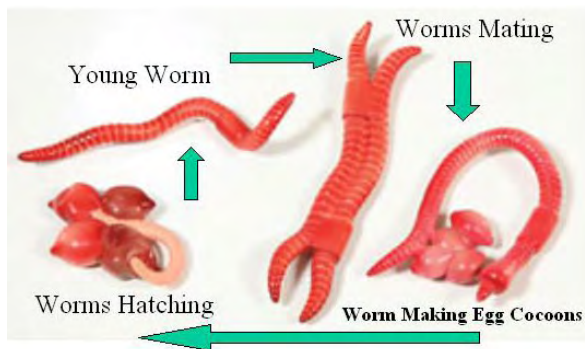
The Tulasi Farm nearest to the main ashram is also growing Rudraksha saplings.

Vermicomposting

by Karuna

As many of you know, I am very interested in worms and in worm composting, also known as vermicomposting. I decided to look into the life cycle of the worm, both for my own interest and to be able to share it with you. Perhaps in other newsletters I will investigate other related topics.

Life Cycle of a Worm



The information I will share in this article comes from <http://www.worm-farming.com/worm-life-cycle.html>, a site which gives permission to copy its contents.

The worms in a worm bin reproduce prolifically. They are hermaphrodites which means that they have both male and female reproductive organs. When the worm is 4-6 weeks old a whitish band forms around its head. This is called a clitellum and is the location of the reproductive organs. Even though a single worm has male and female organs, it still needs another worm in order to mate. At that time two worms will join together, heads in opposite directions, and the sperm will pass from one worm to the other and be stored in sacs.

A cocoon holding 1-5 baby worms will form in each worm's clitellum. The cocoons may last for years. They will hatch when the conditions are right. When the baby worms are born they are about ½ inch long and white in color. They start eating immediately and four to six weeks later the whole process will start all over again.



Worms can live from 1 to 9 years. I've read in various articles that redworms generally live 2-5 years. Composting worms, however, may only live for a year, a shorter life span than worms that live in the earth. On the other hand, in the wild, worms have many predators, e.g. moles, birds, foxes, hedgehogs, turtles, slugs, beetles, snakes and leeches. <http://science.howstuffworks.com/zoology/all-about-animals/earthworm4.htm>

(The picture of the mole and worm is from iStockphoto/Thinkstock.)

When a worm dies, its body becomes compost. The www.wormfarming.com article said "throughout their life and death, they are helping the soil one way or another." Such a life of service!