



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

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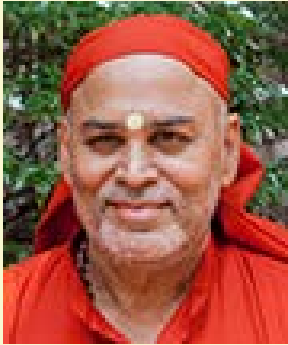
GreenFriends is a global grassroots environmental movement which promotes environmental awareness and local participation in conservation efforts throughout the world.

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 karunap108@comcast.net

NEWS

Suggestion from Swami Dayamritananda Puri



Each month Swamiji reads our PNW GreenFriends Newsletter when he receives it. He often mentions his favorite articles. Last month, he had a suggestion for us:

Perhaps some people could also write articles about giving back to nature, especially food for rabbits and slugs, not only articles about deterring them.

As a way of acknowledging Swami Dayamritananda's suggestion, in this issue we have a new article about feeding urban birds and are also reprinting two 2015 PNW GreenFriends Newsletter articles about slugs. **Would you consider writing something in response to Swamiji's suggestion? It could just be a paragraph in length or it could be 1-3 pages!** Send in your submission by the 20th of the month before you want it to be published ... to karunap108@comcast.net. If you don't have rabbit or slug stories, consider writing about ways you support gophers, moles, crows, snails, ants, spiders, deer or any other creatures people often consider pests.



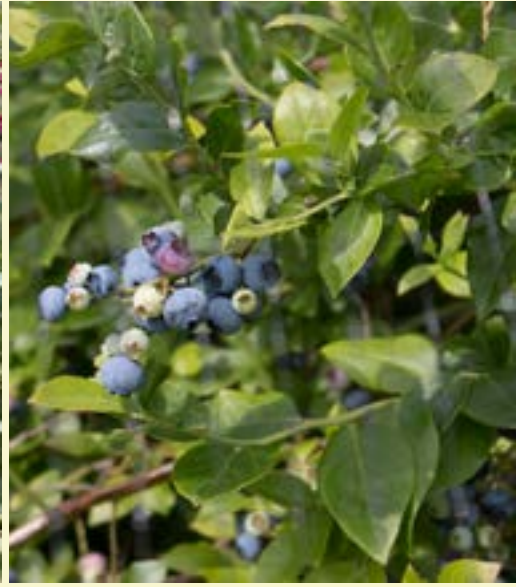
PNW Gardening

Maltby Farm Garden by Tirtha M.

Garden is in full bloom. You hear the bees all over the garden as you walk by. Very beautiful!



PNW Gardening



PNW Gardening

Visala's Herbal Farm Bee Garden by Tirtha (Maltby)

The bees were busy gathering nectar and pollen on the day I took the photos.



PNW Gardening



PNW Gardening

Kristin's Seattle Garden



PNW Gardening



PNW Gardening



Nature

Watching Miracles of Nature- Part 2

by Sonali (Sammamish)

Unfortunately, after long hours of waiting, the egg did not hatch the entire day. I researched the possible causes of a robin's egg not hatching and read that some eggs are not fertile, meaning they may never hatch. It also said that this was a common phenomenon. At least we got to witness two of the eggs hatching! Looking back at it now, it was probably for the best since the two birds sat snug in their nest after they finished growing. If there were 3, there would most likely be a higher chance that one would have fallen out.

Baby robins are helpless at birth – featherless with their eyes closed; however, they do know a few basic things to survive. For example, they are always quick to open their mouths as soon as they sense their parents coming!



The mom and dad took turns and were busy feeding them about every 15 minutes from dusk-to-dawn. I read that, together, they both make as many as 100 feeding visits each day. Hunting the area for food and feeding it to the babies is a nonstop cycle, meaning that the parents are busy all day long. The food is usually fed to the hatchlings in turns, and so it was super interesting to see that the mom and dad always remembered whose turn it was to be fed next.

There was even a perfect mysterious coordination between mom and dad to make sure each one was fed fairly! They seemed to eat more and more each day. They ate a variety of food, including insects, grasshoppers, earthworms, berries, and even butterflies! No wonder they were growing big and stronger so fast!



Nature

After around a week, we noticed that their eyes opened for the first time. They were constantly peeking out of their nest and observing the new world around them. They also were able to spot their mom and dad from afar, so they would eagerly open their mouths whenever they saw their parents. It was exciting to see changes in the babies every day! They slowly started to grow their gorgeous feathers and try out their wings.



On the evening of the elder baby's 15th day, it seemed to be excited to leave the nest and explore its surroundings. However, it rolled back into the nest after its mom came. After doing some research, I figured that it may be because the mom and nestling must negotiate a time for when it wants to leave the nest.



Nature

I like to think that they both slept with excitement, dreaming about exploring the world after they would leave the nest.



They left in the wee hours of the morning the next day, much earlier than we expected.

The nest which cradled this beautiful miracle of life, and was full of nonstop chirping and activity, is now empty. We were so used to these cute temporary backyard residents for almost the entire month that we felt an overwhelming sense of void the first morning when they left. However, we were extremely happy for them to explore the world and we hope that they will remain safe wherever they are. As Amma says, we shouldn't become attached to anything and instead we should just live in the present moment and enjoy things while they last. Hopefully, at least one of the babies will return next year to lay their eggs under our deck!



Baby 1: 4 days old, Baby 2: 3 days old



Baby 1: 5 days old, Baby 2: 4 days old

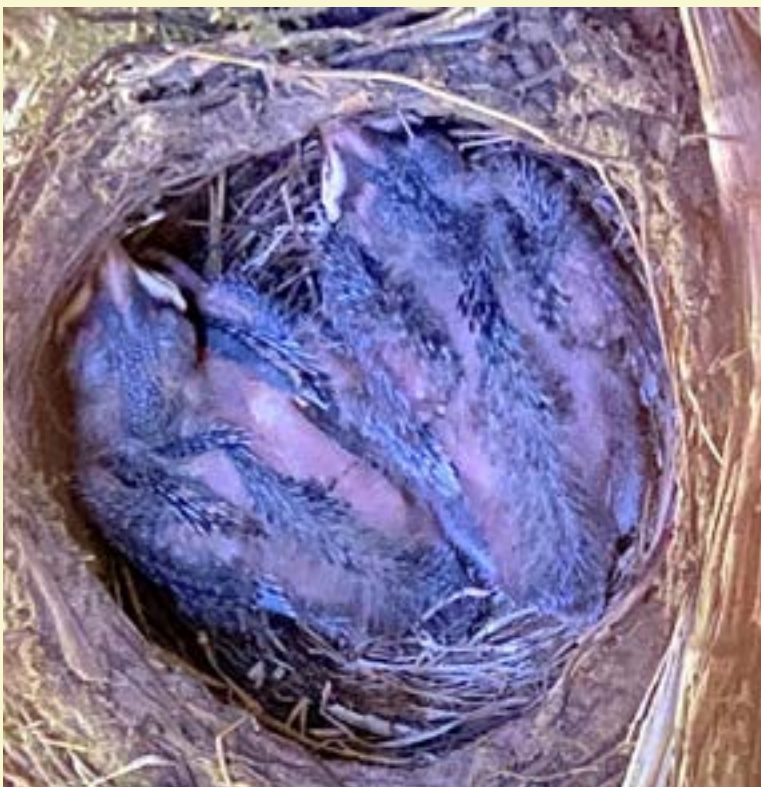
Nature



Baby 1: 6 days old, Baby 2: 5 days old



Baby 1: 7 days old, Baby 2: 6 days old



Baby 1: 8 days old, Baby 2: 7 days old



Baby 1: 10 days old, Baby 2: 9 days old

Nature



Baby 1: 11 days old, Baby 2: 7 days old



Baby 1: 15 days old, Baby 2: 9 days old



Photo Credit: [Pixabay](#)

Nature

How to Do Permaculture Now by Josh

“If humans protect the creatures on earth, these creatures will protect humans as well...”¹



Perhaps like many of you, in the last ten years I have been looking at this world and what is happening in it, asking how things have come to be this way, asking how we can shift them for the better, asking what I as an individual can do. Even more so now is this on my mind and heart.

One path to some answers is through a system called permaculture. Perhaps you have never heard the word “permaculture,” or maybe you have, but are not quite clear on what exactly it is or entails, and so in this article I want to give an overview of what permaculture is, and how you can start doing it now.

Photo Credit: [Wikimedia](#)

What is Permaculture?

Some people may have the idea that permaculture is a form of organic gardening, or is just about farming and growing food. Permaculture is infinitely more than this. At its purest, permaculture is a way of relating to the world, a way of thinking, of feeling, of belonging, of acting, of being of service, a way of participating in the entire ecology of relationships on this planet that truly benefits that ecology in its wholeness.

The Permaculture Research Institute says, “Permaculture design is a system of assembling conceptual, material, and strategic components in a pattern which functions to benefit life in all its forms. It is the harmonious integration of landscape and people [and all living beings] — providing their food, energy, shelter, and other material and non-material needs in a sustainable way.”²

Permaculture is a system of design, a system of ideas and principles. In permaculture, there is no one right way, and the right way for a given time and place is always based on the specific circumstances of a situation -- but it must always “benefit life in all its forms.” Permaculture is certainly concerned with food, but it is also concerned with every other aspect of life: shelter, energy, mental/emotional/spiritual health, community health and relations, economics, etc. Since permaculture is a system of ideas and principles, it can be applied to any situation, need, or circumstance.

¹ Amma - <https://www.amritapuri.org/80115/20wakeup.aum>

² <https://www.permaculturenews.org/what-is-permaculture>

Nature

Permaculture Now!

How to do permaculture now: Participate in Nature!

In order to design effective systems that are in line with Nature, we have to know Nature and understand Nature, and we must be in relationship with Nature. I can say from my own experience, growing up in suburban middle-class America, that until about 10 years ago, I didn't know anything about Nature, and I was scared of it too! But it is always possible to kindle and deepen our relationship with Nature.

The easiest way to do this is so simple: spend time in Nature. Find one spot that calls to you, that is very close to your house and convenient to get to (less than 2 minutes to get there), a place where you can go every day and spend as much time as you want, anywhere from 10 minutes to 10 hours. Get to know that place. Who lives there (birds, insects, squirrels, insects, spiders, plants...)? Who passes through (deer, coyote...)? How does the sun affect that spot? How does the wind blow? From what direction? Use your intuition too: how does the place feel? Does it have moods? How do they change?

Really build a relationship with this place that you choose. Go there at least once a day, or more, and go at different times of day so that you can see it in different aspects. Go at all times of year, notice how it changes. Notice what birds leave and when for the winter, what birds stay, what birds arrive and when in the spring. Notice what plants grow at certain times of year, when they first appear, when they first flower, when the leaves start to turn. Endless learning can happen at your sit spot.

You will learn so much about Nature and be more connected with her by doing this. It may not seem like much, but slowly, and almost imperceptibly, you will come to be more in tune with Nature's rhythms, her needs and functions, simply by spending quality time with her, and giving her your full attention.

Of course, learning about Nature will be a never-ending journey -- which is why it is so fun and beautiful! Along with this immediate way of learning about Nature, you can use it to jump-start more "formal" studies. Someone who studies Nature is called a "naturalist," with specializations including people who study birds, trees, insects, mammals and animal tracking, plants, and more. This includes learning names, genetic classifications, and about the ways of life of all these creatures. Use your sit spot to become curious about the creatures that live there, and then try to learn more about them using the scientific resources we have available to us today. Very helpful to permaculture is also the study of ecology -- the study of all the relationships in a system as a whole.

Maybe when you read this you say, "I live in the city so I don't have access to Nature." This is a false idea. Go outside and you are in Nature, even in a city. There will be pigeons, and where pigeons are there are hawks. The wind blows, the sun shines, and plants and trees grow, including under, and then through, sidewalks. There will be trash, and where trash is there are coyotes. You may not see them often (though I know people who have followed coyotes

Nature

through downtown Seattle!), but they are there, and you can find signs of them if you look closely enough. We may think that cities or suburbs have been “conquered” by humans, but we cannot actually conquer Nature, and if you look you will see Nature is always there and existing more beautifully than we currently are.

Relating to and learning about Nature in community is highly recommended, and especially helpful if you are new to it (pandemic permitting, of course). If you want to go deeper into naturalist studies there is an excellent home study program, the Kamana Naturalist Training Program, that is incredibly extensive and can be done anywhere and at any time.³

Cultivating a personal relationship with Nature is absolutely the simplest and most effective way of not only learning permaculture, but of doing permaculture right now, and through every day and moment of our lives. In future articles I plan to delve into other practical aspects of permaculture, including applications to gardening.

Some Books for Further Reading

There are so many permaculture resources! Here are just a few I like:

The Permaculture Handbook by Peter Bane

This is a quite extensive and comprehensive resource.

Sepp Holzer’s Permaculture by Sepp Holzer

This contains many good ideas. Sepp shares his personal experiences, which are excellent.

Ishmael and The Story of B by Daniel Quinn

These are not technically permaculture books. They seek to explain how things came to be the way they are, which I find very helpful in designing something new. Highly recommended!

³ <https://www.wildernessawareness.org/adult-programs/kamana>

Nature

Confessions of an Urban Bird Feeder by AI (Seattle)



Photo Credit: Image by [Vinson Tan from Pixabay](#)

We feeders of birds are often seen at parks, public and private plazas, downtown street corners and other urban areas calmly doling out stale bread and other staples to pigeons, crows, seagulls and other urban birds. The “Please don’t feed the birds” signs are usually ignored as we hardy souls carry out our mission.

Urban bird feeders, unlike their kindred “Birders,” usually do not have the income and capacity to buy bird-watching equipment and to travel to seek out the many wonderful bird species that nature has provided. We are more numerous than you might think, however, as many urban residents are bird feeders. We are committed to feeding the unloved—the hoards of messy pigeons, the obnoxious and mean seagulls, the sly crows and the many varieties of plain brown sparrows.

Issues tend to arise when feeding locations are not carefully planned. Rodents and street waste are issues for urban residents and businesses. Luckily there are usually locations where these problems can be avoided.

The rewards are many. Urban birds quickly learn your feeding locations and swiftly arrive to clean up. The seagulls and crows actually call out to their species letting them know food sources are available. An incredible calmness comes over me from knowing I’m helping a life survive; I feel a oneness with nature enveloping me.

As I have gotten older, I have thought of many “noble” reasons why I am an urban bird feeder, but the truth is I have always been one. As a child, watching sparrows feed on food crumbs fascinated me. Many of my jobs have included food banks, so I have almost always been near food sources.

What has changed is that over time I have become more of a spiritual being than I was. We humans have taken away the birds’ natural habitat, so I feel obligated to help them survive and feeding them at least once a week is a must. Feeding the “ugly” birds helps remind me that we are all God’s creations.

Finally, the knowledge that Amma is also a birder feeder brings great joy to my heart.

Nature

Facts about Slugs



Did you know...

- Only 5% of the slug population is above ground at any one time. The other 95% is underground digesting your seedlings, laying eggs, and feeding on roots and seed sprouts.
- Slugs do play an important role in ecology by eating decomposing vegetation.
- A slug lays 20-100 eggs several times a year.
- Slug eggs can lay dormant in the soil for years and then hatch when conditions are right.
- In favorable conditions a slug can live for up to 6 years.
- Slugs used to live in the ocean, which is why they still need to keep moist.
- One individual field slug has the potential to produce about 90,000 grandchildren.
- It's been estimated that an acre of farmland may support over 250,000 slugs.
- A cubic metre of garden will on average contain up to 200 slugs.
- Slugs leave their own individual scent trail so they can find their way home.
- A slug can stretch out to 20 times its normal length, enabling it to squeeze through the smallest of openings.
- A slug has approximately 27,000 teeth – that's more teeth than a shark.

The above facts are excerpts from: <http://www.slugoff.co.uk/slug-facts/facts>

Go there to read the full list! You can also find fascinating information about slugs at:

[Slimy summer invasion: Don't be beastly to slugs, they're just snails with bad PR](#)

[Earthworms protect against slugs](#)

Reprinted from the [August 2015](#) issue of the PNW GreenFriends Newsletter, page 16. (Some of the links in this 2015 article no longer work or limit access.)

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Seeking to Live in Harmony with Slugs by Karuna (Seattle)



I imagine slugs are a problem for most gardeners; they sure have been for me. It is so discouraging to go to the garden in the morning and see only the stalks left on bean plants and other vegetable seedlings. In the “old” days I used to use powdered slug bait to get rid of them. Later on, I used beer to bait them.

I have become increasingly uncomfortable with killing the slugs. Early this year it seemed I had more than ever, especially in my two worm bins. Believe me, good compost and free food can raise some BIG slugs. During the early part of the summer, I relocated them to other parts of the yard and hoped the slugs didn’t make their way back to my garden. Occasionally, when I found them in the worm bins, I just left them there.

Then one day I decided to check out the relationship between worms and slugs. I was very dismayed to discover that slugs EAT worms! I even found a timelapse video that showed that happening. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UhsLMOyisUQ> [Note: This is a newer video than was in the original 2015 article.]

Eating my vegetable starts was one thing, but getting plump from eating my worms was completely unacceptable. From then on I took the slugs to the bottom of the lot behind my house, about 250 feet away from my garden and my worm bins. That area is full of blackberries vines but I made them a nice bed of morning glory plants I’d pulled up.

Next year I will make a home for them that is more hospitable, but still far away from things I hold dear.

I will also experiment with other ways to protect my seedlings. For example, I like the gutter planters that my friend Saroja created this year. She didn’t put her seedlings into the garden until the plants were big enough to be of no interest to the slugs.

Nature

I am happy that I have found ways to protect my garden and worm bins without killing the slugs. I hope to be even more successful in that venture next year. If you have found peaceful ways to deal with the slugs in your garden, I would love to hear about them!

I found the information in the following articles very interesting:

Fascinating Slug Facts

[Slimy Summer Invasion](#)

[Earthworms protect against slugs](#)

Reprinted from the [August 2015](#) issue of the PNW GreenFriends Newsletter, page 12-13. (Some of the links in this 2015 article no longer work or limit access.)



Nature

Nature Photos

From Kristin in Seattle:



From Lalita on a small island off of Vancouver Island, BC:



Nature

From Sarah in Eugene:



Nature

Coimbatore, India photos from Kothai (Bellevue): Wildlife from adjacent forests spilling onto urban rooftops.



Nature



Nature

Woodinville flowers from Karuna (Seattle):



Nature

Transformation from chrysalis to butterfly from Rajita on Maui, Hawaii:



Nature

Baby Bobcat Sighting from Kothai in Bellevue:

We spotted this little one crossing the road and dart away into a nearby backyard. At the same time, we saw birds circle the area and give out loud alert calls. The bobcat seemed separated from its mom. Hope it found its way back.



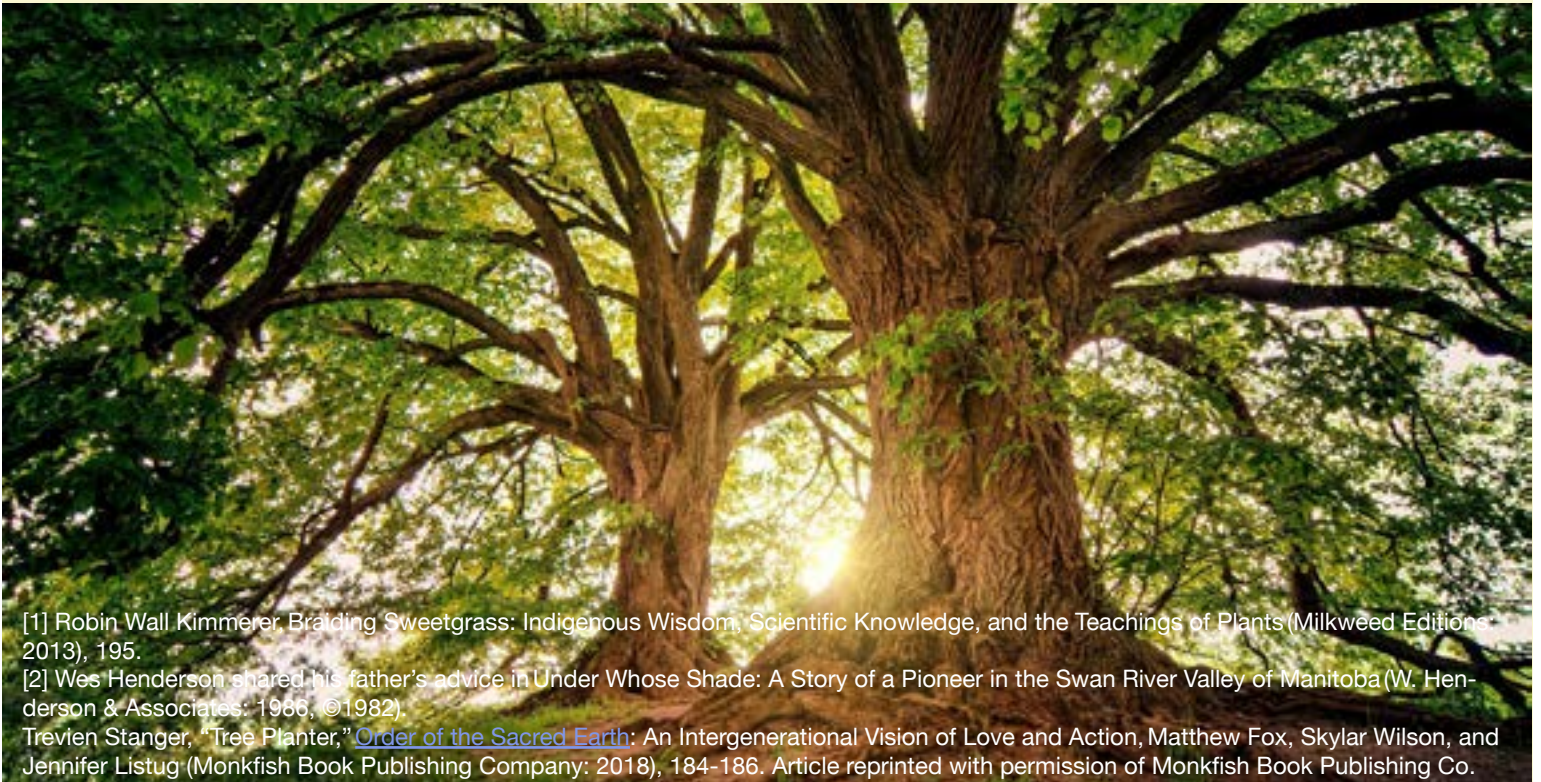
Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

Tree Planter by Trevien Stanger

Ethnobotanist, author, and Potawatami elder Robin Kimmerer asserts, “We need acts of restoration, not only for polluted waters and degraded lands, but also for our relationship to the world. We need to restore honor to the way we live, so that when we walk through the world we don’t have to avert our eyes with shame, so that we can hold our heads high and receive the respectful acknowledgment of the rest of [the] earth’s beings.” [1] . . .

I contend that every individual can participate in [the] Great Turning, and that one of the great challenges of our time is for each of us to figure out how and where we plug into this psycho-spiritual current. . . . I, for one, plant trees. . . . In my more recent work as an environmental studies professor at a community college in Vermont, I’ve had a hand in planting just shy of 100,000 trees over the past 12 years. . . .

What happens when you plant a tree? What happens when you wield a shovel in one hand (a human artifact) and a tree (a provisional mystery) in the other? What happens when you dig a hole (a Kali-like destruction) and plant a tree within it (an act of creativity)? What happens when you learn about your local ecology not just as an observer, but also as a participant? What happens when you embrace the wildness of a tree-being and integrate it into the semi-wild streets and streams of your local community? What happens when you crack open your isolated sense of self and plant within your heart this symbol of our ever-branching inter-being? What happens when you consider your actions in terms of your ecological and cultural legacy? What happens when you move beyond your concerns of today and inquire as to what type of ancestor you will be? Nelson Henderson posits that “. . . one true meaning of life is to plant trees under whose shade you do not expect to sit.” [2] Under whose shade do you sit beneath today? Whose shade shall you help gift for tomorrow?



[1] Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Milkweed Editions 2013), 195.

[2] Wes Henderson shared his father's advice in *Under Whose Shade: A Story of a Pioneer in the Swan River Valley of Manitoba* (W. Henderson & Associates: 1966, ©1982).

Trevien Stanger, “Tree Planter,” [Order of the Sacred Earth: An Intergenerational Vision of Love and Action](#), Matthew Fox, Skylar Wilson, and Jennifer Listug (Monkfish Book Publishing Company: 2018), 184-186. Article reprinted with permission of Monkfish Book Publishing Co.

PNW Litter Project

Litter Stats

In July 2020, **21** Litter Project members and their families and friends picked up litter for **50** hours. (Average **2.1** hours; Median **1** hour; Range **10** minutes to **10** hours). We have picked up litter for **11,452*** hours since the project began in July of 2011.

** The total number of hours is only one higher than last month due to the discovery of a previous accounting error.*

TerraCycle Stats

We sent **1150** cigarette butts to TerraCycle in July. We have sent them **356,874** cigarette butts since 2013. [TerraCycle is an organization that recycles items which are normally considered unrecyclable.]



From Bruce F in Victoria, BC:

Cleaning garbage off Prevost Island B.C.

