



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

## Contents

### News

### Gardening

[Garden Log 1](#)

### Nature

[What Caused the Markings on this Tree?](#)

[Seattle Nature Photos](#)

[Another Orcas Island Visit](#)

[Snow Photos: February 2021](#)

[More Nature Photos](#)

### Nature Inspired Art

[Bee Cakes](#)

[Photography as Art](#)

### PNW Litter Project

[Stats](#)



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](mailto:karunap108@comcast.net)

## NEWS

### **Announcing New PNW GreenFriends Newsletter Category**

Beginning with this newsletter, we will have a section devoted to Nature Inspired Art. You are encouraged to submit photos and/or articles for this category or any other newsletter category. If you are interested in doing that, or if you have questions, email Karuna at [karunap108@comcast.net](mailto:karunap108@comcast.net).

## Gardening

### Garden Log 1: Seed Starting Preparations by Josh (Indiana)



*Three Rosemary Seeds on a Bed of Vermiculite*

Of the many opportunities the last year of pandemic has afforded us, one of my favorites is the opportunity to learn more about gardening, particularly by doing it! When I realized in March 2020 that I would be at my father's Indiana house for the foreseeable future, I decided to put a garden into his backyard. It was somewhat late by that point, so I just did what seemed easiest at the time, but this year I have more time to think ahead, plan more, and do some experiments to stretch my learning.

My hope this growing season is to make a Garden Log entry each month, sharing a bit about what I'm doing, what I'm trying, and what's happening. I'm no expert, and I don't intend to "teach" anything. I want to share what I'm doing and perhaps that will inspire you and give you some ideas.

#### Seed Starting

Last year I didn't have time to start seeds, so I just sowed everything outside in the ground. I certainly had some success and was able to eat fresh food from my garden (blue corn being one of my favorites!), but this year I decided to try starting seeds inside.

I hope that by starting seeds inside I will have more control over what I plant, how much, and how my garden space is used. I'm also planning on starting my own tomato and eggplants seed, which I didn't have any of last year, as well as hopefully preparing a new little garden patch just for tomatoes, eggplants, basil, and sunflowers.

## Gardening

### Seed Starting Setup



Above is perhaps one of the simplest seed starting setups. The light is a four-foot shop light with a full spectrum fluorescent bulb. My dad built the brackets from which it hangs, and the chains make it adjustable. Many years ago I started tomatoes using the same kind of shop light, so I know that part works at least.

### Seed-Starting “Soil”

Of course, you can buy a mix in which to start your seeds, but it’s much cheaper to make it a home, and very easy!

The simplest way to make a starting mix is to combine coconut coir and perlite. Coconut coir is a certain preparation of the coconut husk, so it is a renewable resource (see photo below). In the past, my starting mixes have used peat, but peat is not renewable, so it is better to use coir. Perlite is a type of volcanic rock; it is very light in weight and does not hold much water, so in a starting mix it helps to prevent compaction and improve drainage. So, coir holds the water, and the perlite makes sure that there isn’t too much water, and that there is enough air.

Note that seedlings provide all their own food until they start to produce true leaves (their first two leaves are “seed leaves”, which don’t look like the mature leaves of the plant), so it is not necessary for there to be nutrients in the starting medium, and in fact coir and perlite don’t have any! They are just a bed for the seeds to get started. These two ingredients are all that is really needed to start seeds -- once they are ready for nutrients is when they will be transplanted.

There is also a substance known as vermiculite. Vermiculite is also a volcanic rock, but it tends to hold more mois-

## Gardening

ture than perlite, while also providing aeration benefits. It seems that with coir holding water so well, it is not necessary to also use vermiculite. I heard a suggestion however that vermiculite can be effective for covering seeds when they are being started, especially small seeds. Since vermiculite holds water well, and is very light weight, it will help to keep the seed moist while also not inhibiting it from poking through.

Even though it is possible to make a starting mix with just coir and perlite, I opted to add some compost to mine. While seeds don't need the nutrients for their seed leaves, if I am not able to plant them immediately or if I need to put them in bigger pots with soil they will also have some compost to help them. I found starting-mix recipes both with and without compost. I assume there are opinions as to which is better, but I'm not convinced including compost is going to hurt anything.



The ratio I used to make my starting mix was approximately 3 parts of coir to 1 part of perlite to  $\frac{1}{2}$  part of compost. I started with about 2 gallons of coir, and my final mix takes up a whole 5-gallon bucket -- probably enough to last me the whole season! I found a number of recipes all with different ratios -- this would be a great opportunity for an experiment!

The above picture shows seed starting mix ingredients. The big brown thing in the back is coconut coir. It comes dried, so it must be rehydrated, simply by breaking it up and pouring water on it. It expands greatly -- the piece in the picture would probably expand to about 2 gallons about coir. I bought 11 pounds for less than 20 dollars, and that one piece is definitely less than 2 pounds.

## Gardening

The back-left glass is hydrated coir -- it looks like lovely soil -- even though it isn't because it doesn't have any nutrients! The back-right glass is perlite, and the front glass has vermiculite.

### Starting Seeds

I purchased some plastic seed starting vessels (which can be seen under the light in the first picture), and when I am ready to start the seed I will fill the cells up with my mix and plant the seed according to the instructions on the package.

Once I bought all the seeds I wanted, I went through the instructions on the back that say when to start them inside, when to transplant, etc., and so now I have a seed starting and planting calendar. Since I don't really have any experience with this, I am just going to follow the instructions on the packages.

### Other Considerations

While I do look at various helpful sites on the Internet to get an idea of what might be good to do, I don't worry about finding the "perfect" or the "right" way to do any one thing. With most of these things there are many possible ways to do it, and you will find conflicting guidance. So it is good to get an overview of the possibilities, but ultimately we have to choose a way to try this time. Make a note of what you do, how it worked, and next time there will be an opportunity to tweak it if it needs to be improved.



## Nature

### What Caused the Markings on This Tree?



You guessed it! A Beaver! This picture was taken in Magnuson Park of the aftermath of some beaver activity there. The Beavers have been seen along the northern shore in Magnuson and felled two 5' cedar trees that were planted before Forest Stewards put protective cages around the trees.

Beavers are excellent swimmers and chewers. Their tails act as rudders as they move through the water and their webbed toes provide excellent force to move them in water. They have massive jaw muscles to support the intense chewing beavers do and the dragging of trees away to their dams.

The most incredible part of the beaver's anatomy is their insanely strong and sharp teeth! Beaver teeth are self-sharpening, with a hard orange colored enamel on the front of their incisors and a softer white enamel in the back! Not only are these teeth self-sharpening, they are also open rooted. This means their incisors never stop growing, like most other rodents' teeth. If they don't chew enough, their teeth will become too long and they will not be able to eat!



*The article and top photo were originally published on Green Seattle Partnership's Instagram page. We re-published them, along with two additional photos with their permission.*

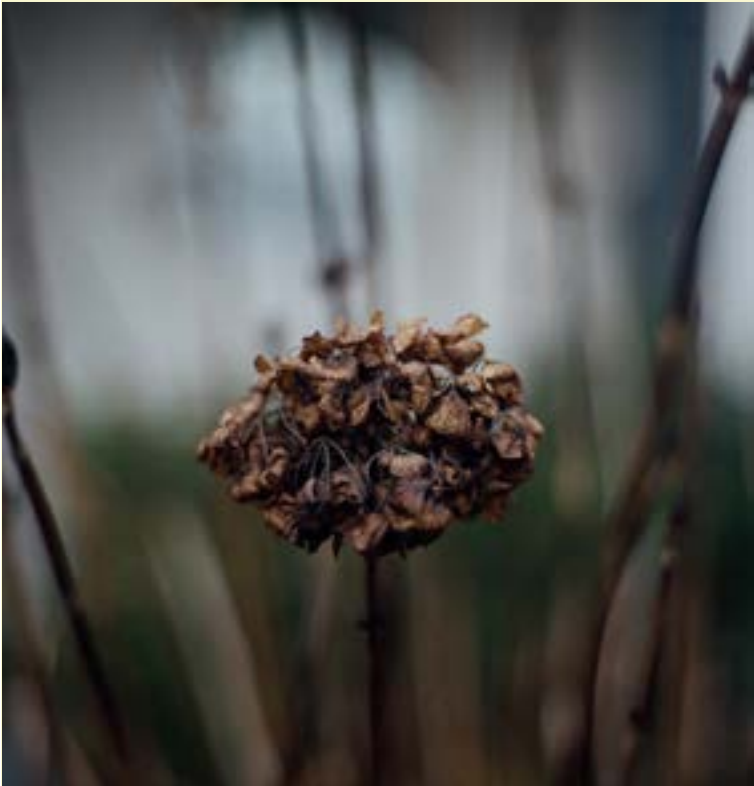
## Nature

### Seattle Nature Photos: February 2021 by Kelvin





Nature



Nature





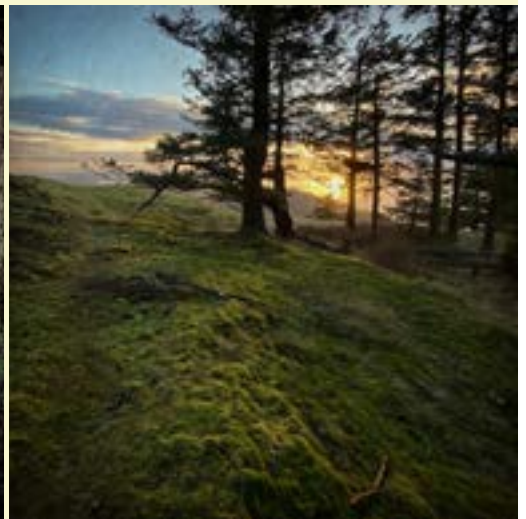
## Nature

### Another Orcas Island Visit by Eric (Redmond)





# Nature





## Nature



## Nature





# Nature

## Snow Photos: February 2021

From Kelvin in Seattle:



## Nature





## Nature

From Karuna inside her warm Seattle house:





## Nature





## Nature

From Kathie in Bellevue:



## Nature





## Nature



## Nature

### More Nature Photos

From From Sarva in Maltby:





## Nature

From Sarah in Eugene:



From Prarthana on Bainbridge Island:





## Nature Inspired Art

### Bee Cakes by Sonali (Sammamish)



To celebrate this Valentine's Day, I made honeycomb "bee my valentine" mini mousse cakes! With this dessert, I wanted to highlight the importance of bees and how they help preserve our natural ecosystems.

To make this, you can bake your favorite vegan vanilla sponge cake recipe and add a layer of mousse made with any plant-based milk. For the last layer, you can make a yellow or orange jelly made with vegan agar-agar powder to give the shiny and smooth look of honey. Make sure each layer has properly cooled prior to adding the next. After all the layers have set, you can use a hexagon-shaped cookie cutter to cut the dessert for it to resemble a honeycomb shape. To further enhance the honeycomb, you can melt baker's white

chocolate and tint it yellow, then use a clean sheet of bubble wrap as a mold for the honeycomb cells. You can make little bees with yellow and black fondant, and lastly, assemble everything together! You can also add some of the leftover agar jelly to a few of the honeycomb cells to make it look like it is filled with honey!

Bees are one of the fastest pollinators on the planet, since one singular bee colony can be responsible for pollinating up to 300 million flowers each day. They are extremely important to humans as we rely on their pollination efforts help sustain our modern food systems.

The significant decline of bees has extremely harmful consequences for the ecosystem. For example, pollination fertilizes plants and provides conditions which allow for floral growth, establishing environments for other organisms. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the U.N. has specified that 78-94% of the Earth's seed producing plants are dependent on pollinators,





## Nature Inspired Art

such as bees, to live. Without bees, our diets would be heavily impacted as well. For example, we would experience a scarcity of fruits, nuts, and vegetables that provide variety to our meals.

Climate Change is one of the prominent threats to bees because of its detrimental effects of habitat loss, shifting temperatures, and disease. Pesticide use has also had a negative impact on honeybee colonies because of a specific pesticide called neonicotinoid, which is poisoning bees. Air pollution is another factor which poses a major threat to the bee population. The substantial amount of carbon emissions break down the scent molecules of plants and confuse bees in their search for flower scents, eventually resulting in the bees taking longer to find food.

Some ways that you can help save the bees are by supporting sustainable beekeepers, buying organic and pesticide-free products, and planting native flowers to attract bees. Planting a bee garden provides a safe habitat for them where they can build homes and find nutritious food sources. Making sure that your garden stays chemical-free can go a long way since synthetic pesticides, fertilizers, herbicides, and neonicotinoids can be really harmful for bees. Using natural and organic products instead helps to strengthen soil health and attract beneficial insects which keep harmful pests away. Another simple thing you could do to help the bees is to create bee baths by filling up a bowl with clean water and pebbles or stones to break the water's surface. This helps the bees quench their thirst with a refreshing drink amidst their constant foraging and collecting of nectar.

### Sources:

[The buzz on climate change: It's bad for bees \(conservation.org\)](#)

[Why Are Bees Dying and Why We Should Save Them – 24/7 Wall St.](#)

[BEE AWARENESS MONTH - HOW YOU CAN HELP SAVE THE BEES | Travel for Difference](#)

[10 Ways to Save the Bees - The Bee Conservancy](#)



## Nature Inspired Art

### Photography as Art Kelvin (Seattle)





## Nature Inspired Art



# PNW Litter Project

## Litter Stats

In February 2021, **23** Litter Project members and their families and friends picked up litter for **81.8** hours. (Average **3.9** hours; Median **1** hour; Range **10** minutes to **24** hours). We have picked up litter for **12037.77** hours since the project began in July of 2011.



## TerraCycle Stats

We have sent TerraCycle **363,224** cigarette butts since 2013. [TerraCycle is an organization that recycles items which are normally considered unrecyclable.]

