



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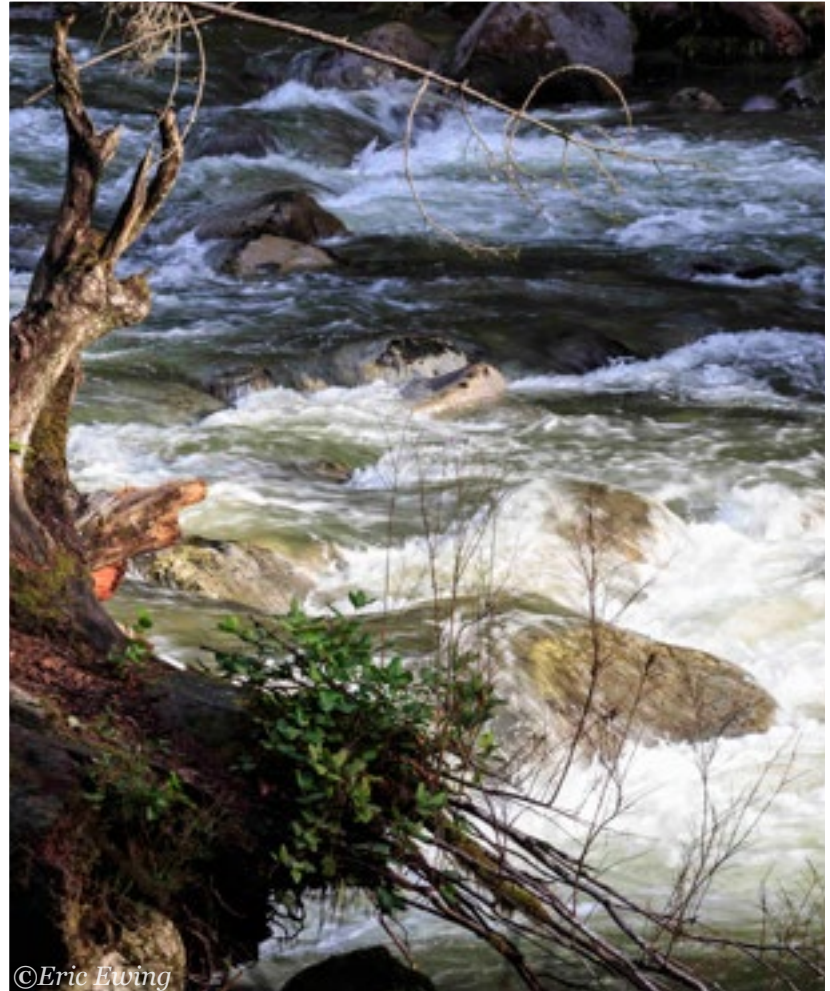
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GreenFriends is a global grassroots environmental movement which promotes environmental awareness and local participation in conservation efforts throughout the world.

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](mailto:karunap108@comcast.net)

For The Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration Project write:

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# Teaching the Children

## Kindness to Nature by Prakash Vaidyanathan

The Amrita Bala Kendra kids recently learned about Kindness to Nature. Nature is the sun, moon, stars, trees, plants, flowers, rivers, mountains, the air we breathe and many more things. There is so much peace and joy in Nature. Nature loves us and gives us everything we need to make us happy. Nature is just like a very kind and loving mother. In India, we call Nature, Bhoomi Mata.

Can we breathe without air? What would we drink if there were no rivers, lakes and wells and no rain? Would we or the animals of the world have anything to eat if there were no grains, vegetables or fruits?

If someone threw a stone at you, what would you feel like doing? One likely response would be to throw a stone back at him or her. But look at the trees. If you throw a stone at a fruit tree, what does it do? It gives you back a fruit.

A tree stands in the sun and rain. We don't notice it or care about it. Yet it gives us shade.

Then we return nature's kindness by cutting down trees for wood and plucking flowers. We dirty rivers, litter everywhere and do many more cruel things to meet our needs.

Even so, Nature is kind to us.

We too should love and care for Nature and thank Mother Nature for all her love and kindness.



# Gardening

## February Garden by Nika Geilfuss

Dear Garden Friends,

The days are still short but slowly they are getting longer. The gardens seem to be at rest and there is not much to do in February. But look around outside.



You might notice a change in color on your willow and dogwood. Mahonia gigantea is blooming since December and also the Christmas rose Hellebores nigres. It looks lovely in a small bouquet with evergreens and lasts nice in a vase. Those few blooming shrubs also provide food for hummingbirds and I adore their resistance to the weather.



Now with warmer days Camellia yulitide gives a show with red single petal rose like blossoms. Also other varieties of hellebores are coming up and I credit them to give structure in shady or part shade areas of the garden.



## Gardening



If you push some leaves aside you'll find crocuses, snow bells, Cyclamen coum and other bulbs emerging. They brave the cold and dark and soon will give us much joy with their pretty blossoms and bright colors. Consider environmentally safe slug bait if you see signs of nibbling. Slugs love primroses!

You might like to make a note of your favorite winter bloomers and consider planting them. If you don't have the space you could always make arrangements in a pot.

Enjoy this month before its time for cleaning up and pruning after the frost is gone!





# Saving the Earth's Resources

## New Rules for Seattle Trash Disposal

Seattle sends its trash to landfills in Oregon. It is estimated that 38,000 tons of that trash is food waste. Seattle residents have been asked to put all food waste in their yard waste since 2005, but there are obviously a lot of people who are not following that request.

Starting in January 2015 it will be required to put food waste, pizza boxes, napkins, and tissues into the food/yard waste bin. For the first six months of this year, if the bin contains more than 10% of those items, the resident will be given a warning notice. Starting in July there will be a \$1 fine. Apartment and condo owners will be fined \$50.

*Jan 2015 in Seattle*



*Jan 2015 in Massachusetts*



# Saving the Earth's Resources

**Waste Not (Haibun) by Cheryl-Lynn Roberts**

Last week we had a fundraiser for a major corporate sponsor. The food was delicious but the use of those fancy plastic miniature containers was mindboggling...at least we put them in the recycling bin...but still.



[Wikipedia – Drinking Straw](#)

*straws*

*adding to clutter*

*mindboggling*

*adding to clutter*

*plastic cups, stereo foam plates*

*fundraiser cocktail*

*mindboggling*

*non-profits host a show*

*Mother Nature weeps*

[© Tournesol '15](#)

# Saving the Earth's Resources

## Buddha Story from Kothai Nandaswamy

One day, a disciple came to the Buddha and said,  
"Master, my robe is worn out. Can I have a new one?"

The Buddha found that the robe was indeed in a bad condition and arranged for a new robe to be given.

The next day, the Buddha asked him  
"What did you do with your old robe?"

The disciple replied, "I am using it as my bed spread."

Then the Buddha wondered,  
"Have you disposed of your old bed spread?"

The disciple replied,  
"No, Master. I am using my old bedspread as a curtain."

"And what about your old curtain?", asked the Buddha.  
"It is being used to handle hot utensils in the kitchen,"  
the disciple replied.

"Then, can you tell me what happened to the old cloth  
used in the kitchen," was the next question.

The disciple said, "It is being used to wash the floor."

The Buddha asked, "So then where's the old rag being used to wash the floor?"

The disciple humbly replied

"Master, since it was totally torn, I could not think of any better use for it,  
but as the wick in the oil lamp, which lights your study room after sunset."

The Buddha smiled in contentment and left for his room.

*The above story is told in many places but original source is unknown.*



# GreenFriends Web Pages

by Karuna Poole

I recently learned that North America now has a GreenFriends page of its own. I was even more surprised when I discovered the developer had used my “We Need the Bees” article as the front page story!

For some time, at the request of many people, including Amma, we have been trying to find a place where our PNW GreenFriends Newsletter could be made available to a wider audience. Now we have it!

The URL is: <http://www.greenfriendsna.org>



There are other pages you might want to explore as well:

1) The international InDeed Facebook page can be found at: [https://www.facebook.com/indeedcampaign?ref=br\\_tf](https://www.facebook.com/indeedcampaign?ref=br_tf)

2) Amma groups in Europe GreenFriends webpage URL is:

<http://www.greenfriends-europe.org/index.php/en/m-action-en/m-ecomodele-en/m-frenchcenter-en>

3) The Amritapuri GreenFriends page is: <http://www.amritapuri.org/activity/nature/greenfriends>





# PNW Litter Project

## PNW Litter Project Stats

As of November 30, 2014 we had **375** members. **35** members and their guests reported picking up **70** hours of litter in January 2015. The average pick up time was **2** hours; the range was **2 minutes to 10 hours** and the median was **1.25** hours.



Members of the project have picked up litter for **6095** hours since the project began in July 2011.

TerraCycle credited us with turning in **139,534** cigarette butts in **2013**. We have turned in **55,200** butts so far this year for a total of **203,724** butts since we started sending them to TerraCycle in January 2013. (We also collected the 5 gallon jar of cigarette butts we use for the litter project display.)

## Keeping Mother Nature Clean by Aparna P. Iyer (age 8)

You are walking on the sidewalk and you see litter. Pick it up!

It may not be your litter, but it is trashing Mother Nature. You should do that because Mother Nature gives us from a tiny grain of rice to a farm filled with crops.

When other people see what you are doing, they will follow your example and clean the earth. Unfortunately we humans do not think like that. We think it is not my property then why should I clean it? On the other hand if we think of Mother Nature as our property we will strive to keep it clean.

There are many organizations that help clean Mother Nature, but you don't have to join them.

You can walk right out of your house and start cleaning.

Mother Nature has given us so much that we possibly cannot pay her back for everything.

But at least we can help keep her clean.

## PNW Litter Project

### Heaven on Earth by Catherine Brooke-Barrows

It's been 18 years since I first came to know Amma, in that time I have loved her dearly and continue to walk this path of devotion trying to follow her living example, though invariably I feel I may never get through this process of "taking out the trash" of the Ego.

Not because I don't share her vision of Heaven on Earth for all her children and the planet itself. I understand the importance of taking care of our beloved Mother Earth- my mother had us recycling and composting before most people even knew what that was and as a hippy child of nature, I felt a deep connection to spending time discovering her bountiful treasures, delighting in the simple joys of playing in the forest for more hours than I can count.

It is not because I lack compassion for those less fortunate; it is in my nature to feel the pain of others as I am extremely empathic and desire most deeply for all who are suffering to be relieved whether it be financial or physical or spiritual.

The economic disparity and violence, greed and separation of the world is something I have felt and wanted to do something about for as long as I can remember.

It's not even because I lack faith in her, I have personally witnessed and had first-hand experience with Amma's incredible Love. One of the ways I describe Amma to people who have never met her is by saying "she's not of this world that's for sure!"

I believe that any of my struggles to fully live the path that Amma has set forth, is due to the mental garbage of the past that I have accumulated over many, many lifetimes and continue to have to work to remove.

The Ego acts like the worst litter offender, constantly throwing up refuse and slovenly refusing to change its ways despite our heartfelt pleas and showing it clear evidence of its negative impact in our lives.

On this path of self-realization one must continuously "clean house" and it seems, the more one is determined to get to the goal, the more trash the Ego likes to throw.

## PNW Litter Project

Tending to this litter feels like a never -ending project and there are days I feel overwhelmed by the sheer amount of “stuff” that comes up and needs to be cleared.

There are also days when I feel I simply cannot spend another minute waist deep in this putrid pile of Ego refuse and wish I could go back to what the world calls “blissful ignorance”. But once on the path, one can never really go back, any more than one can pretend they are not in a landfill when clearly sitting in one- even if one closes their eyes, their other senses will not let them off the hook so easily!

And when I ask myself honestly what it is that I truly want, the answer is never, “to sit in my landfill of sleeping consciousness and pretend I am in Heaven”.

No, I want the real deal, I want to be fully awake, cleansed and clear of the Ego detritus that weights me down and rots all my God given abilities and higher expression of purpose. I want a lush and beautiful garden of liberation from which I can pluck fruit for the hungry, flowers for the dejected and soil to share with the spiritually barren.

But that landfill will not be transformed into a beautiful garden without a lot of hard work, focused attention and maybe even a work party or two when it becomes unmanageable.

Amma is a one woman massive work party, the ultimate landfill supervisor who not only shows you the best way to remove the refuse, but is also there cheering you on and sending you other work party volunteers in the form of satsang and divinely appointed friends and family when the mound of junk seems insurmountable.

The last couple years have brought up truckloads of claptrap for me to remove and this clearing of the waste of the past and old regrets seems to be a theme among many I know and the world in general right now.

As we remove the rubbish of untruth from our lives, a lot of old pains and bits of discarded falsehoods are there to be looked at, handled and then thrown in the proper receptacle. This can be quite uncomfortable, scary even and can leave one wondering who they really are underneath it all.

I was thinking about all this the other day as I went to Gasworks to pick up cigarette butts. I was struck by how much



## PNW Litter Project



garbage had accumulated on this one small stretch of shore. Much of it was easily seen on the ground beneath me but as I investigated further, I discovered quite a bit of tossed scrap hidden in the grass, bushes and even tucked between rocks and branches.

I was sure I could not get this all cleaned up that day and just as I was beginning to feel frustrated by it, a group of young women rowed by with their instructor, her boat gliding above and in the middle of the other boats.

The instructor had a megaphone with which she used to shout clear, concise instructions and positive criticisms such as “Erin, you’re dropping your arm a bit”. She would shout praise when the women heeded her instructions and began rowing in a way that not only increased the speed of the boat but also brought her into better sync with her fellow rowers.

God’s grace and Gasworks Park offered me many images and encouraging lessons from Mother that day.

Like the rusted refinery that sits in this beautiful park, Amma is transforming and refining us by the great light of her love, illuminating all of our “houses”, turning us from coal into diamonds and softening our edges, even adding bright bursts of color to our structures that call our inner children out to play.

Mother offers us her bond of unconditional love, and like the old concrete arches that were used



## PNW Litter Project

to support the large pipes connecting the facility, she is there protecting and supporting us on our path when we get weary (or lazy!)

I am so grateful to Amma and nature for reminding me that though I may fail to meet perfection in my daily life; if I continue to apply sincere desire, humility, selfless service and daily attention to purifying my inner landscape, there will come a day when I will be handed the keys to the pristine garden of my heart, and truly I will be in Heaven.



### Kick Butts Day 2015 is Coming!

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. <http://www.kickbuttsday.org> Traditionally our way of supporting that event is to hold cigarette butt work parties.

The actual Kick Butts Day is on Wednesday March 18, 2015, but we hold our workparties on weekends since most people would have to be at work on a Wednesday. Traditionally the Seattle/Redmond area work party is held in the International District of Seattle. That date will be announced soon.

It would be wonderful if many of the satsangs in the Pacific Northwest and beyond participated in Kick Butts Day this year. It is also fine for people to participate as individuals. If you have questions contact Karuna at [karunap108@comcast.net](mailto:karunap108@comcast.net).



## GreenFriends Projects in Amritapuri

### Organic Gardening in Amritapuri by Karuna Poole



©Alan Bosse

For some time Amma has stressed the importance of avoiding chemically treated food whenever possible. Last year, she expressed the desire of having only organic food served at the Amritapuri ashram. The residents immediately started planting seeds and seedlings all over the ashram. Some are in pots. Some are planted in the ground. There are even roof-top gardens! On my recent trip to Amritapuri, I saw tomato, spinach, eggplant, pepper, bean and okra plants. I'm sure there are also vegetable plants I don't recognize.





## GreenFriends Projects in Amritapuri



A day or two before I left Amritapuri, I visited three of the ashram's larger gardens. Two are a fifteen minute walk south of the ashram, and one is much closer.

First, I visited one of the gardens to the south. When I was at that garden last year, it primarily contained tulasi, and a few vegetable plants. The garden has grown exponentially since that time. There are now growing many types of fruit and vegetables in addition to the tulasi. Permaculture principles are utilized whenever possible.





## GreenFriends Projects in Amritapuri



As we walked through the garden, I was cautioned to be very careful not to step on what appeared to be weed-like plants that were growing in the paths. These are actually Ayurvedic and other herbs. Many of these medicinal plants are endangered, so Amma has asked for them to be cultivated in the Amritapuri gardens.

It was amazing to see how fast some of the plants grow there. The first of the pictures below is of a banana plant on the day it was planted. The next two are plants which had been the same size when they were planted, but were now FOUR days older! I can't imagine anything ever growing that fast in Seattle.





## GreenFriends Projects in Amritapuri

Amma's desire is to have all the ashram food become organic. Since it will take some time for that desire to become reality, the residents' short-term goal is to at least provide all-organic produce for the lunch that Amma serves to everyone on Tuesdays.

Each week vegetables for that meal are picked from all of the ashram gardens and taken to the kitchen for preparation. Many come from Amma's Grace Garden (pictured below), which is located next to the garden I just reported on.





## GreenFriends Projects in Amritapuri

The last garden I visited was the one closest to the ashram. That one had also changed markedly since I was there last year. Tulasi and vegetables were growing abundantly but my eyes were pulled to the beautiful flowers! My time at that garden was very brief so I look forward to exploring it in more depth next year.

I was fascinated by some projects that were being done with coconuts and banana trees in the first of the larger gardens I visited. I plan to report on those in the next newsletter!

