



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 pnwgreenfriends108@gmail.com

For The Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration Project write:

Ananya_ammasananya@comcast.net

PNW GARDENING

Bhuvaneshwari's Prasad



Aum Amriteshwaryai Namah

Dear GreenFriends,

Blessed Spring from the Pacific Northwest. We hope your gardens are now growing. Perhaps you have some green sprouts by a window, a few planter boxes on the front porch or flower beds in the yard. All these are gardens.

Spring is associated with a busy time of year full of the vigour of strengthening life force. The awakening forces of the Earth which flow through us call us into the active season. Today's lifestyle has become so full - full of choices and opportunities, commitments and responsibilities. Where does a garden fit in?

This is one place in our lives where there need not be a rush!

Our family made a choice here to live a rural lifestyle on behalf of simplicity and harmony. In order to arrive there we consciously let go of many things - so it's noticeable when I find myself in the garden stressed about how much work there is to be done! The garden has consistently reflected that one conscious action done to completeness and with awareness yields more than 10 actions, hastily completed.

A garden teaches about balance in work, activity, recreation, rest and relaxation - tuning into the ebb and flow of universal prana. Finding creative ways of working with this life force can be very intriguing and rewarding. The intelligence inherent in the way living things grow inspires creative discovery.

Gardening is a practice that benefits body, heart, mind and spirit. The physical exercise can be a yoga



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practice when we move with awareness and integrate breathing, balancing use of both sides of the body. No need to drive to the gym!

Meditating on the life force apparent in all the living forms we encounter in the garden can be a deeply joyful experience. It is empowering to participate in each part of the full cycle of nature, starting even before the planting of a seed, sprouting, flowering, bearing fruit and recycling. It is a deep local lifestyle fulfilling on all levels. Plants respond to our state and feed back the

healing energy we cultivate when we work with them. They are ideal recipients and givers of loving kindness.

The spiritual practice of gardening blesses us with a harmonious state of being that carries forward into all our other activities and relationships.

Some good news stories from nature: Orcas have returned to Desolation Sound! We saw a pod of 5, one big male, 3 females and one baby, swim by gracefully on Earth Day! We have had frequent sightings of this group in 2015 after many years of their absence. Abundant flocks of Snow Geese and Brant Geese were flying above us all week! Mother Nature is strong!

Jai Bhuvaneshwari!

Mark Braaten – Cortes Island



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Making Your Gardening Life Easier and More Enjoyable

Weeds

Weeds are plants we think are in the wrong place. By having bare ground in our gardens we are inviting weeds to appear. Nature abhors bare soil, any bare ground in your garden will soon sprout plants from dormant seeds in the soil, seeds carried by the wind and animals, and creeping roots and runners. To minimize weeding minimize bare soil.

Mulch



Mulches such as straw, hay, leaves, bark, and cardboard will keep weeds at bay, keep the soil moist, and provide organic material. The garlic I planted in the fall has sprouted thru the hay and will require little work 'til harvest. I like to dig out the good soil in my paths and add it to my raised beds, then put down a couple of layers of cardboard with a covering of hay on the paths.

New plantings

In new ornamental gardens I often see trees and shrubs planted too close to fill in the garden; in a few years they will grow into each other and some will need to be moved. Be aware of their eventual size and space accordingly. The spaces in between can be filled with fast growing annuals like calendula, sweet peas, and nasturtiums. Vigorous groundcovers such as periwinkle, spurge, or sweet woodruff can also be used, but over time they will spread too far and can require considerable effort to be controlled. Vigorous herbaceous perennials like rudbeckia, bergamont, and crocosmia or fast growing shrubs like buddleia, lavatera, and forstia will quickly fill in space and can be easily managed.

In the vegetable garden I have been planting out broccoli transplants, spacing them a couple of feet apart, in the open space I am planting spinach and lettuce. Interplanting transplants with quick growing salad greens will minimize open ground.

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Forks and mattocks

Different types of weeds require different types of tools to easily control them. Some areas of my berry patch that didn't get mulched and buttercups have become established amongst the strawberries. They have brittle tops that break off easily and will also regenerate from pieces of root. I use my long handled digging fork to go thru the garden and loosen these established weeds. I then use a small mattock with forked tines to lift the roots, shake off the soil and put them in a 5 gallon

bucket. For tap rooted weeds like dandelions, docks, and thistles I use a narrow transplant spade to loosen the root, then tease it out with the tined mattock. This method works better than the commonly used trowel which requires more effort and often cuts parts of roots, leaving them to regrow.

Slicing hoes

For shallow rooted weeds like chickweed, smartweed, and popweed I like to use a hoe that slices just under the soil surface, cutting roots and lifting the plants when they are young. There are a number of styles of these hoes. One style has a blade shaped like a stirrup which has a little back and forth oscillation movement of the blade. Hula hoes, shuffle hoes, and action hoes are examples of this type. They vary in their robustness and width.



Other hoes that cut below the surface are the American winged weeder, the English swoe hoe, Elliot Coleman's col-linear hoe and the diamond hoe.

Keeping the blade sharp is necessary for them to work well, and the angle of the blade to the soil is also important. Too steep an angle makes the blade dig too deep and too shallow, causing it to skip over the weeds.

Over the years I have noticed that tool handles have gotten shorter and shorter, requiring the user to bend over

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instead of keeping his/her back straight, This makes the tool harder to use and less comfortable. I have replaced some hoe handles with a 6 ft. length of dowel, and extended others with a piece of PVC pipe slipped over the handle. This allows me to stand straight rather than bend over, which eases strain on my back. It also allows better control of the blade angle. I have a selection of slicing hoes so that I can choose the right one to suit the soil—i.e., some work best -in light soil, some in heavier soil, some in dry soil, and some in wet soil.

Right tools

With hand tools, small differences in shape, weight, length, and sharpness can make a big difference in ease of use and effectiveness.

Choosing the right tool for the conditions can make a big difference in comfort and efficiency—a fork rather than a shovel, a mattock rather than a trowel, loppers rather than shears.

Finding the right tools for you and your conditions will make your gardening life easier and more enjoyable. Visit and talk with community and market gardeners to see what tools and techniques they use and give them a try.

cercis chinensis



empress tree



primula japonica



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If We Feed Our Soil, We Feed Ourselves

There are 100 species in the *Stellaria* genus and every year I think I've got a new one, but then on closer inspection it turns out to be good-old Chickweed (*Stellaria media*) looking different because it is growing in pure compost.

Leaves, seedpods and seeds are all twice the size as what one would see in the wild, and the taste is just scrumptious. Eating the plant nourishes the body's foundation and energizes it. This leads me to consider the relationship between soil nutrients, plants, and ultimately the human body, the soil/body connection as it were.

I have found that if we feed our soil we feed ourselves. It is that simple.



Here is some more information on Chickweed:

Family: Pink (Caryophyllaceae)

It is an annual or overwintering annual that takes 60 days to maturity

Spreading groundcover native to all temperate zones, as far north as the Arctic. Succulent, green leaves dotted upon maturity with white flowers. Classic spring tonic, loaded with vitamins, flavonoids, and blood-cleansing saponins.

Harvest fresh for a wholesome, succulent and tasty salad green. Used daily, the herb will assist in weight reduction programs. Dried, it makes a worthwhile addition to any healing salve.

Plant prefers soils that were heavily manured or composted the previous growing season and have now mellowed into aged compost. Try sowing it in the spot where that monumental zucchini died back. Sow in fall or spring. Strew seed on surface, press in, and keep moist until germination. Grows best in cool soils.

Article by Richo Cech, Horizon Herbs, Williams, Oregon

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Horizon-Herbs/348837717347?fref=nf>

<https://www.horizonherbs.com>

Teaching The Children

There is Glitter in My Compost Pile by Aishwarya Murray



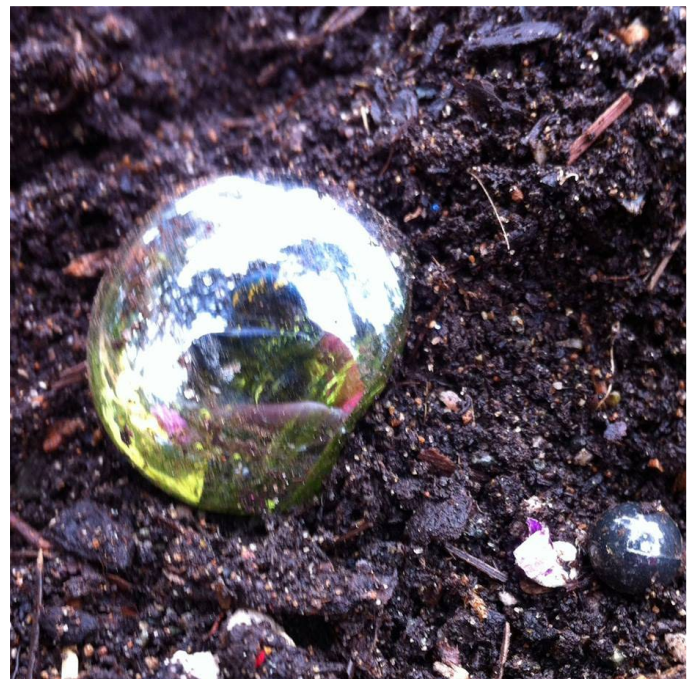
I work for a children's nature education program. The program has been going on for over a decade now, which means some of the structures in our Kids' Garden have reached the end of their lives. One such structure was our three-bin compost system. It was completely full, and we hadn't been putting compost in it for a couple of years. It was sitting in a neglected corner of the garden, covered in nasturtiums, the wooden posts beginning to turn into compost themselves.

When the compost was disassembled, the adult volunteer gardeners who help make sure our kids' garden actually

grows something were very excited about all of the wonderful rich soil that they found at the bottom of it. They started enthusiastically shovelling it into a newly built raised bed, laying it on top of the other garden beds as top-dressing, and making all sorts of very serious plans, including making charts of which garden beds were most in need of soil improvement.

That is when they found the glitter. Actually, they found flat glass beads in various colours, buried like hidden treasure in the decade old composted soil. They pulled out three beads and went for a tea break, leaving me the shovels and wheelbarrow so that I could add soil to the section of the garden that is full of seeds planted by kids.

I started shovelling, and soon found another flat glass bead. This made me look closer in the soil, where I soon discovered tiny bits of blue, green, and purple glitter. I laughed, and happily distributed the glittery soil over the kids' gardens, wondering what the kids will think when they discover glitter



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surrounding the peas they planted last month.

It doesn't surprise me in the least that there is glitter in our compost. This sort of thing happens when you garden with children. Nothing gets done 'properly' in the kids' section of our garden, because it is, essentially, run as a giant experiment. But, because we experiment, we often discover unexpected surprises.

One such surprise happened after we planted peas back in February. The peas grew enthusiastically in our unusually warm spring weather... only to be devoured by slugs who were happy for the delicious pea shoots. In the place of the peas, several other strange looking plants appeared in the garden. When we investigated what these new weird plants were, they turned out to be potatoes. An earlier kids' group had dumped all of the soil from our 'potato tower' onto this garden bed in the fall, and because they didn't know they weren't supposed to do that, we ended up with a bunch of potatoes in the pea garden.

Serious vegetable gardeners might be very stressed out by this. The crop rotation plan is ruined! The soil in that bed is not deep enough for potatoes! We need to grow peas against the fence! The kids, however, after a brief moment of disappointment, embraced the change. They took their nametags, which they had originally used to mark the location of their peas, moved them next to the potato plants, and asked me for more pea seeds. We discussed how this was really a lesson about life. Sometimes, you plant peas... and get potatoes.

When peas turn into potatoes, and your compost is full of glitter and beads, you start to wonder if really, what you're learning, and teaching, in the garden isn't how to grow vegetables, but rather a lot of more important lessons, such as patience, perseverance, and non-attachment. Over time, I've shifted from trying to teaching the kids what I know, to allowing myself to learn along with them.

What I've mostly been learning is how to find the proper balance between providing guidance while still allowing for experimentation and whimsy. Kids love watering plants, pulling out weeds, and planting seeds, and are often more tolerant of failure than we give them credit for, which makes them natural gardeners. But, because a garden with no successful plants is very depressing indeed, some structure and planning is needed.

For instance:

*Garden beds in a children's garden need to be narrower so that shorter arms can reach the middle.

Teaching The Children



*Keeping feet out of the garden is difficult for excited children. Raised beds help prevent this problem.

*Kids love working with gardening tools, but need to have some safety rules established for using them (like always walking while carrying tools, not running). Hand cultivators and watering cans are especially popular.

*Physical structures like raised beds, greenhouses, and three-bin composts may be mistaken for gym equipment. Rather than worry about how to keep kids off of these structures, it may be easier to just build them robustly enough to be climbed on.

*When selecting seeds, involve the kids in the choices, but also try to guide them towards plants that will be hardy and grow quickly in your area, and are easy for small hands to work with. Peas, beans, nasturtiums, and sunflowers are good plants to start with.

*For plants with smaller seeds, some seed companies make 'seed tape' with seeds incorporated into a paper strip to allow for proper spacing. This really helpful stuff if kids want to plant tiny seeds like carrots or lettuce.

Don't get too attached to your planning, though. If the kids want to do something crazy, like plant watermelons in January, or throw art supplies into the compost pile, it's often worth letting them try, so that they can learn from the results. The real product of a kids' garden is the time spent together digging, watering, experimenting, and wondering. Ten years ago, some kid who didn't know that beads and metallic glitter don't decompose threw their craft project into the compost pile, and because that happened we now have shiny, colourful, fairy dust sprinkled throughout our garden beds. It's not supposed to be there, and isn't going to help the plants grow – but everything is somehow a bit more magical because of it.

Saving The Earth's Resources

Damaged Clothes Aren't Garbage Anymore



A recent Seattle Public Utilities notice asks us to give ALL clothes, shoes and linens for reuse or recycling. Even items that are torn, worn or stained can be recycled. The notice goes on to say:

“Many other items, including stuffed animals, purses, belts and other accessories can be donated in any condition. Even single shoes, socks and gloves that are not paired-up can be matched with other “singles” and worn by people who would otherwise go without. Damaged clothes are not trash—they can have a second life as new products such as wiping rags; padding for carpet, mattresses and upholstery; and insulation material for automobiles and appliances.”

What an inspiring program this is and what contribution it makes to changing our throw-away society.

Threadcycle is sponsored by King County and Seattle Public Utilities.

For more information, including drop off locations go to:

<http://your.kingcounty.gov/solidwaste/ecoconsumer/threadcycle.asp>

WILD LIFE

Bird's Nest by Sanaa Rizvi



*Winter winds have come and gone,
Empty nest awaiting the return.
Under heat of the northern feathers;
New birds settle at break of dawn.*

*The innocent cries of the newly born;
Seeking sweet crumbs filled with love,
Having not learned actions nor words.
Fly at once without fear of thorn.*

*The flaws you make have fear arise.
The wings trembling cold and small.
Preparing for the first of flights;
Soar throughout the cloudless skies.*

*The nest alone expecting to be filled;
Raw emptiness of the wintry season.
For when the sun is glistening bright;
The flight of birds shall be fulfilled.*

(from: <http://www.adashofsunny.com/birds-nest>)

The pictures of the pelicans and sea lions are from Gunavati who lives in Amritapuri but was visiting San Diego



WILD LIFE

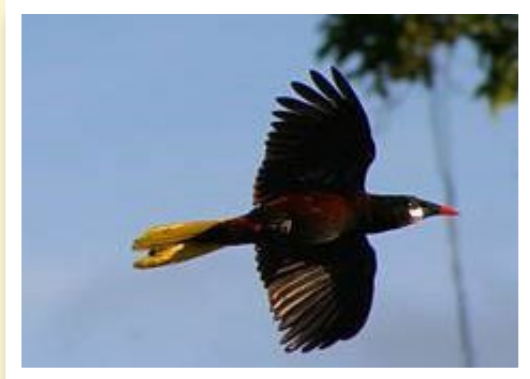
From Marla in Bellevue (after trip to Costa Rica)



Oropendola nests

Wikipedia says this about the birds.

"Oropendolas are birds associated with forests, for a few species, more open woodland. They are colonial breeders, with several long woven basket nests in a tree, each hanging from the end of a branch. These gregarious birds eat large insects and fruit. They are very vocal, producing a wide range of songs, sometimes including mimicry."



Interesting Information from Our Readers

From Yashas in Seattle:

"Are we human beings not too limited to bring a change to the destruction of Mother Earth?" No, we are not! We have infinite power within us, but we are fast asleep and unaware of our strength. This power rises up when we awaken within. Spirituality is life's greatest secret. It enables us to awaken unlimited but dormant inner power. Earth cannot be changed for the better unless the consciousness in individuals is changed." - Amma

From AI in Seattle:

Seattle Parks is proposing a ban on smoking in city parks The reasons for the proposed ban are as follows:

1. Health concerns over the effects of second-hand smoke on children, youth and adults
2. Environmental impacts and maintenance concerns (cigarette butts)
3. Encouragement for smokers to quit
4. Easier to enforce than the current 25-foot rule

Seattle will join more than a 1,000 cities large and small nationwide if the ban is passed.

(These comments were written by David Takami.)

From Shobana in Shoreline:

I don't know if you know that Netsah and Michael (and tons of volunteers) have created a working permaculture garden in Oak Harbor. Truly a labor of love! They've been at it for years. Anyway, they've just gotten the beginnings of a website for it started. I thought you'd enjoy seeing it.

<http://www.imagineapermacultureworld.org>

From Rajeshwari in Vancouver, BC

This is a great trailer for a permaculture video!! Gives hope!!!

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=h1x7DQp9ysc>

From Poornima in Shoreline:

"Britta Riley wanted to grow her own food (in her tiny apartment). So she and her friends developed a system for growing plants in discarded plastic bottles — researching, testing and tweaking the system using social media, trying many variations at once and quickly arriving at the optimal system."

https://www.ted.com/talks/britta_riley_a_garden_in_my_apartment#t-8056

Interesting Information from Our Readers

Submitted by Aditi in Fairfield

Gaelic Blessing

*Deep Peace of the running wave to you,
of water flowing, rising and falling,
sometimes advancing, sometimes receding...
May the stream of your life flow unimpeded!
Deep Peace of the running wave to you!*

*Deep Peace of the flowing air to you,
which fans your face on a sultry day,
the air which you breathe deeply, rhythmically,
which imparts to you energy, consciousness, life.
Deep Peace of the flowing air to you!*

*Deep Peace of the quiet earth to you,
who, herself unmoving, harbors the movements
and facilitates the life of the ten thousand creatures,
while resting contented, stable, tranquil.
Deep Peace of the quiet earth to you!*

*Deep Peace of the shining stars to you,
which stay invisible till darkness falls
and disclose their pure and shining presence
beaming down in compassion on our turning world.
Deep Peace of the shining stars to you!*

PNW Litter Project

PNW Litter Project Stats

Thirty-nine litter project members and their guests reported picking up **94** hours of litter in April 2015. The average pick up time was **2.4** hours; the range was **3 minutes to 14 hours** and the median was **1** hour.

Members of the project have picked up litter for **6386** 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**. Our **2015** count stands at **32,900** butts, bringing us to a grand total of **236,624** butts since we started sending them to TerraCycle in January 2013. (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)



©Eric Ewing

PNW Litter Project

Living in Landfills by Karuna Poole



Photo Credit: [Sreejit Poole](#)

Recently, while traveling by train to Rishikesh, my son Sreejit took this picture of children playing cricket in a North India trash field. I saw the photo when he posted it, along with many others, on [Twitter](#).

Soon thereafter, an article and photos about India's Boragaon landfill caught my eye. The landfill, which is 94 acres in size is about 300 miles from Bangladesh on the Bhutanese border. It is home to 100 families.

Timothy Bouldry, the author of the article, "lives and works inside the La Chureca landfill in Nicaragua, one of the largest landfills in the world. He helps the people living there grow gardens fertilized with compost he makes with organic waste from local smoothie shops. In addition to his photography, he teaches English and yoga classes a few times per week."

To read more go to: <http://www.cnn.com/2015/04/14/world/cnnphotos-boragaon-landfill-india/index.html>