



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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Interesting Information from Our Readers



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

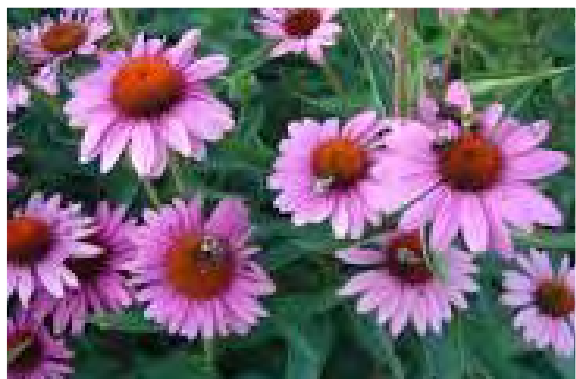
PNW Gardening

Perennials: Medicinal plants for your Garden by Rachael Fairbanks

Perennials are a wonderful way to bring life into your garden year after year, to share seed and root stock with neighbors, and to make sure you have an abundance of plants for years to come. I love perennials mainly because they are cheap, spread easily, and are often drought tolerant. Medicinal perennials give you the opportunity to have a plethora of plants at your fingertips for healing various ailments, creating pollinating species for birds and bees, and having plants that are often fairly resistant to pests.

Some of the perennials I have planted recently in my garden have been:

Echinacea



What they like: Echinacea grows well in full sun to partial shade.

She will do well in drought situations, though like most plants she likes to be moist. Plants grow from root stock/ nursery starts/ or seeds. If you grow them from seed, start them when there is 4-6 weeks of frost still left. Plants will spread and become bushy with purple coneflowers perfect for the monarch butterfly. Flowers can be 2-3' tall.

What they support: Echinacea can be harvested for her flower, young leaf, or for her root. It's the root that is used in traditional tinctures as a support for the immune system; however, all parts of the plant have this medicinal effect. Harvest roots in the fall when 'the energy' has gone to the root. Flowers are picked towards the beginning of the bloom to be used in teas and infused honeys.

Bee Balm

What they like: Bee balm, unlike Echinacea, likes moist soils. It is also a wonderful attractant for bees (hence the name) and butterflies. With rich soil this plant will grow year after year and bring Dr. Seuss like quality flowers to your garden. Deadheading the flowers will provide continuous bloom through the summer months. These plants are 2-4 feet tall but you can find a dwarf variety that only grows to about 10 inches.



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What they support: Everything! This plant is helpful for stomachaches, flatulence, sore throats, headaches, fevers, and overall immune health. It brings warmth to the body and supports blood flow. I use this plant as a tea- both leaves and flowers- and dry the flowers for later use in colorful concoctions. You can also use it in baths and as a garnish for salad.

Yarrow

What they like: Yarrow likes well-drained soil and lots of sun (though I have seen this plant grow everywhere). It can easily tolerate drought and is often found in the more arid areas of Eastern Washington. The flowers will grow 2-4 feet high and are great for cut flowers and as a pollinator. The leaves are feathery and have a tendency to spread in nice bunches and not aggressively.



What they support: I will not be in my garden EVER without yarrow. It is a life saver- literally. Yarrow is an incredible plant because as a chewed poultice it clots blood. Leaves can be used to aid menstruation, break a fever, and get folks over a cold. The root is used to numb the gums and is a fun experiment with older children in the power of plants.

WARNING: Do not try to identify this plant in the wild- there are too many poisonous look-alikes- one famous one being POISON HEMLOCK. Thanks for being smart with your plant knowledge!

Integrate plants you love into your garden and it will become an alive place full of exploration, usefulness, and friends! The garden is for you to enjoy and to celebrate nature in the process. For more information about garden tips, email Rachael at Rachael.fairbanks@gmail.com.

You are Invited:

We are calling on our green-thumbed green friends to celebrate the garden at the Maltby property by coming out for a few hours, day, or weekend to have a work-party with our very knowledgeable and funny gardeners! Use your devotion to infuse it into the soil at Ma's property. Please email Rachael at

Rachael.fairbanks@gmail.com to schedule your visit today.

PNW Gardening

Growing Food in the Front Yard by Jyotirmayi Elmore



I have been noticing a very wonderful turn towards edible gardening in the front yards of Bellingham. I take a nightly drive with my dear mother in the evening as the sun sets. We drive around the quaint neighborhoods here looking for a dream home suitable for both our families. Along the way, I take pictures of our favorite things, and we are noticing that many neighborhoods' residents are planting food gardens in their front and side yards. And they are looking great!

It really is more than just looks, actually. Planting a garden in your front yard can have many advantages.

The first advantage of growing fruits and vegetables at home, is that these gardens are a perfect way to inspire children to learn food production skills that some of our parents and grandparents took for granted. In addition, it's a way for children to develop a personal relationship with Mother Earth, and a way for all of us to appreciate the bounty she'll provide in conjunction with our efforts.

Amma has been stressing the growing of kitchen gardens, so I think she would be proud and happy that many of us are developing an interest, taking action, and including our beloved children in what we learn. Don't worry about inexperience. There is so much information available to begin the wise and wonderful path to growing your own fruits and vegetables!

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The second advantage is food safety. Escalating concerns include glyphosphate contamination invading the environment from pesticide use and the potentially hazardous effects of genetically modified seeds. We can avoid both issues by growing our own food using organic and heirloom seeds and natural fertilizers. These seeds can be passed down in a family gardening book including pictures of your glorious gardens and the fun times your family had cooking with the food you grew together. One of my favorite activities is a Saturday omelet brunch for family, friends, and neighbors in which they select their own fillings from my garden's tomatoes, peppers, and fresh Italian herbs.

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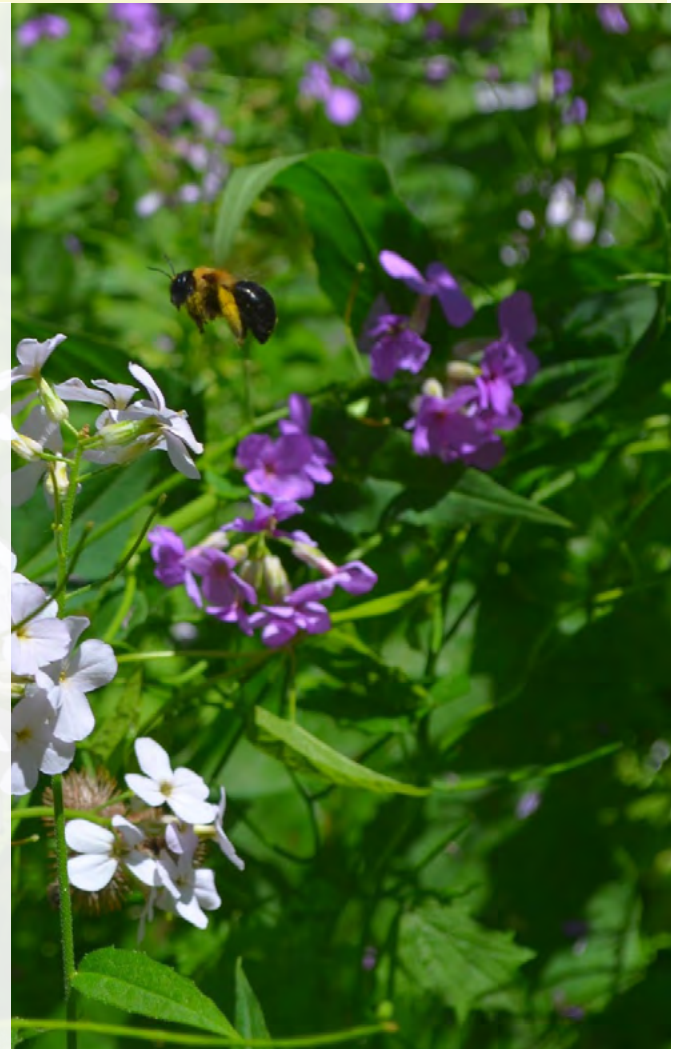
A third advantage of an edible garden, especially one out front, is that it's a great opportunity to befriend neighbors and send them home with samples of heirloom tomatoes and other delicious produce you've grown yourself.

Unfortunately, there are some cities that forbid food-producing gardens in the front yard, so make sure you find out what the laws are in your city.

Here are Cristina Santiestevan's 10 rules for growing a successful vegetable garden in your front yard:

10 Rules for Growing Vegetables in the front Yard

1. Be beautiful. Looks matter.
2. Be friendly. Say hello.
3. Be generous. Share.
4. Be respectful. Keep things tidy.
5. Be ruthless. No mercy for unhealthy plants.
6. Be flexible. Use containers.
7. Be creative. Experiment.
8. Be thorough. Plan for all four seasons.
9. Be incognito. Grow flowers.
10. Be ready. Just in case.



You can learn more by reading the full article. (<http://outlawgarden.com/2012/07/13/10-rules-for-growing-vegetables-in-the-front-yard>). She provides simple and fail-proof tactics to help keep you and your family embracing the many gifts that front yard gardening can bring.

PNW Gardening

Life is Like That



Wild winds predict rain around here. Unlike the squirrels, who skittered for shelter, I went to the garden and tried to take photos of highly colored true comfrey blossoms (pictured) as they swung in the gusts.

Then, I moved compost down to the field and side-dressed all the comfrey plants (carefully avoiding a side-dressing of my camera as it lay in the field, which simply wouldn't have done it the same good as it did the plants).

The rains came in the night and, as I woke from time to time and listened to the drumming, I just couldn't stop thinking about the comfrey. The water would fall on the compost, and the compost tea would reach the roots, which had been thirsty, and then the plants would grow some more, and flower more freely.

All this would promote the seeds. The seeds would be collected, gardeners would grow them, and there would be more comfrey, more squirrels, more wind. I turned over and snuggled the comforter. Dawn came in the midst of the storm, and the electricity was out. I did manage coffee, which dispelled an inexplicable case of the grumpies.

Humans, gusty wind, and comfrey. Life is like that.

<https://www.facebook.com/Strictly-Medicinal-Seeds-348837717347>

Saving the Earth's Resources

Buying Less Plastic – Part 3. Laundry Detergent

by Vandita (Halfmoon Bay, B.C.)



By Michal Mañas (Own work) [CC BY 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

Homemade Laundry Detergent: Save Resources and Money and Avoid Toxins

By making our own recipes, instead of buying commercial detergent products, we reduce the burden of harmful chemicals on the environment, along with reducing purchase of single use plastics. As we change our habits, we influence others. Saving precious resources used in manufacturing and recycling, such as water and oil, we may be reducing the impact of global warming in a small way, but it all makes a difference—maybe more than we dream.

Additionally, by using these recipes, we can protect our own health by avoiding synthetic fragrance and other toxins that are present even in the Eco versions.

Because laundry-care product manufacturers are not required to list all laundry detergent ingredients on packaging, it can be difficult for consumers to make informed choices. The term “fragrance” alone may refer to a combination of several hundred laundry chemicals including many that are hazardous. Laundry detergents are often derived from petrochemicals and contain synthetic fragrances, even when advertised as “fragrance-free.” Most companies add optical brighteners to detergent formulas—additives that emit blue light, making whites appear whiter by tricking the eye. By design, optical brighteners stay in clothes after washing, which may cause skin irritation. They also decompose relatively slowly and can be toxic to marine life. Fabric softeners are also designed to stay in clothes and not fully rinse out, which means lingering chemicals come into contact with skin.

By [Sarah Lozanova March/April 2012](#).

Saving the Earth's Resources

These are a few cheap and healthier alternatives:

1. Soap Nuts and Eco Oxy bleach – shipped in from India in a compostable package and with a cotton bag. Good for light cleaning but I found they didn't work well without adding some washing soda*. I think if they are soaked and made into a liquid they are more effective.
2. Soap Nuts Liquid Detergent with Eco Oxy bleach – easy to make and effective. This liquid cleans very well but is more expensive than the liquid Laundry detergent below, depending on the price of the Soap Nuts. See recipe below.
3. Washing Soda* and Eco Oxy bleach – comes in compostable packaging and cleans well without creating suds. Even without adding essential oils, the clothes smell very clean afterwards.
4. Liquid Laundry Detergent – a homemade recipe found online that is very cheap to make and effective. See 5 gallon recipe below.

*Be aware washing soda can be a lung irritant, wear a mask if needed.

Is Commercial or Homemade Better at Getting Clothes Clean?

I've found that homemade detergent gets out as much dirt as commercial detergent, and that clothes come out smelling clean. Eco Bleach or Oxygen bleach have successfully removed remaining stains. For the price and result, it seems that the homemade detergent is a better choice, everything considered. I tested my husband's dirtiest clothes with each of these recipes and they really came out mud free. If they were very dirty, I gave them a pre-rinse to get the excess dirt off.

A school girl tested this out and her conclusions are interesting: <http://www.amynewnostalgia.com/my-daughters-homemade-laundry-detergent-science-project>

Homemade Soap Nut Liquid Laundry Detergent

Posted by Heather on <http://www.mommypotamus.com/homemade-liquid-laundry-detergent>

Why make soap nuts into a liquid?

Are you wondering why you can't just toss some soap berries into the wash? Well, you actually can, but there are a couple of catches:

- *Soap berries can be used for several washes, but you have to keep track of how many times each berry has been used and you need to store them properly between washes*
- *If you're washing in cold water you'll need to soak the nuts in hot water for 5-10 minutes before adding them.*
- *You also need to remove them before tossing clothes in the dryer*

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Image source: <http://www.mommypotamus.com/homemade-liquid-laundry-detergent>

Personally, I was always accidentally throwing my soap nuts into the dryer or forgetting how many loads I'd done with them. I have other things to keep track of!

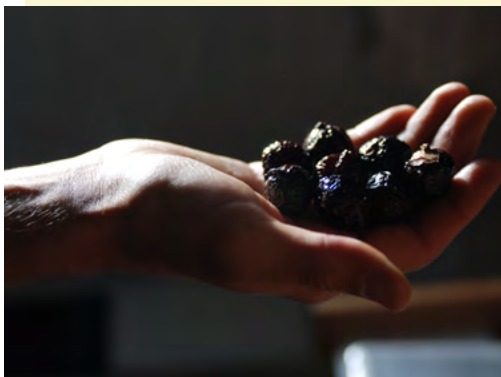
Soap nuts liquid is much more like traditional liquid laundry detergent, and it's just easier in my opinion.

Excerpt from: <http://www.mommypotamus.com>

See full recipe here: <http://www.mommypotamus.com/homemade-liquid-laundry-detergent>

Additional tips:

By Petty Officer 2nd Class Nathaniel Moger



(<https://www.dvidshub.net/image/105843>)

[Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

I discovered if you squash the soap nuts through a sieve with a wooden spoon you get out more saponin. You can then put the soap nuts remains in a small, drawstring fabric bag and use in the laundry or for dishes. There is still lots of saponin left in them and they foam up through the bag.

Homemade Liquid Laundry Detergent

Posted by Crystal on <http://naturalthrifty.com/homemade-laundry-soap.html>

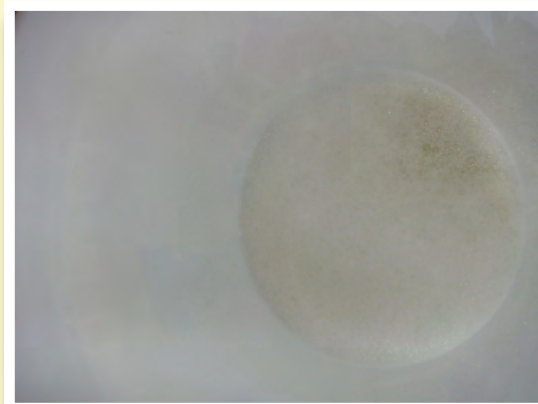
Out of all the things I'm talking about this week in regards to laundry, this homemade laundry soap recipe is by far my

Saving the Earth's Resources

favorite. It's super easy to make, and is the cheapest out of all the laundry detergent recipes I've been sharing. If you've got these ingredients and twenty minutes, then you can make your own laundry detergent, be more eco-friendly, and start saving a lot of money. Here's what you're going to need...

Ingredients and Supplies

- 1 Bar Soap (I use this castile soap)
- 1 cup Washing Soda
- 1 cup Borax
- Hot Water
- Measuring Cup
- Cheese Grater
- 5 Gallon Bucket
- Big Metal Cooking Pot
- Long Wooden Spoon
- Optional: 35-40 drops of essential oil (tea tree, lavender etc...) I chose tea tree oil.



By Vandita Smith

Directions for Homemade Laundry Soap

Step One: Grate your soap with a cheese grater. This is probably the most work you will do in the entire process. But afterwards your cheese grater will be really clean!

Step Two: Bring big pot of water (about half full) to a boil, and then slowly stir in your grated soap.

Step Three: Once the soap is melted, reduce heat and slowly add in the Washing Soda while stirring with the wooden spoon. At this point a small reaction will occur, and your mixture will try to bubble over a little in your pot. This is where the wooden spoon comes in handy. Lay the wooden spoon across your pot, and then your mixture won't boil over and make a mess.

Step Four: Add in your Borax to the pot while stirring. Once everything is blended and melted, remove from heat.

Step Five: Fill your five gallon bucket half-way with hot water. Add your soap mixture from the pot to your bucket of water.

Step Six: At this point you can add in your optional essential oil, and stir the mixture really well with your wooden spoon.

Step Seven: Once everything is well-blended, fill the bucket the rest of the way with water and then put the lid on. Allow to cool and sit overnight.

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Step Eight: After sitting overnight, your mixture will become a gel-like goop, and that means it's ready to use! At this point you can transfer some of the soap to clean and empty smaller bottles (old laundry detergent bottles or milk jugs), so that it's easy to use every day. Shake/stir the mixture before using in your washing machine. Use one cup or less of "gel-like goop" per load.

Cost of Homemade Laundry Soap (Liquid)

- 1 bar soap = \$3.49
- 1 box Washing Soda (55oz) \$3.19 – Cost Per Cup = .46 cents
- 1 box Borax (76oz) \$4.49 – Cost Per Cup = .47 cents
- Optional Essential Oil: Tea Tree Oil (1oz) \$8.99 – Cost for 40 Drops = .72 cents

Total Cost for 5 Gallons or 80+ loads of Laundry Detergent = \$5.17

Total Cost Per Load: Approximately .06 cents

**Note that prices are common retail. Watch for a sale or deal at an outlet for even cheaper cost per load!*

For more info and further instructions and photos, see source article:

<http://naturalthrifty.com/homemade-laundry-soap.html>

Additional Info

Fabric Softener - 1/2 Cup Baking soda. Pour into machine during rinse cycle.

Homemade Oxygen bleach recipe - <http://www.food.com/recipe/homemade-cleaner-wow-319938>

Alternative to Oxygen Bleach – <http://nourishingjoy.com/homemade-bleach>

If you are feeling ambitious, here is a Castille Soap recipe - <http://www.nwedible.com/how-to-make-diy-liquid-castile-soap>

Dryer Ball recipe - <http://www.diynatural.com/how-to-make-wool-dryer-balls>

If you feel so inclined, please support these bloggers and what they do. These people are helping us to be kinder to the environment, and they come up with great recipes which you can share with others. Even if you're a very busy parent, these recipes are quicker and easier to make than you might think—especially if you make a huge batch that will last awhile. I create a fun family project by letting my daughter help, and the money saving makes the project even more worthwhile.

Our own mother may carry us on her lap for five years or so. But Mother Earth will tolerate all our abuses and take care of us for our entire lifespan. We cannot forget the Mother who sustains us for all our life, who sustains all of life.

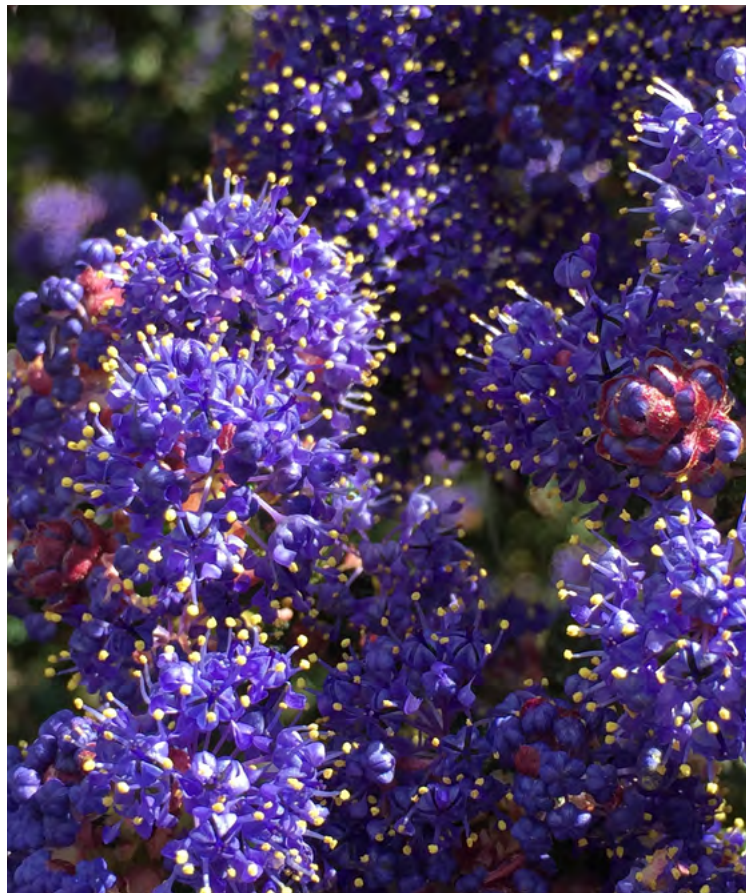
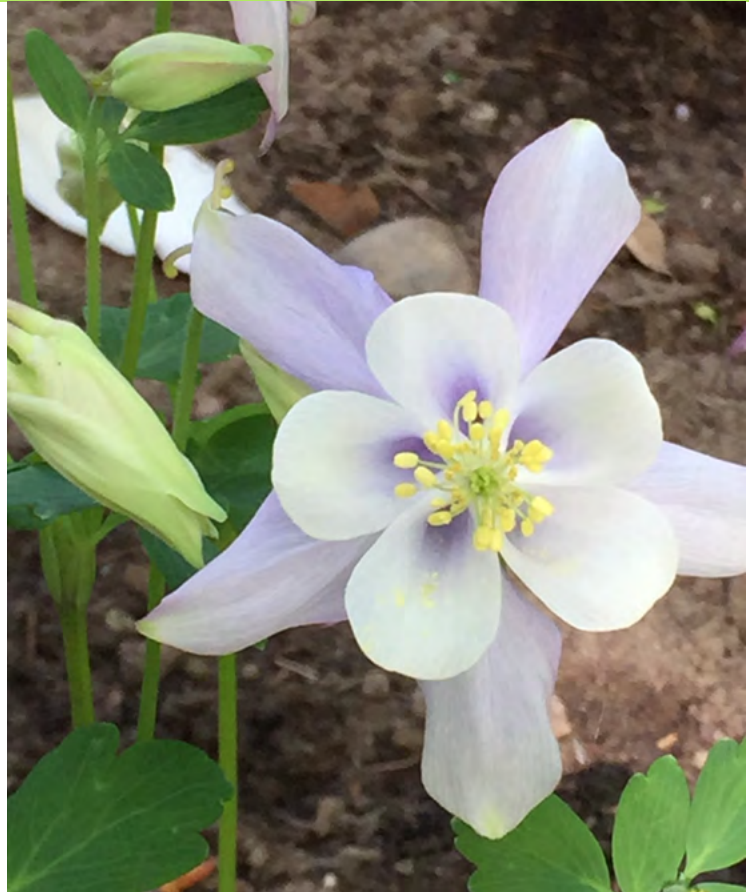
We cannot forget our responsibility towards her. - Amma

NATURE

Spring in Seattle by Karuna Poole



NATURE



PNW Litter Project

PNW Litter Project Stats

Thirty-nine Litter Project members and friends reported picking up **89** hours of litter in April 2016. The average pick up time was **2.3** hours; the range was **2 minutes to 23 hours** and the median was **1** hour.

Members of the project have picked up litter for **7652** 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 **2016** count stands at **25,400** butts, bringing us to a grand total of **300,124** 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)



Amritapuri Gardens

Amrita Herbal Garden by Karuna Poole

The Friday before I left India in January, my friend Lalita (from B.C. Canada) and I decided to go a garden near Amma's Amrita School of Ayurveda. Even though I had been to the property before, I wasn't sure how to get there so we hired a rickshaw.

When I saw a garden across from the college, I told the driver to stop and let us out. It turned out not to be the garden I had planned to see, but it was "no accident" that we stopped. We were soon walking in a wonderland.

This garden is named Amrita Herbal Garden and it is part of the School of Ayurveda. I learned later that it covers 5 acres and that there are 500 rare species of medicinal plants growing on the land. The plants are used for research and for making Ayurvedic medicines.

I will let the photographs speak for themselves.



Amritapuri Gardens



Amritapuri Gardens



Amritapuri Gardens



Interesting Information from Our Readers

From Lin in Bellevue:

Awesome story and videos...

https://www.thedodo.com/dog-saves-tiny-hummingbird-1759293160.html?utm_source=huffingtonpost.com&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=pubexchange

From Marla in Bellevue:**The Mouse, Douglas Fir and the Great Forest Fire**

Adapted from a well known local legend, by Heidi Bohan

https://www.wnps.org/education/resources/documents/K-5_Q&E/2nd_grade/2-2b.pdf

From Sri Lalita on Vashon:

Great reuse of a lot of things and absolutely glorious in bloom!

<http://www.hertoolbelt.com/pallet-planter-box>

From Achala in Tacoma:

It's a long read, but so worth it!

<https://grist.org/food/this-ocean-farmer-could-make-you-hopeful-about-the-future-of-the-sea>

From Poornima in Shoreline:

How a Japanese town produces no waste:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eym10GGidQU>

From Kothai in Bellevue:

Tips for reducing wood waste.

<http://www.seattletimes.com/life/wellness/12-tips-for-keeping-food-from-going-to-waste-or-your-waist>

From Priya in Seattle:

Video Cam of eaglets in Washington D.C.

<http://dceaglecam.eagles.org>