



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

PNW Gardening

Planting Butterfly Gardens in the Greater Pacific Northwest

by Jyotirmayi Elmore



Cabbage White Butterfly- [Wikimedia](#)



Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly - [Wikimedia](#)

One of the most exquisite insects for cheerful viewing in the PNW spring and summer is the butterfly. Fluttering haphazardly from flower to flower, they bring movement and joy to any garden.

One reward for having a flourishing butterfly garden is that you will be able to take some wonderful pictures to add to your family albums. Another is that kids love butterflies. Their fascination will provide the perfect opportunity to include them in yardwork by adding playful learning about nature. Teaching them the process of metamorphosis of caterpillar to butterfly will be especially joyful if they can watch and participate in the recording of the different stages of a butterfly's short life span.

If you decide to plant a PNW garden to attract butterflies, choose a place that will be visible and easy to maintain, such as:

- Close to a frequently-used window
- Along a walkway or next to a patio or other seating area
- Near a frequently-used entry
- In your vegetable garden

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Because the end of summer will bring the end of butterflies, choose some plants to include that will maintain a beautiful garden space in the winter. Plants with interesting winter structure might include evergreen foliage such as lavender, evergreen huckleberry, and hyssop. Butterflies will love them when they're blooming in spring and summer.



White Butterfly Caterpillars- [Wikimedia](#)

To successfully lure your winged beauties, you will need plants that will meet both the food needs of caterpillars and the nectar needs of butterflies.

Butterflies love:

- Brightly-colored, fragrant plants especially red, yellow, orange, pink, or purple.
- Plants with flat flower heads that contain small multiple florets, such as asters, which furnish butterflies with landing pads where they can rest, sip nectar, and pollinate the plants.
- Flowers with short tubes so they can reach the nectar such as mints and marigolds.
- Native plants with which they have evolved a mutually beneficial association.

Good container plants for butterflies are fuchsias, sweet alyssum, garden sage, dianthus, and lavender. Avoid tall annuals such as zinnia, and cosmos, and tall forms of marigold.

A flowering plant that can serve the needs of both caterpillar and butterfly is the PNW's native flowering currant (*Ribes sanguineum*). In addition to providing nectar for butterflies, it's also an early food source for over-wintering hummingbirds.

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Ribes Sanguineum Photo Credit: [Wikimedia](#)



Ceanothus Species Photo Credit:- [Wikimedia](#)

Another plant beloved by butterflies is the blue flowering shrub called the *Ceanothus Species*.



If you blend all of these plants that are loved by butterflies, you will be successfully on your way to some joyous butterfly watching with your children and family members of every generation.

Happy gardening in the Pacific Northwest!

Om Namah Shivaya.

References:

[Best Plants for Butterflies for the Northwest](#)

[Butterflies and How to Attract Them](#)

PNW Gardening In Defense of Low Germination

I was standing by a pothole in the driveway, late in the evening. A fine rain was falling. My attention was flagged by a polka-dot pattern in the pothole, and I realized that this phenomenon was caused by an even sprinkling of Empress Tree seeds that had landed there, distributed by the strong wind that, around here at least, generally kicks up just prior to a rainstorm.

The seeds were very evenly distributed. I thought they would never sprout there in the driveway. I thought most of them that fall on fertile ground never sprout either; otherwise, I'd be living in an empress tree forest, and I'm not. So nature is no stranger to low seed germination, and I fail to see why we humans should remain strangers to this phenomenon. It is common.

When we plant, sometimes the planetary influences and light cycles are ideal, and we get 100% germination for our efforts. Other times (like when planting around winter solstice), low germ is quite common. To the mind unaware, expectations breed disappointment. However, even one plant is a good receptacle for a prayer, makes food and medicine, is worth our love.

Below is a picture of my Sacred Datura (*Datura wrightii*) plant, the one living result from the planting of a packet of seed I sowed under lights January 1. I love this little plant. In my heart there is no emptiness for the seeds that did not sprout—they may sprout later, or become food for mycelia or earthworms. They have fallen, as will I, into the great mystery. <https://www.facebook.com/Strictly-Medicinal-Seeds-348837717347>



Saving the Earth's Resources

Buying Less Plastic – Part 2. Multi-Purpose Cleaner

by Vandita (Halfmoon Bay, B.C.)



epSos.de [CC BY 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>)], via Wikimedia Commons

The Scourge of Single Use Plastic and What We Can Do

In a recent TED Talk, Dianna Cohen delved into the root of our plastic problem. It's a quick talk and definitely worth the watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fddYApFEWfY>

Source: <http://greenupgrader.com/13228/the-scourge-of-single-use-plastic-and-what-you-can-do>

The Cost of Cleaning Products

This homemade Multi-Purpose Cleaner is incredibly cheap to make and very effective. This study shows how much the average family spends in N. America. It's a surprising amount.

How Much Money Does an Average Family Spend on Cleaning Products in a Year?

Data shows a correlation between the size of the household and the amount spent on housekeeping supplies. For instance, a household of one person in 2009 spent an average of \$345 on cleaning supplies, while a household of five or more persons spent an average of \$798 a year. Households with two, three or four persons spent

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nearly the same amount per year on cleaning supplies, with annual expenditures of \$779, \$771 and \$803 respectively.

Written by Ameerah Cetawayo, Demand Media, Title: How Much Money Does an Average Family Spend on Cleaning Products in a Year? Source: <http://budgeting.thenest.com/much-money-average-family-spend-cleaning-products-year-23539.html>

Easy To Make and a Healthier Option: Citrus Infused Multi-Purpose Cleaner



By Vandita Smith

This Multi-Purpose Cleaner is not only a money saver and healthier, it also works as a good grease cutter.

In the article titled '8 Household Cleaning Agents to Avoid' it states:

A surprising number of the most harmful toxins ever created are found right in our own backyard — indeed, right inside your mop closet. Here are ways you can detoxify your home, make it safe again, and keep it that way by avoiding a few key chemical cleaning products.

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The air in our homes is filled with fumes from petrochemical solvents added to cleaners to dissolve dirt. The average household contains anywhere from three to 25 gallons of toxic materials, most of which are in cleaners. No law requires manufacturers of cleaning products to list ingredients on their labels or to test their products for safety. It's up to you to make sure your home is not only clean, but also nontoxic.

By the Gaia Staff. Source: <http://life.gaia.com/article/8-household-cleaning-agents-avoid>



By Vandita Smith

Another benefit is that it is very simple to make and a great way to be rid of numerous cleaner bottles. Keep empty cleaner bottles to refill them as needed. We eat a lot of citrus, so it didn't take long to save it up in the freezer in a zip lock bag.

How to Make Citrus Infused Multi-Purpose Cleaner

Recipe by <http://modernhippiehousewife.com> (recipe used with permission)

What You'll Need

- *A jar with a non-metal lid (vinegar will corrode the metal. You can cover the jar with a plastic bag and secure it with an elastic band)*
- *Citrus Peels (majority lemon)*
- *White Vinegar*
- *15-20 Drops Essential Oil (Rosemary, Tea Tree and Lavender are my faves for cleaning) – buy fair trade, organic essential oils*

Start by collecting your citrus peels. I add them to a bag in the freezer until I have enough to fill a jar (any size you'd like – feel free to choose something that will look nice sitting on your counter).

Once you have enough, cut the peels into quarters, and place them in the jar (skin side out if you want them to look nice).

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Cover the peels with white vinegar, seal with a lid, and leave to soak for at least three weeks, although I often forget about them and leave them to soak for months, which makes for a powerful cleaner!

To Use

Strain the mixture into a spray bottle, and add your choice of essential oils (if using)—I like rosemary, tea tree, and lavender in this recipe.

You can use this cleaner full strength or diluted.

Full Strength: *good for areas that could use some extra disinfecting, like the bathroom, or to remove built up oil and grease in the kitchen. My husband uses it full strength to clean his tire rims and other greasy areas in the shop.*

Diluted 50/50 with water: *You can use this cleaner diluted for use as a multi-purpose/surface cleaner.*

Tip: *When paired with baking soda, this is the best bathroom cleaner going, and can seriously conquer soap scum. Simply spray your sink/toilet/tub with the cleaner, sprinkle with baking soda, and scrub!*

See full instructions here: <http://modernhippiehousewife.com/2016/01/14/citrus-infused-multi-purpose-cleaner>

To make Window Cleaner I use ¼ cup of the Multi-Purpose Cleaner with 2 tsp of Dish Soap (see [February 2016 PNW GreenFriends Newsletter](#)), and add 2 cups of water to a re-purposed spray bottle.

An Excerpt from Immortal Bliss: Issue 3: 2011

...If we are not ready to change, nature will teach us. The only thing is, we may not be able to bear the brunt of the teaching. Mother Nature has blessed humankind with her bounty. But if we forget our responsibilities, if we give free rein to our desires, nature will retaliate. Nature's boons will turn into curses...

We cannot delay anymore. We must make the right decisions and embark on the right course of actions.

- Quote excerpt from Amma's teaching on Nature. See more at: <http://amma.org/teachings/harmony-nature#sthash.EKFN-pc7E.dpuf>

Nature

Onion Blooms by Mukul Chand (New Delhi)



Umbels of Onion Flowers Standing out in a Vegetable Farm

These beautiful and attractive **White Star Bursts** are **Umbels of Onion Flowers**.

Onion (English), **Pyaz** (Hindi), **Allium cepa** (Scientific Name) is an **ancient vegetable** known to man since time immemorial.

All these pictures were taken in a field close to the village of **Raipur, Pali District** near **Ajmer, Rajasthan**.

Onions are primarily cultivated and many claim they are no longer found in the wild anymore. However read on and you will be surprised.

Onions are almost staple food in India and there are still a vast number of people for whom the **Local Homemade Bread (Roti), Onions and Salt** make up a **complete meal**.

Nature



Balls of White

Dainty Buds in a Cluster



Nature



Various Stages of the Buds of the Onion Blossoms

The following picture is of a **Wild Onion** I photographed on the **Aravalli Hills** close to **Lakshman Sagar** (a must visit site) a few kilometers from the Onion Fields pictured above.

The dry bulb will spring to life with the first drops of Rain during the Monsoons. Thus the theory they do not exist in the wild is laid to rest.



Peeping out under the Rocks of the Aravalli Mountains

To read the full article go to: <https://enchantedforests.wordpress.com/2016/03/13/onion-blooms>

PNW Litter Project Kick Butts Day Work Party



Once a year we support [Kick Butts Day](#), by holding a cigarette butt pick up work party in the International District of Seattle. This year the day was supposed to be rainy, windy and cold. All fifteen of the people who had signed up to help came regardless of the weather forecast. We spread out in different directions so we could cover as much territory as possible. The sun blessed us by coming out for part of the work party!



PNW Litter Project



We were lucky to have two delightful volunteers from [Seattle's Surfrider HOTYB](#) (Hold On To Your Butts) chapter join us for the work party.



PNW Litter Project



At the end of the work party we returned to Hing Hay Park. Later, we discovered that in two hours we had picked up

23 pounds of cigarette butts!



PNW Litter Project

From Theresa:

I'm going to be honest...it's gross picking up cigarette butts. They stink and the smell only gets worse when you have a bag full or even a quarter of a bag. At times, I can't help but wonder about the mouths and lungs of those who smoked the cigarettes of the butts I had just picked up. Then I steer my mind to a place of gratitude - glad that I don't smoke cigarettes, glad to participate on a small scale in removing the toxins that could seep into the earth, and glad to hang out with fellow 'kick butt'-ers once again! All in all, a good experience :)

From Prarthana:

This time I played the 1000 Names (Sri Lalitha Sahasranama) while collecting butts and it was so helpful. And as Karuna noted has been the case repeatedly, the sun came out just during our shift!

From Karuna:

I watched as several people fed pigeons in the park. As I moved around the park picking up butts, the pigeons would flock to me, no doubt hoping I would be dropping food. I felt sad when I realized that there were probably plenty of cigarette butts in their stomachs. I remembered a picture I saw a few years ago showing how much plastic garbage is ingested by birds. <http://www.takepart.com/article/2012/08/28/plastic-waste-killing-birds-tens-thousands>

From Marvel in Covington:

For me, picking up cigarette butts is an intentional act of caring for Mother Earth - and a reminder to say a little prayer for the smokers to be free of their nicotine addiction and restored to radiant well-being.

From Shirley in Bellevue:

The day started out cold, windy and wet. We had a good turnout for the event in spite of the weather! I chanted silently while picking up the cigarette butts during the first hour as the wind curled around me. In a way, picking often becomes a kind of walking meditation, as I focus on the ground around me and chant. Sometime in the second hour, the clouds parted and although it was still a bit windy, the sun came out! And then I saw Al just down the sidewalk; we visited for a minute and he told me where a cache of cigarette butts were nearby and said goodbye for the day. Theresa hailed me from across the street and we joined up and picked and talked together as we made our way back to Hing Hay Park. Another satisfying morning picking up butts in Seattle.

PNW Litter Project

A Story in Photos by Karuna Poole



This morning I took a short walk to the grocery store. About three blocks from my house I came upon a scene that took me through several states of mind. Even though all of these photos were taken within a 20 foot segment of the block, my mood ranged from awe to despair.



PNW Litter Project



PNW Litter Project



<https://livinglearningandlettinggo.wordpress.com/2016/02/29/weekly-photo-challenge-state-of-mind>

PNW Litter Project

PNW Litter Project Stats

Fifty-two Litter project members and friends reported picking up **189** hours of litter in March 2016. The average pick up time was **3.6** hours; the range was **2 minutes to 23 hours** and the median was **1.5** hours.

Members of the project have picked up litter for **7456** 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

Amma's Vrindavan Tulasi Field by Karuna Poole



A few days before I left Amritapuri this year, Lalita (from British Columbia) and I visited the Vrindavan Tulasi Field. This property contains the gardens I have heard about most over the years. The devotees who have worked there have faced so many obstacles. Year after year it has been a process of trial and error. Amma teaches us to put in the effort and let go of the results. Those who have worked at this farm have done such a good job of doing that.

When I walked onto the property, I gasped at what I saw. The place had truly become paradise. The first plants that caught my eye were some that had beautiful flowers, different from any I had ever seen.



Amritapuri Gardens



After leaving that area, Lalita and I walked from place to place, marveling at everything we saw. There were coconut trees of course, but so much else. We saw many banana circles, each with its own compost pile in the middle. We viewed many different types of plants, all looking healthy and luscious.



Amritapuri Gardens



Amritapuri Gardens

This farm was first known as the Tulasi Field. (Tulasi is also called holy basil and is known for its medicinal and religious properties.) Several years later, they discovered that Rudraksha trees were growing there and throughout the ashram. The devotees started planting Rudraksha trees in all of the gardens. For a while the Tulasi Field became known as the Rudraksha Farm. This year I discovered it has been renamed Amma's Vrindavan Tulasi Field.

Lalita noticed that the bottom portion of all of the Rudraksha trees had been painted white; I didn't think to ask one of the workers why that was done. A worker told us that 10,000 rudraksha seeds had been harvested this year. Those were produced by a small number of trees, as the trees that had been planted in the last few years were not mature enough to produce fruit. One thousand seeds had been harvested from the tree in the picture on the right side of the gallery below. It was the most prolific tree on the property.



Amritapuri Gardens



[wikimedia](#)

Rudraksha seeds are considered sacred in India. They symbolize the dissolution of desires and the awakening of truth. A rudraksha seed is divided into 1-21 segments. Those segments are also known as faces or mukhi. While all rudraksha seeds have healing properties, the properties change depending on the number of mukhi. The five mukhi rudraksha seed is the most common form. It can help with regulating blood pressure, heart problems, stress, mental disability, obesity, anger management, diabetes, piles, neurotic and behavioral problems.

Here are some pictures I took the first year they started harvesting the fruit of the rudraksha trees. After the fruit is picked, it is opened and the seed is taken out, soaked and then brushed until it is clean. To read an article I wrote about the rudraksha seeds two years ago go to: [Rudraksha Farming at Amritapuri, pages 7-9](#). That document contains more information and many pictures.



Amritapuri Gardens



There may have been tulasi plants growing throughout the property, but one of the last areas we came upon before we returned to Amritapuri was a field of tulasi. The plants were so big and so healthy. A woman who had recently come to the ashram was watering them. I had the feeling she didn't understand why we were so astounded by what we were seeing. She probably didn't know about all of the years and effort that had been spent trying to get anything to grow in the dry, barren ground.

I found myself teary as I wrote this post. The earth in so many of the pictures looks dark and rich; so different from how it used to be. This property is certainly proof that when you put in the effort and let go of the results, miracles can happen.

Interesting Information from Our Readers

From Aditi in Fairfield:

"Skylight" is a collection of dramatic sky shows, captured from a variety of locations. It runs about 3-4 minutes and is better in full screen. <http://videos2view.net/skylight.htm>

From a Reader in Shoreline:

An 8 year old with brain cancer used her Make a Wish Day to take care of the world by picking up trash. Read about what happened:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/inspired-life/wp/2016/03/02/why-this-8-year-old-used-her-make-a-wish-day-to-pick-up-trash>

<http://fox4kc.com/2016/02/27/8-year-old-girl-with-cancer-uses-make-a-wish-to-clean-up-trash>

From Lin in Bellevue:

Bottle Tower Gardens- an interesting way to plant vegetables without bending: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9vN2eudWcQ>

From Karuna in Seattle:

Nimo from Empty Hands Music sang for Amma in Atlanta last year. I was so inspired by his life and his music. Here is a video about him. <http://www.emptyhandsmusic.org/album-gift-for-all>

He has just released a new video called Planting Seeds. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5AmqYcWjB-mc&list=PLx7I9WcMK0LZ19ADweJE5IWFrnKegTer1&index=3>

You can download all of the Empty Hands album for free at <http://www.emptyhandsmusic.org/album-gift-for-all>