



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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James Ko

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

NEWS

GreenFriends Greenbelt Work Party Come Join the Fun!

When: Saturday April 8 from 10-1

Where: Meet at Karuna's 3212 25th Avenue S, Seattle, WA 98144

Wear warm clothes and bring rain gear, water, and a snack if you like. Gloves and Tools will be provided.

This will be the first expanded work party Ananya and Karuna will lead after finishing their Forest Steward training on April 1. We're hoping for a big turn out! Please help restore this four lot stretch of Seattle's Greenbelt. Look at the captions by the photos below to get a sense of the work we will be doing.

Even though it is fine for you to just show up, it would be helpful to know that you are coming so that we have enough gloves and tools for everyone. It would also save time on the day of the event, if you signed up ahead of time using this link. <http://seattle.cedar.greencitypartnerships.org/event/11107>

If you have questions write Karuna at karunap108@comcast.net.

Remove ivy



Remove blackberry root balls



NEWS



Rake up blackberry debris



Build and load debris racks

Rescue Ferns



Put down burlap where ivy and blackberries have been removed



PNW Gardening

Backyard Herbal Medicine – Lovely Lemon Balm by Visala Hohlbein



Let's practice gratitude for the glorious bushy herb Lemon Balm (also known as *Melissa officinalis*.)

I bet you have seen this sweet smelling green herb thriving throughout the Northwest. Lemon Balm is a member of the mint family. She is easy to grow and can spread rapidly. She is a perennial, which means she will return year after year to the spot where planted. Lemon Balm has square stems and lemon scented foliage. She has soft crinkled pairs of oval shaped leaves.

In the late summer she will bloom and have white or yellow flowers that will turn an incredible shade of light blue when mature. Bees have fallen in love with Lemon Balm. In fact the scent attracts bees, and if they are rubbed on an empty hive, the scent will encourage bees to move in.

The fresh leaves of Lemon Balm can be eaten directly. A few sprigs of Lemon Balm in a salad is very refreshing. It is also a great way to keep your water bottle fresh! Just a few leaves will keep you wanting to drink more and more water.

Lemon Balm is considered a calming herb. Lemon Balm has been used to:

- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Promote and support a good night's sleep
- Improve appetite
- Ease pain and discomfort from indigestion.
- Relieve headaches
- Eliminate nausea

PNW Gardening

Lemon Balm is wonderfully relaxing when infused in a bath. Her infused tea has a long-held reputation for increasing longevity. The extracts of Lemon Balm are antiviral and help clean and heal wounds by starving bacteria of oxygen. You could use the herbal medicine as a compress on the wound, very magical. The refreshing antidepressant essential oil helps some eczema and allergy sufferers get relief. Lemon Balm can also be taken as a tonic. Tonics are drinks that encourage wellness of general health. Tonics are known to increase vigor and be restorative of wellbeing.

Lemon Balm is indeed an important herb for backyard herbalists! It is very easy to get a start of Lemon Balm from a friend who will be happy to share! She will transplant easily. She will also reseed and volunteer to grow in new places, which is a huge plus! Lemon Balm can be cut and dried out for later use. Who needs to go out and buy tea when you have Lemon Balm on hand.

Please join me in trying to get to know our friend Lemon Balm better. Take time to talk to her and express gratitude. This will help you to grow the relationship. She can grow easily in a pot, so if you live in an apartment, no problem. This is a superb herb to plant in a neglected parking strip or alley. Soon this unloved portion of Mother's Earth will become a frequent gathering spot for neighbors.

Here are **two quick easy ways to start using Lemon Balm** intentionally and medicinally. Before you gather the herb, remember to thank the plant for its medicine, and always give something back when you take something from the plant. What you give back is up to you. You can give back a chant or a song or just a simple message of gratitude, or maybe you will return the used portion of the Lemon Balm back to the base of the plant.

1. HERBAL TEA: Cut off small pieces of Lemon Balm to make a tea (1-2 tsp.). Cut the small pieces up in order to release more of the fragrant herb. Boil water and let her infuse 10 minutes before drinking. Incredibly refreshing! You can either strain the Lemon Balm out, or just enjoy the pieces when you drink the water. After all, it is edible. Lemon Balm water is much better tasting and healthier than just plain water, and once you plant it, it is always available nearly year round! I suggest making a very large pot of tea so you can sip on it all day. It tastes as great cold as it does hot.

2. HERBAL BATH MEDICINE: Cut a few stalks of Lemon Balm and bind it with some string. Run a bath and let the sachet that you have created soak in the water while you soak. As you relax in the warm water, you will inhale the yummy fresh lemon scent. Making this a regular ritual, even once a month, can improve your health in many ways. Bathing helps relax tense muscles, open pores, encourage digestion, soften the skin, assist in detoxification, boost the immune system and promote restful sleep. Essential oils are responsible for increasing white blood cell count. You can actually get healthier while you laze around in the tub de-stressing.

I hope you will take time to reflect on what connection you feel to the plant Lemon Balm and ultimately to your Mother Earth by soaking in the tub with the herbal leaves and drinking the infused tea water consciously and intentionally.

Happy Herbing!

Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

Greenbelt Project Update

There was an article in last month's newsletter about the trash pickup the Bala Kendra children did in the Greenbelt lot that we (GreenFriends) are restoring. Much has happened since that time.

Bamboo - We have been cutting down the invasive bamboo since the project began. This month Yashas and Karuna cut off the leaves and branches from the stalks. The leaves were taken to Maltby to be used in the new compost project. The stalks which were suitable for stakes were given to Beacon Hill residents who wanted them. The remainder were taken to Maltby for use in the gardens. [Note: When the project began, we were told we could give the bamboo to the zoo for the elephants. The botanist had forgotten that the elephants no longer live in the zoo!]



Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration



Hemlock, Ivy and Blackberry Rootball Removal - Even though we haven't been able to do big work parties yet, small groups of people have been working on removing the invasive plants.

Forest Steward Training - On March 4, Ananya and Karuna took the first half of the Green Seattle Partnership training to become Forest Stewards. They are learning what to do to restore the native habitat by removing the invasive plants and in time to plant native plants and trees. The second half of their training will be held on April 1. After that they will be able to lead larger work parties.

Live Stake Course - Yashas and Karuna took a one day course to learn how to make live stakes. They are cuttings from plants that are used to make new trees or bushes. Karuna brought 75 live stakes home (Twin Berry, 9 Bark and Indian Plum) and planted them in pots. In the fall, we will see how many of them rooted, and will plant the ones that did in the Greenbelt.



Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration



City workers cut down bamboo, ivy and blackberry vines - We are not allowed to use power tools so when they are needed, city workers come to do the work. Two weeks ago 8 of those workers cut down most of the invasive vines and bamboo on this four lot strip of Greenbelt. That will make it much easier for us to dig out the blackberry root balls and ivy.



We made an interesting discovery when the blackberries were cut down. There was a foundation of a house on one lot; one that no one in the neighborhood knew about! Interesting objects were found in the "house."

Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration



The city workers took away our ever-growing pile of garbage and left us burlap bags to cover the ground after we remove the root balls and ivy.



After the April 1 class, Ananya and Karuna will be prepared to lead work parties. The first one will be held on Saturday, April 8 from 10-1. Please come and participate in this exciting event. Sign up at <http://seattle.cedar.green-citypartnerships.org/event/11107>. For more information contact Karuna at karunap108@comcast.net.

Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

Beauty in the GreenFriends Greenbelt Site



Nature

KING COUNTY NOXIOUS WEED ALERT

Poison Hemlock

(*Conium maculatum*)

Parsley Family

**Non-regulated Class B
Noxious Weed: Control
Recommended**

Identification Tips

- Tall biennial, reaching 8 to 10 feet the second year
- Bright green, fernlike leaves with strong musty smell
- First year plants form low clumps of lacy leaves with reddish or spotted stems
- Second year stems are stout, hollow, hairless, ribbed, with reddish or purple spotting/streaking
- Flowering plants covered with numerous small, umbrella-shaped clusters of tiny white flowers that have five petals
- Seeds form in green, ridged capsules that eventually turn brown

Biology

Reproduces by seed. First year grows into a rosette; second year, develops tall stems and flowers. Rapid growth from March to May, flowers in late spring. Up to 40,000 seeds per plant are produced. Seeds fall near the plant and are moved by erosion, animals, rain and human activity. Seeds viable up to 6 years and germinate throughout the growing season; do not require a dormant period.

Impacts

Acutely toxic to livestock, wildlife, humans; causes death by respiratory paralysis after ingestion. Aggressive growth crowds out desirable vegetation. Early spring growth makes it more likely to be eaten by animals when there is limited forage available.

Distribution

Eurasian species, widely found in North America. Widespread in King County; found along roadsides, riparian areas, ravines, fields, ditches and un-managed yards and vacant lots. Prefers moist soil and sun, but can adapt to dryer soil and shadier conditions. Can be mistaken for a carrot when small.

What You Can Do

Poison hemlock is so widespread in King County control is not required, but this plant should be removed whenever possible, especially in areas that are accessible to people, pets and livestock. **All parts of the plant are poisonous when eaten and even dead canes remain toxic for up to three years.** Toxins can also be absorbed through the skin and respiratory system so always wear protective clothing (gloves, long sleeves, dust mask) when handling this plant. **If you suspect poisoning, call for help immediately.** In both humans and animals, quick medical treatment can reverse the effects of hemlock poisoning.



Poison hemlock has white flowers, fernlike leaves, and thick stems with purple spotting.




All parts of this plant (the roots, stems, flowers, seeds, leaves) are poisonous.



Poison hemlock quickly invades open areas, displacing beneficial plants.

Questions?

King County Noxious Weed Control Program Line: **206-477-WEED** www.kingcounty.gov/weeds  King County

Nature

Control Methods

Manual:

For small sites, pull or dig up plants. Remove entire root. Wear protective clothing and wash your hands thoroughly after handling plant matter. To be fully effective, all mature plants need to be removed so no new seeds are produced. Do not leave flower heads on the ground as the seeds can remain viable. Composting is not recommended; instead place in a plastic trash bag and toss into your regular trash.

Mechanical:

To prevent seeding, plants can be mowed or cut back with a weed-eater before going to flower. Protect yourself with a dust mask to avoid inhaling toxins while mowing. Adding a layer of mulch to the area after it has been cleared or replanting with desirable vegetation will reduce germination of poison hemlock seeds present in the soil. Monitor mowed areas as plants often grow back after being mowed.

Chemical:

Follow labels exactly as written and only use products appropriate and legal for the site. Herbicides should only be applied at the rates specified on the label. Foliar herbicides are most effective if applied to actively growing plants in the spring, followed by another application later in the summer for late sprouts. Spray plants before they flower for best results. Spraying may not prevent seed production in mature plants. A selective broadleaf herbicide with the active ingredient triclopyr, 2,4-D or metsulfuron will work well for lawn or pasture areas as it won't harm grasses. Glyphosate products (such as Roundup) work also but they kill grass as well as broadleaf plants. Apply the herbicide to the entire leaf and stem surface and do not cut down the treated plants until they have died. This may take two weeks or more. Seeds germinate throughout the season, so repeat treatment is necessary to eliminate all plants. Chemical control options may differ for private, commercial and government agency users. For questions about herbicide use, contact the King County Noxious Weed Control Program.



In late winter, look for mounds of bright green, lacy leaves. The largest clumps are second-year plants building up energy to flower and seed later in the spring.



Could be confused with:

Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*) as well as other similar-looking members of the parsley family including fennel, chervil and anise resemble Poison Hemlock.

However, poison hemlock can be distinguished in a couple of ways. It grows to heights of 8 feet or more; its leaves give off a strong musty smell; and its hairless stems have reddish or purple blotches/spotting. In contrast, wild carrot typically only grows to about 3 feet; its plain green stems have fine hairs with fewer branches; and it flowers later in the summer.

Wild carrot (sometimes called Queen Anne's Lace) is often confused with poison hemlock.

Nature

The Life-Giving Coconut Tree by Kothai



The coconut tree is one of nature's special gift to man. From top to bottom, every part of the coconut tree is useful. When the temperature soars in summer, there is nothing like a drink of coconut water to cool the body down.

Coconut meat is rich in antioxidants and healthy fats and is used in a myriad of ways in the kitchen. Coconut oil is antiviral, antibacterial, antifungal and traditionally used as a moisturizer on the scalp and the skin. In traditional households for any wound, scar, scabs the first thing that one reaches for is the coconut oil.



Nature



Since it does not require a lot of space the coconut tree is a common feature in many Indian households. It takes about seven to twenty years for a tree to bear fruit. One coconut tree can yield around 140 coconuts per year. After you have plucked the coconut, it can stay fresh for up to 20, 25 days after which the meat dries up and can be used for extracting oil. The outer shell can be easily removed with a sharp kitchen gadget.

The inner shell is broken by cracking it against a stone ledge. I must have cracked at least a hundred of them when I lived in India. Our skill was measured by our ability to break it into two perfect cups. In our house, whoever breaks the coconut gets to drink the water.

The coconut fruit has three stages in its development –

- Tender coconut - full of water and little meat. This is the stage where we cut the coconut purely for its water.
- Ripe coconut - some water and the meat is full and fresh. This meat is used for cooking.
- Mature coconut - no water and the dried meat is used to extract oil.

The coconut leaves are weaved and is used as a roof on huts. The dried coconut outer shell is used as firewood. The coconut husk is made into coir and used as ropes, mats, brushes and in mattresses. The coconut trunk is used for furniture and as a building material.



[Picture Link](#)

Nature



Nature

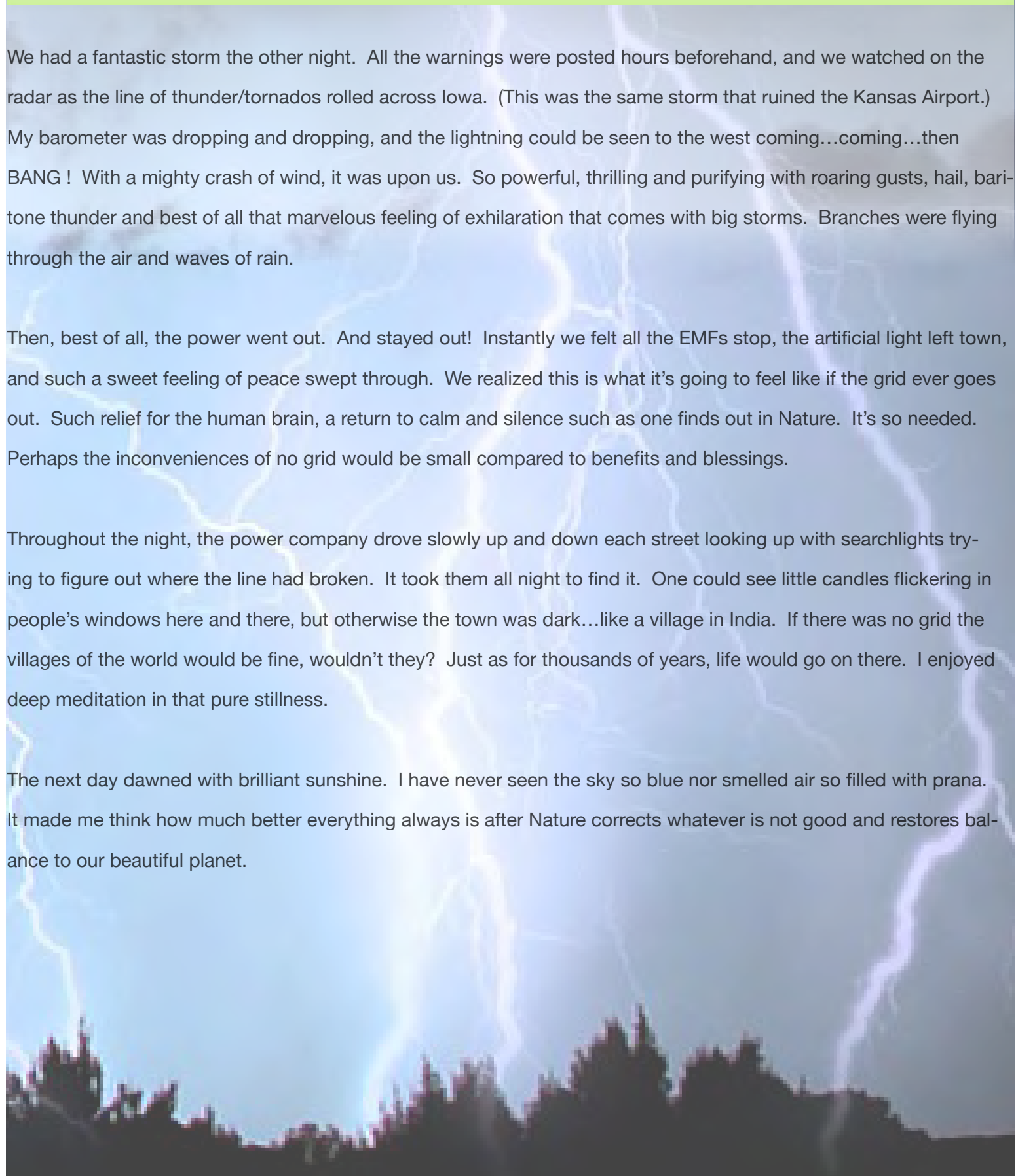
Viewing a Seagull Viewing by Karuna Poole

One day in March, I was on the 14th floor of a downtown Seattle building. When I looked out the window, I saw a seagull standing on the ledge in front of me.



Nature

There is Always a Bright Side by Bhumi Briggs



We had a fantastic storm the other night. All the warnings were posted hours beforehand, and we watched on the radar as the line of thunder/tornados rolled across Iowa. (This was the same storm that ruined the Kansas Airport.) My barometer was dropping and dropping, and the lightning could be seen to the west coming...coming...then BANG ! With a mighty crash of wind, it was upon us. So powerful, thrilling and purifying with roaring gusts, hail, baritone thunder and best of all that marvelous feeling of exhilaration that comes with big storms. Branches were flying through the air and waves of rain.

Then, best of all, the power went out. And stayed out! Instantly we felt all the EMFs stop, the artificial light left town, and such a sweet feeling of peace swept through. We realized this is what it's going to feel like if the grid ever goes out. Such relief for the human brain, a return to calm and silence such as one finds out in Nature. It's so needed. Perhaps the inconveniences of no grid would be small compared to benefits and blessings.

Throughout the night, the power company drove slowly up and down each street looking up with searchlights trying to figure out where the line had broken. It took them all night to find it. One could see little candles flickering in people's windows here and there, but otherwise the town was dark...like a village in India. If there was no grid the villages of the world would be fine, wouldn't they? Just as for thousands of years, life would go on there. I enjoyed deep meditation in that pure stillness.

The next day dawned with brilliant sunshine. I have never seen the sky so blue nor smelled air so filled with prana. It made me think how much better everything always is after Nature corrects whatever is not good and restores balance to our beautiful planet.

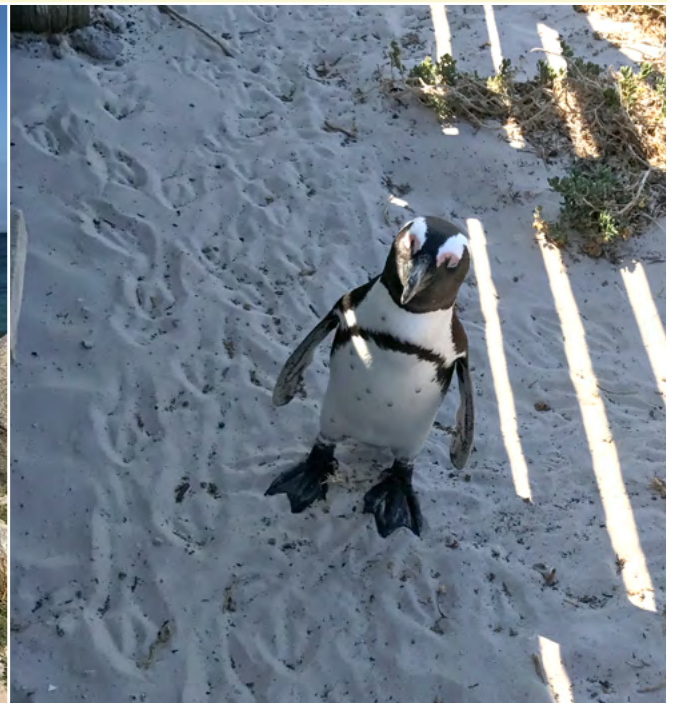
Nature

African Penguins by Kothai



“There are Penguins in Africa???? is what Karuna asked incredulously when I showed her my husband's pictures from Cape Town, South Africa in Feb 2017.

The African penguin is also known as the jackass penguin and black-footed penguin for its donkey-like bray and is found only on the south-western coast of Africa. The African Penguins are an endangered species and is rapidly on the decline. If the rate of decline is not halted, it could be extinct very soon.



Nature

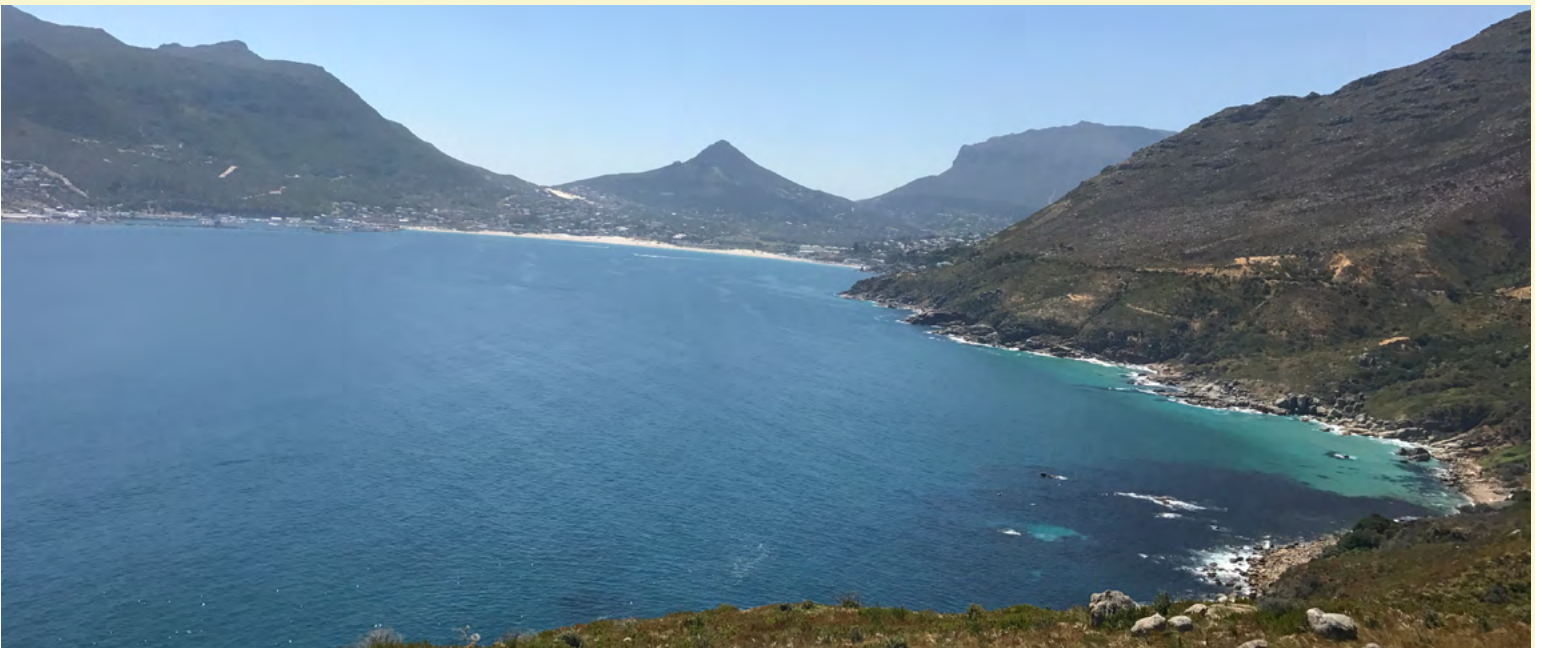


The rate of decline of the African penguins is alarming

in 1910 - 1.5 million

in 2000 - 200,000

in 2010 - 55,000



Nature

Facts about Penguins



- Penguins are birds but they can't fly. Evolution has changed their wings to flappers.
- Penguins have been around for 60 million years. They were alive when dinosaurs were on the earth.
- There is a gland that is behind a penguin's eyes that filters out salt water from its blood stream.
- Almost all penguins live in the Southern Hemisphere.
- Penguins live in colonies. Some colonies have thousands of birds.
- Thirteen out of the seventeen species of penguins are considered threatened or endangered.
- Emperor penguins can be four feet tall and weigh 49-99 pounds
- Prehistoric penguins may have been as tall as humans and have similar weight.
- The Little Blue Penguin is the smallest species of penguin and is only 16 inches.
- Most penguins lay their eggs in nests. An Emperor penguin only lays one egg a year and it stays warm by laying on the penguin's feet.
- Penguins live 15-20 years and 75% of their lives is spent in the water.
- Penguins catch their food in the water. They eat fish, squid, shrimp and other crustaceans.
- Penguins don't have any teeth. They swallow their food whole.
- Seals, orcas, snakes, sea lions, eagles, ferrets, rats and foxes are predators of penguins

To Learn more about Penguins read:

[20 Fun Facts about Penguins](#)

[69 Wonderful Facts about Penguins](#)

[Amazing Penguin Facts for Kids](#)

[Emperor Penguins](#)

[Penguin Predators](#)

NATURE

Mushroom by Dewin Nefol



Mushroom

*Spore of dank and darkness
Born to spawn and clone.
Amongst leaf waste and litter.
Rotting bark damp rich loam.*

—

*Nature seeded in Earth's fatality.
Rising in Life from Death suddenly.
Humble Spirits with Gaia's humility.
Striving thriving growing organically.
Mushrooms spawning Love Eternally.*

—

*Nature's Lazarus sired in Totality.
Risen death living new life's gallery.
Souls reborn metaphysically.
Spiritually physically.
Sharing Immortality.
Knowing Spiritually.
They bring taste of lasting PEACE.*

—

*Please never let the Apocalyptic Vision.
Cloud out the Rising 'Shroom.
Love and Peace!*

PNW Litter Project

PNW Litter Project Stats

In March, 41 Litter Project members and their friends picked up litter for 101 hours. (Average 2.5 hours; Median 1 hour; Range 2 minutes to 16 hours) We have picked up litter for 8516 hours since the project began in July of 2011.

TerraCycle Stats

We turned in 9,654 cigarette butts to TerraCycle in March. TerraCycle is an organization that recycles items that are normally considered unrecyclable. They have credited us with turning in 309,654 cigarette butts since 2013. We have also sent them 394 Drink Pouches, 732 Cereal Bag liners, and 2,997 Energy Bar wrappers.

From Shawn in Seattle:

Starbucks “is bringing residents and police officers together to meet and share experiences to foster greater understanding around relevant topics and to find common ground.” On March 9, I was at Starbucks on Capitol Hill for one of these Coffee with Cops events. This one was focused on the impact of crime, drug usage and homelessness on the community. Lo and behold Police Chief O'Toole came up and shook my hand and thanked me for doing garbage and needle pick up every day. Needless to say, I was impressed with her. (Someone had told her about the cleanup work I do in my neighborhood, a neighborhood which is increasingly rampant with homelessness and drug use.)



PNW Litter Project

Kick Butts Day Cigarette Butt Work Party

On March 5, nine Litter Project members gathered on a cold and rainy day to pick up cigarette butts in Seattle's International District. They were working in support of Kick Butts Day, an annual event organized by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. Two Tacoma members were gathering butts in Tacoma at the same time.

Between the two groups, we collected 13 pounds of cigarette butts. The butts were then mailed to TerraCycle where they will be recycled into plastic pallets.



GreenFriends Projects in Amritapuri

Vrindavan Tulasi Field by Karuna Poole



On January 8th, I visited one of the oldest gardens in Amritapuri. While it is known as Amma's Vrindavan Tulasi Field, it has become so much more. In the early years, growing tulasi was the focus. Then the volunteers who worked at the farm discovered that rudraksha trees were scattered around the property. Rudraksha seeds are considered sacred in India, so the volunteers started harvesting the seeds and planting more of the trees. They also began growing vegetables and other plants.

Farming on that property has been such a struggle over the years. Among the problems were lack of water, poor soil, and bugs.

When I visited the farm this year, I was amazed by all the new projects that were underway. The first thing I noticed was the irrigation system that was under construction.



GreenFriends Projects in Amritapuri



Then I noticed the raised beds. I was told that when there are heavy rains, the farm floods. With raised beds, the plants will be higher than the water.

There is a big pond on the property. The plants that are growing in the pond are used for mulching. Volunteers are constructing stairs that will go into the pond to make harvesting those plants easier.



GreenFriends Projects in Amritapuri

I was surprised by the many varieties of eggplant. Here are photos of three of them.



The tulasi fields are thriving.



The plant below is called Lakshmi Taru, The Paradise Tree, The Tree of Heaven, Simarouba or Simaroubaceae.

It is a medicinal tree that has been used to treat dysentery, malaria, cardiac palpitations, asthma and epilepsy. It may have a role in cancer treatment.



GreenFriends Projects in Amritapuri

And some final photos of this beautiful farm.

