



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

Backyard Herbal Medicine - Classy Catnip



Hi Herbal Friends, it is time again to practice gratitude for the amazing herb Catnip.

Here in the PNW, it is EASY to grow Catnip. Catnip is in the mint family. It is edible. It tastes minty, is nutritious and calming. Once you start to grow her, you'll be happy you did. Her tea is lovely, relaxing and centering, and all your feline friends will be happy too!

One thing Catnip is generally known for is what her name suggests. A sweet treat for cats. It is true cats love her! If you have a special cat friend, you can include a bit of Catnip herb in her bed, or put some in a sock and then tie a knot at the end. Your sweet kitty will have way too much fun with this new toy!

Catnip is such an important herb for herbalists! She can help:

- to increase appetite
- to act as a natural pest deterrent
- to give headache relief
- to promote menstruation
- to relieve colic
- to reduce restlessness
- to act as a mild sedative/ a promoter of restful sleep
- to support healthy digestion
- to soothe the stomach
- to act as an overall health strengthening tonic
- to relieve intestinal cramps and indigestion
- to act as an anti-inflammatory

PNW Gardening

Here are **three quick easy ways to start using Catnip** intentionally and medicinally.

Before you gather the herb, please thank her before taking her medicine, and always give something back to the plant. What you give back is up to you, a simple message of gratitude will do. Try to return any of the used portion of the herb back to the base of the plant. That is a loving traditional action.

1. Catnip for the cat, yours or your neighbor's. Make their day. Sprinkle Catnip or make a Catnip toy.
2. Catnip Tea. Infuse two tablespoons of the herb into 1 cup of hot water after 15 minutes. Drink.
3. Catnip eaten fresh can relieve headache pain.

As with many plants, always remember herbs are medicine; please use with care! Pregnant women should use special caution with herbs.

If you want to start working with Catnip, I sincerely encourage you to start your journey. She is easy to grow and will return to your garden year after year.

Time to grow a Classy Catnip!!

Peace and Happy Herbing!

Visala



PNW Gardening A Big Weekend

The last weekend in February was a big one on the property owned by Visala, Gaurang, Susanta and Jagadish. Their friends stopped by throughout the weekend to help them put together two Climapod greenhouses. A grand total of twenty-five people helped in the endeavor. The greenhouses will be placed end to end and will be used as a community greenhouse.



PNW Gardening

Simultaneously, another group was planting seven cedar trees on the property. The trees had been laying on the ground next to the place where Visala had bought the greenhouses. She asked the owners if they wanted them and if not, could she have them. The owners were happy to have Visala take the trees.



Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

Greenbelt Restoration Work Party: February 26 Planting Day!



Monday, February 26 was an exciting day. On that day, 31 enthusiastic employees from Silver Creek Capital Management came to plant trees, shrubs and ground covers in our GreenFriends Greenbelt restoration site. The staff consisted of Nicole from Forterra, Claire a master gardener, and two Green Seattle Partnership Forest Stewards- Karuna and Peter (Mt. Baker Park). Claire and Karuna are also GreenFriends members.

During the three-hour work party, we planted 17 trees, 75 shrubs and 77 ground covers! Every new plant is native to the Pacific Northwest. After the planting, we spread two buckets of wood chip mulch around each plant to reduce weed growth and retain water.



Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration



Towards the end of the event, part of Nicole's team cleared more land on the property. They dug up some huge blackberry root balls. The biggest one weighed almost 10 pounds!

Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration



The photos below show some of the new plants:



Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration



The land looked like this when we were finished...



When the work party was over, we cleaned and put away the tools and celebrated all we had done.

Next steps: Lay down burlap bags on any place in the planting areas where the land is bare... and then cover the burlap with wood chip mulch.

Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

Greenbelt Restoration Work Party: March 17, 2018



On March 17, thirteen hardy volunteers gathered to spread wood chips in areas that had been planted during the February 26 work party. Most of the group had worked on this restoration project in the past, but for some it was their first time on the property. There was also a nice mix of GreenFriends members, neighbors and friends. Two neighborhood parents brought their children for part of the event. I felt moved when I realized that this forest may become an important part of these children's growing up years.

We didn't have enough participants to do the traditional type of bucket brigade; i.e., handing buckets from person to person down a long line of people. Instead, everyone filled buckets for a short period of time and then most volunteers began to carry them to their destination on the other end of the site. Later on, the system changed again. At that point, part of the group carried the buckets the first half of the way, and then left them for others to carry to the planting areas. Once the buckets of wood chips reached a planting area, someone poured the chips onto the burlap bags that surrounded each of the plants.

Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration



We accomplished so much; spreading wood chips throughout three large planting areas and several small ones. The transformation in the look of the land was remarkable.

Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

Before (February 1)



After (March 17)



We have many more wood chips to spread. It is gratifying to know that the work we are doing now will give the plants a better chance of surviving the summer, a season when rainfall may be minimal.

Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

Green Seattle Partnership: 2017 Review

The Green Seattle Partnership is “a collaboration between the City of Seattle, Forterra, community groups and non-profits, businesses, schools, and thousands of volunteers working together to restore and actively maintain the City’s forested parklands.” This is the group that supports GreenFriends as we restore the Greenbelt site on Beacon Hill in Seattle. The graphic below reviews Green Seattle Partnership’s 2017 accomplishments.

GREEN SEATTLE PARTNERSHIP

PHASE 1

173.3

NEW ACRES ENROLLED IN RESTORATION



PHASE 2

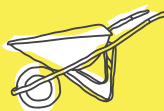
164,177

PLANTS INSTALLED
*38,194 TREES

PHASE 3

322

ESTABLISHMENT ACRES MAINTAINED



PHASE 4

26.6

ACRES SAW LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP & MAINTENANCE



2017 IN REVIEW

78,666

VOLUNTEER HOURS
*VALUED AT \$2.36 MILLION

8,697

IVY RINGS REMOVED

24 %

OF VOLUNTEER HOURS COMPLETED BY YOUTH

159

NEW ACRES COMPLETED BY PROFESSIONAL CREWS

HIGHLIGHTS

- **NEW STAFF ADDED:** NICHOLAS MUSSO, MATTHEW HILLIARD, JACOB GABRIEL
- **NEW PARTNER:** DIRT CORPS, CASCADIA CONSULTING, MOUNTAINS TO SOUND GREENWAY TRUST, STEWARDSHIP FORESTRY, BROADVIEW PLANNING
- **DENNY AWARD:** CARKEEK PARK WEWOS

GSP TO-DATE

170

FOREST STEWARDS

108

PARKS UNDER STEWARDSHIP

1,520

ACRES ENROLLED IN RESTORATION

*301 VERIFIED PHASE 4



Tree Planting Stats

In March:

Jayanand and Surabhi planted 3 Cedar trees in Pt. Townsend.

Mechas planted 1 pear tree in Maltby.

The GreenFriends Greenbelt Restoration Project planted 1 Douglas Fir tree and 55 shrubs in Seattle.

Total: PNW devotees have planted **400** trees (plus **661** shrubs and groundcovers) since our Tree Planting project began the last week of September 2017.

Please send reports of any trees and shrubs you plant to karunap108@comcast.net so your numbers can be counted. Send pictures and information about what you planted whenever possible.



Nature

The Wonder of Nature by Karuna

I love photographing decaying trees. This tree hasn't fallen yet, but I suspect that will happen sometime this year.



Nature



Many years ago, I snapped a picture of a crow in this tree. I still remember how delighted I was when I saw how it turned out. I was even more fascinated, when I realized that I could see it as a photo of a crow, or as a photo of a person reaching for the sky, a person who has a crow perched on one hand.

The tree will continue to serve nature after it falls. My friend Jayanand once told me:

Downed trees play an important role in maintaining the health and regeneration of forests. Not only do they provide nutrient pools for other plants during stand regeneration, they often even serve as “nurse logs” which support the germination and growth of other trees by providing substrate, moisture and nutrients to the seedlings and young saplings. They also can act as carbon sinks by locking up carbon in the forest floor – instead of being released into the atmosphere by burning. Decaying wood provides habitat for a variety of plants and animals, adding to the diversity of life found in forested areas. Finally, downed woody material can also help prevent runoff and soil erosion.

I look forward to having this tree in my life for years to come.

Source Reduction

Source Reduction Update

Amma's 3-Step Plastic Challenge is now underway and the Northwest Region is off to a great start! On March 24th SOLVE Oregon sponsored a state-wide beach clean-up. Team 'Amma's Hands in the Sand' came together with The Surfrider Foundation and together 89 people picked up 320 lbs of trash and recyclables from Nye beach in Newport. What a wonderful way to serve Mother Nature!



Several plastic challenge participants have reported they are making strides in various ways to reduce their plastic footprint such as: buying in bulk, picking up plastic on the beach, using reusable coffee cups and using metal tiffins, mesh produce bags, wax paper wraps and a Soda Stream!



Source Reduction



Diya in Oregon has been communicating with coffee shops in her area, asking them to consider using alternatives to plastic straws and to encourage their customers to bring their own cups. She is also hosting a source reduction booth at the local farmer's market on March 31st and April 7th to talk to the community about single-use plastics. The information presented will be on alternative solutions. An update on this event will be posted in next month's newsletter.

And the PNW is even finding ways to make an impact abroad with the 3-step plastic challenge!



Tirtha from Victoria B.C. bought two new cotton bags while in Amritapuri to replace a couple of the synthetic carry bags she's been using at home. She has been reading about how synthetic bags can cause microparticle plastic pollution when they're washed, which causes problems for small ocean creatures that mistake them for food. The microparticles are already moving up the food chain and being found in our food and drinking water.



At the coconut stall in Amritapuri, Hari encourages us to use alternatives to plastic straws, such as metal straws, or pouring coconut water into tiffins. Diya sent the posters to Tirtha, who had them printed up, and Hari has posted them behind his work table where everyone can see them. You can buy metal straws at the Eco Centre when you visit Amritapuri!



Donna Oris from Salt Spring Island, BC, is showing us a coconut 'to save'. The top is cut off but not opened. You can use a knife to open it within 24 hours or more. Way better for you and the environment than a plastic bottle of coconut water, which also wouldn't keep as long.

Source Reduction

One Person's Journey Toward Source Reduction by Diya

I used to consider myself an avid recycler. I felt a sense of comfort and even superiority on occasion for being such a good steward of the planet. I would go other places in the US and scoff when I didn't see the blue recycling bins anywhere. I bristled with antipathy when I saw people throwing their plastic take-out containers in the trash. Didn't they know how important it was to recycle? This blissful ignorance carried me along for many years. Until a few months ago in November when I received an alarming letter from my sanitation company.

The letter stated they would no longer take Tetra Pak cartons of any kind. What? Why? My almond milk, half and half and vegetable broth all came in 'Tetra' packs which I thought were recyclable! I got on the phone lickety-split to the sanitation company to get the scoop. I was told China was no longer buying our plastic and the local recycling facility couldn't process them. Wait. What? Back-up, you mean our plastic was being sent to China? Yep. And come to find out, this had been going on for years. How could I not have known this? Although disturbed, I was leaving for Amritapuri in a couple days so this would have to be tabled until I returned. Or so I thought.

My second day at Amritapuri, I wandered over to the seva desk to find out what my assignment would be while I was there. You guessed it... recycling! I chuckled at the irony. I showed up the next day and was in for a shock. I was overwhelmed at the amount of plastic being used and cried throughout my entire shift about the magnitude of human consumption. The beautiful thing about Amritapuri however, is they pretty much have recycling down to a science and approximately 98 % of all their waste is recycled. What a great example to the rest of the world.

After my seva, I just wanted to forget the pain I had experienced during my shift seeing all of the plastic waste. I decided some retail therapy would be the perfect anesthetic so I headed into Vallikavu. The anesthetic worked for about three minutes but disappeared as soon as I left the ashram grounds and reached the canoe boat launch by the bridge. There was plastic everywhere in the water! I was dumbfounded. Why hadn't anyone picked it up? Why weren't there any garbage or recycling bins anywhere? I was shaken but continued over the bridge into town as I pondered on what to do about the mess.

For a moment, I was able to forget about the garbage and lose myself in the magic of India. I could hear chanting from a nearby temple and tropical birds singing blissfully. The spiritual vibration was palpable. Beautiful flowers and lush vegetation reminded me I was somewhere exotic and far away. Brahminy Kites flew overhead and I was taken in by the beauty of Amma's birthplace. Then I turned the corner. What I saw will remain forever imprinted in my mind. Plastic. Everywhere. Hundreds of wrappers from candy manufactures, water bottles, bags and other plastic packaging choking the waterways and littering the streets of this beautiful, sacred land.

Source Reduction



In that moment, I was overcome with grief and awareness of how our selfish needs as consumers for convenience are destroying Mother Nature. In the US it's easier to turn a blind eye because we can throw our evidence in the big, blue recycling bin and it magically disappears! We're doing our part, right? In India, there are no blue bins. The dirty truth is out in the open and the truth is: even in the US most plastics are not recycled. I had read about this in the news and seen it on TV but I needed to witness it with my own eyes. I started weeping and talking to Amma as if she was in front of me, "Do you see this? Why aren't we doing anything about it? What are we going to do about this situation Amma?" Something had to be done! But what? I had no idea at the time, of course, that Amma's source reduction campaign was already underway and would be launched very soon.

I was upset and decided to talk to Swamini Krishnamrita about it. I love talking to her because I know she'll always be honest

with me. I went to her office, sat down and started pouring my heart out. I asked if Amma was aware of the plastic problem in Vallikavu. I mean, she doesn't get out much anymore because she's always giving darshan! Maybe she didn't know! I proceeded to tell Swamini how dire the situation was asking what could 'we' do about the world's plastic problem?

She just listened while flashing me one of her radiant smiles that light up the room. Then she said, "You know, you first have to clean up the plastic and garbage in your OWN mind before trying to clean it up in the world. After all, the 'world' is only a reflection of your mind. That's where you have to start." Ka-BAM! I knew she was right as that powerful truth slowly sank in. The world didn't need to change, I did.

I began watching my mind and saw how every judgment was a piece of plastic. Every angry thought, plastic. Every selfish act, plastic. Every feeling of superiority, plastic. Every streak of envy, plastic. Every feeling of self-pity, plastic. I also saw how easy it was to shift the blame and point fingers at causes outside of myself; Coke and Pepsi need to change. Tetra Pak needs to change. The recycling industry needs to change. But I remembered what Wayne Dyer once said, "Change the way you look at things and the things you look at change."

After three blissful weeks at Amritapuri, I came home in December determined to look at my relationship to plastic in all aspects of my life. I started making my own broth instead of buying it in a Tetra Pak. I know! How radical! I found

Source Reduction

almond milk in a carton that could actually be recycled. I asked the manager at my local grocery store if she'd be willing to order milk in glass bottles instead of 'Tetra' packs. I explained my concern about the new recycling protocol in our city. She said yes! Now I return the glass to the store when I'm finished and get a \$2.00 rebate toward my next bottle. I started buying in bulk. I needed a new toothbrush so I chose one made from bamboo instead of plastic. I was changing the way I looked at things and the things around me began changing.

February came quickly and it was finally time for the PNW retreat in Neskowin. I was looking forward to relaxing and being with my spiritual community. There was also going to be a presentation on Amma's newly launched source reduction campaign and I couldn't wait to hear about it. Later that afternoon, I was telling a new friend how passionate I was about the campaign and asked how I could get involved. The next thing I knew, I had become the PNW Source Reduction Coordinator and I was giving the presentation on plastic! When I said 'yes' in that moment, I had no idea how far this project was going to stretch me beyond my comfort zone and force me to grow.

Several times during this project I've felt overwhelmed, frustrated and wanted to quit as I became more aware of the insidious nature of plastic and how it has infiltrated my entire existence. The blue bin outside my house which used to be my friend was now an eye sore. I found myself getting discouraged and losing my joy, becoming wrapped up in perfectionism and my 'role' as Coordinator.

One afternoon while hiking in the woods I had a moment of clarity. I started laughing out loud, suddenly remembering who was at the helm of this project! I'll give you a hint; it wasn't me. Amma was in charge! What a relief! I'm pretty sure my role does not include solving this problem by April 20th and saving the world.

As I move forward on my journey to reduce my plastic footprint, I'm starting to find the joy in it! My creativity and imagination have been fired as I think of new ways to shop and reuse things. I've gotten involved with other like-minded people in my community and collaborated on ways to make things better. Learning to do without some of the things I thought I needed is liberating me. Through this process, I'm not only cleaning up the plastic in the world, I'm cleaning it up in my mind which is most important. Only someone like Amma could take on the stinky mess of source reduction and through us, transform it into something beautiful.

PNW Litter Project Kick Butts Day 2018

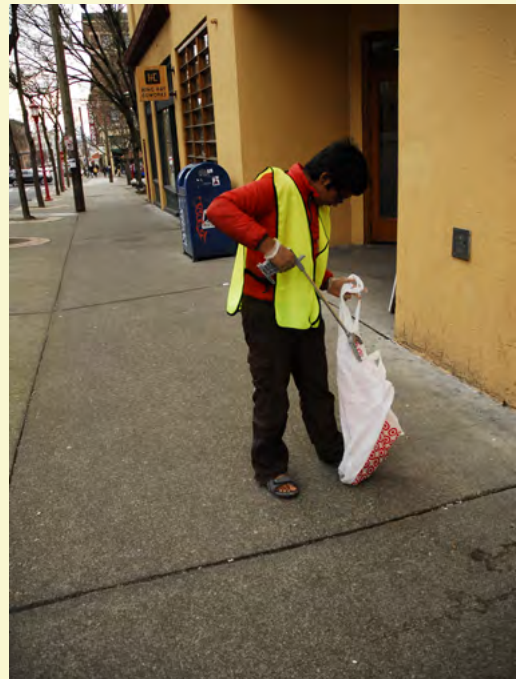


For the seventh year in a row, members of the PNW Litter Project held a cigarette butt pick-up work party in honor of Kick Butts Day, a day of national activism sponsored by the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids. As always, it was held in the International District of Seattle.

Cigarette filters are NOT made of cotton, they are made of cellulose acetate tow, which is a form of plastic, and they can take decades to degrade. Investigators in a past San Diego State University study discovered that if you put fat-head minnows and a single cigarette butt in a liter of water, half of the fish will die.

Every cigarette filter we pick up is one less that could end up being swallowed by a fish, bird or other form of wildlife. By sending the butts to TerraCycle to be recycled into plastic pallets, we will also keep them out of the landfill.

Twenty-one satsang members participated in the two-hour butt pickup. We met at Hing Hay Park and then spread out throughout the District.



PNW Litter Project



When we returned to Hing Hay Park at the end of the work party....



PNW Litter Project

we took a group photo....



and then poured the butts into one bag. It was amazing to see how many we had collected in only two hours., Karuna weighed the bag later that day. We had picked up 12.81 pounds of butts; which is approximately 12,810 cigarette filters!



It had been another successful Kick Butts Day work party!

PNW Litter Project

PNW Litter Project Stats

In March, 52 Litter Project members and their friends picked up litter for 124 hours. (Average 2.4 hours; Median 1.75 hours; Range 1 minute to 16 hours) We have picked up litter for 9522 hours since the project began in July of 2011.

TerraCycle Stats

TerraCycle is an organization that recycles items that are normally considered unrecyclable. They have credited us with turning in 321,224 cigarette butts since 2013. We have also sent them 394 Drink Pouches, 732 Cereal Bag liners, and 2,997 Energy Bar wrappers.

From Sumati in Portland:

I made a pledge to pick up trash averaging 30 minutes a day. We live in a popular neighborhood with lots of foot and car traffic nearby as well as a public park. There is never a shortage of trash and cigarette butts (I have about three gallons of them now and will send them in whenever I get to five gallons). I'm happy to contribute to a cleaner, safer neighborhood. Our street water goes through the sewers directly into the Willamette River, so I think of the plastics that are NOT going into the river and ocean as I pick up litter.

These clothes and bags were dumped near the Greenbelt. They were taken to Goodwill.



Amritapuri Gardens

Visiting Amma's Vrindavan Field by Karuna



On December 29, Gopika and I visited Vrindavan Field. This garden/farm was started many years ago; at that time it was a tulasi garden. Over time, the volunteers added many other kinds of plants. Several years ago, they discovered that some of the trees on the site were rudraksha trees. The seed that is inside of the rudraksha fruit is sacred. Since then, gardens all over the ashram have been raising rudraksha tree seedlings. The photo above shows an area that contains a combination of coconut palm trees and rudraksha trees. The tree in the foreground on the left is a rudraksha tree.

One of the first plants I was drawn to on this visit was a banana palm sprout that was growing out of a nearly dead banana palm stalk that was lying on the ground. You can see a tiny bit of the sprout on the left side of the first photo below; most of the photo is of the stalk. The second photo shows the full sprout. Banana palms only give fruit once; then they die and new sprouts take their place.



Amritapuri Gardens

This farm has had to deal with so many problems over the years; e.g., lack of water, flooding, disease, and poor soil. The volunteers have experimented with so many processes to enrich the soil and to retain water. Their effort has paid off, but challenges still come and go.

The gardens produce a considerable amount of food. I saw bananas, coconuts, tapioca, many kinds of spinach, beans, eggplant, okra, basil, tulasi and moringa growing. There were plants that I didn't recognize, and I suspect many of them are edible.



Amritapuri Gardens



There were many other interesting plants.



Amritapuri Gardens



As we were leaving, one of the garden volunteers offered to take us to see the rudraksha trees on the School of Ayurveda grounds. She said those trees were much smaller than the ones in Vrindavan Field. We took her up on her offer and it was well worth it; the trees were beautiful.



Interesting Information from Our Readers



Photo: [Wikipedia](#)

From Br. Dayamrita Chaitanya in San Ramon:

[A Secret Superpower. Right in Your Backyard](#)

From Janani in Colorado:

[Article: 'Plogging' is the Swedish fitness craze for people who want to save the planet. It's making its way to the U.S.](#)

From Tina in Seattle:

Video: ['Plogging' is 2018's Hottest New Fitness Trend](#)

From Karuna in Seattle

[Plastic straw makers brace for bans](#)

From JoAnn in Edmonds:

[Butt Lady of Auburn Grabs 1 Millionth Butt on Valentines Day](#)

From Iswari in Edmonds:

[The 11 Cities Most Likely to Run Out of Water- Like Cape Town](#)

Recommended Books from Numerous People:

[Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants](#)

[The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate- Discoveries from a Secret World](#)