



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

Backyard Herbal Medicine

Bountiful Bay- *Laurus nobilis* by Visala Hohlbein



Happy Fall Sweet Herbal Friends, it is that exhilarating time again! Time to practice loving gratitude for the very powerfully nourishing and useful herb -Bay. NOW, December is the perfect time to visit a Bay tree in your neighborhood to stock up on some incredibly healthy nutrition for your body! If you are collecting the leaves, it is vital to sustainably collect them. You don't want to take so many as to damage the tree. If you have room in your yard, please consider planting a Bay. She can grow to be about 30 feet tall. She produces beautiful healing leaves year round. She is native to the Mediterranean and has been used as medicine for thousands of years.

As you probably already know, Bay leaves are commonly used in cooking, especially in soups, but have you heard about their great value as a powerful herbal medicine. Her leaves can make a healing tea or herbal infusion. The leaves are both antimicrobial and antibacterial they can be used to strengthen and protect your immune system. They also have anti-inflammatory properties. So, they can help in times of sickness as well!

Herbal Studies are showing that Bay Leaves are a great insect repellant. Many people burn dried Bay Leaves in their homes for this reason and also for the calming affect that she has on the vibration in the physical environment. Read up on it when you get a chance there is tons of information about it!

Her leaves The leaves are easy to pick, put please be mindful to take only what you need. The leaves contain powerful anti-oxidants, which means they will protect your body's cells. In addition, the leaves have anti-inflammatory and immune boosting properties. The leaves make a very healing and restorative tea. If you take time to dry the leaves, you'll have tea all winter long, even when you feel like it is too cold to go outside. There is never a need to purchase tea again! Grow your own and it will be organic too!

PNW Gardening

Her Berries

Bay berries are edible. By inviting herbs into your body that are rich in antioxidants, your cells will have a better chance to suppress any possibility of cell mutation.

Highlights of Medicinal Uses of Bay Leaves

Bay is such an important herb for backyard herbalists! I like to call Her "Bountiful Bay " because she so generously offers an abundance of leaves. Since she is traditionally grown in the Mediterranean, keep an eye on her in the winter to be sure that she doesn't get too cold and perish especially if you live at a higher altitude. Bay has shown that it may be promising in treating IBS, and Breast Cancer, Migraines, Ear Problems, and Candida as well!

When you get ready to harvest her leaves and berries please take the time to talk to her and listen to what she is saying to you! Sing to her! My favorite thing to do is to gather a group of friends to go herbing with. To spread the cheer and love of Herbal Medicine choose someone whose heart is open to it and prepare some of the leaves, dry them and make a Bay tea gift to share with them. Everyone loves the gift of a sweet bundle of fresh tea! Better yet, offer them an experience and invite them along with you!

Bay Leaf contains:

High in Vitamin C

Antioxidants

Folic Acid

Antiseptic (can be used on wounds to prevent infection)

Niacin- promotes healthy nervous system

Large amounts of Vitamin A (good for eyes)

Here are **three quick easy ways to start using Bay Leaves** intentionally and medicinally. Before you gather the herb, remember to thank the plant before taking any of its medicine, and always give something back when you take from the plant. What you give back is up to you, maybe a prayer, song or a simple message of gratitude, or you can return the used portion of the herb back to the base of the plant. That is also a loving action.

1. HERBAL TEA. Collect enough Bay leaves to make a tea. (3-4 leaves.). Boil water and let her infuse 15 minutes before drinking. You can either strain the herb out, or just enjoy her presence while you drink the tea. Herbal water is much better tasting and healthier than just plain water. It tastes as great cold as it does hot. It is amazing how fresh and stimulating she is!

2. HERBAL INFUSION Put 5-6 Bay Leaves and berries if available in a quart Mason jar and fill with boiling water. Put a lid on. Let the Infusion sit overnight. In the morning, strain out any berries and the leaves. Drink the infusion throughout the day. This is an incredible healthy tonic your body will thank you for.

PNW Gardening

3. My new Winter favorite! Make a Bay Leaf Infused Oil. Macerate or crush 5-6 Fresh Bay Leaves in a small amount of olive oil. This will allow the Bay leaf to release its own Laurel Oil. Keep crushing until you see that the leaves are releasing their oil. At that point transfer to a small Mason jar and cover the leaves entirely with Olive Oil. Store the infused oil in a cool dry place. After two weeks, strain and replace the Bay leaves with fresh leaves. This will cause the oil to get even stronger. Bay Laurel Oil is good medicinal oil that can reduce pain, calm the nervous system, Strengthen the immune system, help to soothe and heal varicose veins and joint pain, increase mental activity. This oil can also be used for migraines. Simply rub the oil on the temples. If you like you can heat the oil. The oil can be rubbed on sore joints or on skin rashes. It comes to the rescue in the case of acne and dandruff outbreaks. There is current research showing that Bay Leaves may help with Candida. The study is showing that Bay Laurel can disrupt the ability of Candida to stick to the cell walls.

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

I hope you will take time to reflect on the renewed connection you feel to the plant and ultimately to your Mother Earth by experiencing her herbal leaves and drinking the infused tea water consciously and intentionally.

Thanks for Reading!

Happy Herbing!

[Wikimedia Commons](#)



Tree Planting and Forest Restoration

Following-up on Our Birthday Gift for Amma



Last fall, more than 100 Pacific Northwest devotees honored Amma's birthday by planting 309 trees, during just seven weeks (between the last week in September and November 9).

Since Amma did not come to the U.S. this fall, we decided to share the project with her in Amritapuri. Ten of us – from Seattle, Victoria, Tacoma and Salt Spring Island satsangs – took a booklet about it to Amma. The booklet was filled with photos and stories about the tree planting (which you can see in the last issue of the [PNW GreenFriends newsletter](#)).

Since darshan was being held that day in the Kali Temple, which has a very small stage, there wasn't room for us to go up as a group. Instead we formed a long line and went for darshan one after the other. Kumuda took the photo of us above as we waited in the darshan line!

Karuna gave Amma the booklet, and Amma looked through many of the pages. She was clearly happy with our work. To let Amma know we were together, each member of the group said "I planted trees" to Amma when they had their darshan – in both English and Malayalam!

When John, the last person in line, made the statement, Amma looked at the person beside her and said "He said it too!". We wish all of you that planted trees could have been with us, but Amma did see your beautiful photos and stories. Earlier that week, on Tuesday, December 19, Amma had mentioned tree planting during her talk. She told us that tree planting is a great seva in that it gives fruit, flowers and shade to many people for years, and purifies the atmosphere as well.

We look forward to planting many more trees for Amma in the months and years ahead. GreenFriends will list the number of trees (and shrubs) planted each month. Let Karuna (karunap108@comcast.net) know if you have any helpful and interesting stories and information about serving nature, including planting trees.

"A tree is like a house that we construct for Mother Earth." – Amma

Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

Greenbelt Restoration Work Parties

November 11, 2017



On Saturday, November 11, we held another large restoration work party. Our staff consisted of two GreenFriends members, Karuna's roommate and a Forest Steward, who normally works on a different site. Twenty-nine students from the University of Washington's Introduction to Environmental Science class participated. This work party was special in that five of those students had enjoyed our October 14th work party so much that they came back!

Normally the weather during our work parties turns out to be better than the forecast, but this day was an exception. It rained on and off throughout the work party, more on than off. In the photo above and in the one below participants were huddled under the deck of Karuna's house during a snack break. The rain may have dampened their clothes and bodies, but not their spirits.

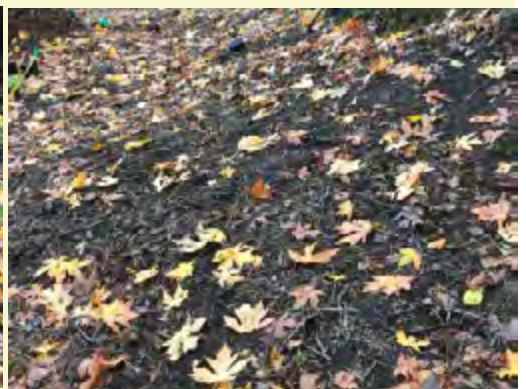


Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

Our task for the day was to finish preparing eight planting areas for the DocuSign corporate group who would be coming to plant more than 300 shrubs and ground covers four days later. That preparation entailed digging out any remaining blackberry root balls and removing the burlap bags that had been laid down to prevent weed growth when the area was originally cleared. In one area, the bags had been covered by a heavy layer of branches and blackberry cane debris. That debris had to be removed before we could pick up the burlap.

[Note: Normally by now, the burlap bags would have decomposed but, since there was almost no rain this summer, most of the bags were still whole. In some places, the burlap was three layers thick, making it impossible to dig holes for the plants. With the burlap gone, it would be easy for the DocuSign group to plant the shrubs and ground covers. Once the plants were in the ground, those volunteers would replace the burlap and then cover it with a thick layer of wood chips.]

The first two photos below show the branches and burlap we removed from one of the areas. The third photo shows what the land looked like once that area had been cleared of everything but leaves.



The students found some carpet and a folding bed in one of the planting areas. Several weeks later, a Seattle Parks Department work crew hauled the bed out of the site for us. That was no easy feat because of its weight, misshapen condition, and the area's difficult footing. They must have forgotten to carry out the carpet, as it is still there.



Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

While three of the teams did the work described above, a fourth team carried 500 cubic feet of new burlap from the street closest to our restoration site and placed it in two stacks on the property. Once they finished that job, they began to distribute the pots of shrubs and ground covers to the planting area where they were to be planted.



After the snack break, some students continued distributing the plants. Before long, most of the potted shrubs and ground covers were gone from the holding area.



Others resumed clearing the site of branches, blackberry vines and blackberry root balls. Even though everyone worked intently, and much was accomplished, smiles and laughter were also in abundance.

Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration



Almost everyone spent the last 45 minutes of the work party participating in a bucket brigade, moving wood chips from the street, down the stairs and into piles on the site. The piles of wood chips would be used on the November 15 planting day.



Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration



Afterwards, we celebrated all that we had accomplished, cleaned the tools, brushed the mud out of our shoes and went on our individual ways. What an incredible three-hour work party it had been.

November 15, 2017



Wednesday, November 15 was a big day for our restoration project. On that day, a corporate group from DocuSign came to plant the 330 shrubs and ground covers the Seattle Parks Department had given us. November 15 was DocuSign's Global Impact Day. DocuSign's website says this about their Global Impact program:

Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

We believe character is defined through action. With DocuSign IMPACT, we are committed to putting this character into action by harnessing the power of DocuSign's people, products, and profits to make a difference in the global communities in which our employees and customers live and work.

Buses picked up the employees at their corporate headquarters and took them to projects all over Seattle. It was wonderful to have 42 of their volunteers helping us.

[Note: You might be wondering why we plant at this time of year. In the forest, planting starts after the fall rains begin. That way the plants have a chance to root before the summer comes. We've had almost no rain during the summer for a few years and there is no water source on this property. The plants have the best chance of survival if they have developed a healthy root system before the dry period.]

A highlight of that day was that Joanna Nelson de Flores, the director of Forterra's Green Cities program and Nichole Marcotte, Forterra's Stewardship Coordinator joined Karuna and Anavadya in leading the work party.



The weather forecast was for rain, but we were blessed with having a rain-free work party. After an initial orientation, everyone began to work. After the planting was finished, burlap bags were placed throughout the planting area and then the burlap was covered by wood chips. This process reduces weed growth, holds in moisture and prevents erosion.



Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration



To complete the process, blue and white tape was tied loosely onto or near each plant. Every year, Seattle Parks Department uses a different color of tape to tag the plants. The color of the tape indicates what year a plant was planted, so a blue and white tag means the plant was planted in 2017!

Here are photos of two the completed planting areas. You can see the blue and white tape scattered throughout them.



We planted 37 trees on October 22 and about 320 shrubs and groundcovers on November 15. The line of empty pots was impressive.

Before we know it, spring will arrive. How beautiful these planting areas will become.

Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

November 24



We had brought Devi Bhava petals back from Amma's summer tour with the intention of using them in part of the planting process. Since a corporate group did the planting, it was not appropriate to distribute the petals at that time. Therefore, on November 24, nine devotees placed a petal beside each of the 300+ plants as a way of requesting Mother Nature to support and protect each of the plants.

December 5 Follow-up

The trees, shrubs and groundcovers are already growing! Some are considerably bigger than they were when we planted them. So much beauty, and it is just beginning.



Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

Tree (and Shrub) Planting Stats

Since the birthday project ended, 10 vine maple trees (and 371 shrubs) were planted in the GreenFriends Greenbelt Restoration project on Beacon Hill in Seattle; Colette, Visala, Gaurang, Jagadeesh and Janice planted 5 fruit trees in Maltby; John and Surabhi planted 3 douglas-firs and 7 red-cedars in Pt. Angeles and Mechas planted 2 serviceberry trees in Maltby for a total of 27 trees (and 371 shrubs) planted between November 9 and December 31. We've planted 336 trees (and 445 shrubs) since the 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.



PNW Litter Project

PNW Litter Project Stats

In December, 30 Litter Project members and their friends picked up litter for 73 hours. (Average 2.4 hours; Median 1 hour; Range 1 minute to 12 hours) We have picked up litter for 9195 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.



PNW Litter Project

Blatant Irony or Planting a Seed? by Karuna Poole



A friend in Amritapuri showed me this photo that she took in Ft. Kochi. When she pointed out all of the litter behind the sign, I thought of how many times I have been picking up cigarette butts in Seattle and someone has stood watching me and then dropped the butt from the cigarette they were smoking on the ground right in front of me.

I like to think that if people see the trash bins in Ft. Kochi or watch others pick up cigarette butts in Seattle, it will plant a seed in their minds that will sprout sometime in the future. Perhaps at that time they will stop contributing to the litter problem. Perhaps they will even start picking up litter themselves!

PNW Litter Project

Amma South Africa Plastic Project

The Plastic Project in South Africa has been described as “an eco-friendly, trash-to-treasure transforming project to initiate sustainable employment for women.” It was inspired by The Plastic Project in Amma’s Amritapuri ashram.

The items in the photos below were crocheted from disposable plastic bags. The main part of the bag was used to make the baskets, bags and other items. The handles were cut off and used to stuff the balls shown below. Any bags that were not suitable for crocheting were given to a group that builds schools using “bricks” made from plastic bottles filled with soft plastic.



PNW Litter Project



To learn more about this project go to the [Amma South Africa Facebook Page](#)

Interesting Information from our Readers

From Vandya in Pt. Townsend:

Vandya thought this newsletter might be of interest to our GreenFriends newsletter readers. It is written by Geoff Lawton, an Australian permaculture consultant, designer and teacher. Geoff says this about his Friday Fives offering:

- Every Friday at 9 am EST, a very short email with 5 bullet-points of things I consider fascinating, engaging, or quirky.
- Immediate access to our newly-published videos, including some that will not be available anywhere else.
- Topics: Permaculture, climate change, off-grid-living, aquaponics, beyond organic, and lots more.
- It will occasionally be behind-the-scenes and personal, like me putting on a GoPro camera and going for a bumpy ride around the farm :)
- It'll take you 3 minutes to quickly scan.
- You will absolutely take away something new.

Anyone can [sign up](#). The blog-version of all Friday Fives [is here](#).

From Kathie in Bellevue:

[The Blind Man and Double Amputee Who Planted 10,000 Trees](#)

From Tip in Vaughn:

[This Hardworking Group Is Cleaning America's Last Frontier](#)

From Jovanna in Pt. Townsend

[New Zealand Government Announces Plan to Plant 1 Billion Trees. Get to 0 Emissions](#)

From Mechas in Maltby:

[Seed Saving at Home](#) video by Vandana Shiva

From Jayanand in Pt. Angeles:

[Leave the Leaves](#)

From Poorima in Shoreline:

[The Uninhabitable Village](#)

From Nirag in Connecticut

How Trees Talk to Each Other

From Priya in Seattle:

[The Hidden Life of Trees](#)

From Tirtha in Victoria:

[America Petro-topia](#)

Photos of Amritapuri Gardens

Saraswati Garden



Amritapuri's Saraswati garden is located just north of the main part of the ashram.



Photos of Amritapuri Gardens

