



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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Instagram: @sarahyetta

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](mailto:karunap108@comcast.net)

## NEWS



Photo Credit: [Wikipedia](#)

### March 5 Cigarette Butt Pick-up Work Party

The PNW Litter Project will be holding a work party in support of [Kick Butts Day](#), an annual event organized by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. Traditionally, our way of supporting that event is to pick up cigarette butts in the International District of Seattle and that is what we will be doing again this year.

The work party will be held on Saturday, March 5, from 10:00 a.m. to noon. We will meet at Hing Hay Park, at 423 Maynard Ave. S., Seattle (the cross streets are S. King and Maynard). You can get more information about the park and the location at <http://bestseattleparks.com/parks/hing-hay-park>.

Any butts we pick up will be sent to TerraCycle to be recycled into plastic pallets. As of now, we have sent them more than 300,000 butts.

IF YOU CAN'T COME TO SEATTLE, CONSIDER HAVING A WORK PARTY IN YOUR SATSANG, OR SPEND SOME TIME PICKING UP CIGARETTE BUTTS ON YOUR OWN!

To sign up or to receive more information about the March 5 work party, write Karuna at [karunap108@comcast.com](mailto:karunap108@comcast.com).



# NEWS

## Miscellaneous News

Readers who answered the PNW GreenFriends newsletter feedback questionnaire suggested we have a Question of the Month and Do It Yourself sections. If you have suggestions for potential content for those areas, please write [pnwgreenfriendsnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:pnwgreenfriendsnewsletter@gmail.com).

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It would be wonderful to include reports of GreenFriends projects from all around the PNW region. Please share your experiences so we can learn from and be inspired by them. You can send them to [pnwgreenfriendsnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:pnwgreenfriendsnewsletter@gmail.com).

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Karuna and Ananya will be taking Green Seattle Partnership's Forest Steward training on March 4 and April 1. After that training is complete, we will begin to have GreenFriends work parties in the Cheasty Greenbelt.

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### From Kathie in Bellevue:

Beautiful art made while stacking wood: <https://shareably.net/piling-log-art>

### From Saroja in Seattle:

Fun video about a baby elephant <https://www.facebook.com/L0veNature/videos/1633886360258491>

### From Mechas in Bellevue:

Short video about the organisms in a worm bin <https://youtu.be/qB2BxpeiD5E>

### From Yashas in Maltby:

Green Roofs: A Primer <http://foresternetwork.com/stormwater-magazine/sw-water/green-roofs/green-roofs-a-primer>

### From Tirtha In British Columbia:

17 tips to get closer to zero waste [How to Go Zero Waste](#)

### From Maheshwari in Shoreline:

Turn a small space into a big harvest <http://waldenlabs.com/20-vertical-gardening-ideas>

### Climate & Health Meeting February 16, 2017 • Atlanta, GA

Eight hour recording from the Climate Reality Project [https://www.climate realityproject.org/health?utm\\_source=E-mail-Atlanta-WrapUp&utm\\_campaign=ClimateHealth&utm\\_medium=Email#watch](https://www.climate realityproject.org/health?utm_source=E-mail-Atlanta-WrapUp&utm_campaign=ClimateHealth&utm_medium=Email#watch)



## PNW Gardening

### The Fruit Trees Are Calling Me by Mark Braatan



Early February 2017 was a very unusual time on the West Coast of British Columbia. Precipitation that most often falls as rain fell as snow, and accumulations were unusually deep.

My son and I had taken advantage of the snow forecast to go downhill skiing together, but we did not anticipate so much snow at sea level. Our last day on the mountain we received news from home that the snow had already piled up 2 feet deep, there was more on the way and that our favorite plum tree had already toppled over on the first night of snow. I had a strong intuition at that moment that our orchard was in grave danger.

By the time we made it back home to Cortes Island the entire forest was heavily burdened with snow. We live on a farm with over 100 fruit trees, among them a heritage orchard of apple trees over 100 years old. We just moved to the farm last year and had not had the time to prune the old beauties who had been unfortunately neglected for too long. The dense branches were trapping all the snow that fell and branches hung awkwardly low on the verge of collapse.

All night long the snow continued to fall, and I couldn't sleep a wink. I listened with heightened awareness and a pounding heart for the sound of breaking branches and falling trees outside. I knew that the fruit trees could not take any more weight. I felt them calling out for help as the branches carried more and more of the falling snow. I vowed that the following day as soon as it was light enough I would attend to the trees, and shovel off our barn roof which was not designed to carry such snow loads.

We woke to find the power out and electrical lines knocked down all over the island due to falling trees. After a hasty breakfast, I suited up with full rain gear and headed out into the storm. All day long I moved from tree to tree with a pike pole and shook the branches. Heavy piles of snow fell all over me, penetrating every opening. I moved as quick

## PNW Gardening



ly as I could knowing how urgently the trees needed to be unburdened of the snow load. Ignoring fatigue, cold and wet, all concern for myself was eclipsed by the needs of these magnificent old trees. The trees were talking to me and sighing with relief as their branches sprang upward when the snow fell off. I continued after dark by the glow of a full moon through the snowy clouds. I felt certain that only by these efforts would the trees be saved.

I slept soundly that night, but woke to see the trees burdened by yet more snow and it continued to fall and accumulate very quickly. I shoveled off the barn roof a second time and began a second round of tree shaking in the orchard, again working at it all day long. Toward the end of the day, rain began to fall and the snow became very heavy. I took to clearing off the most vulnerable sections of our house roof. As darkness fell I watched with anguish as some large branches began to break off the largest fruit trees, ones I had already shaken off twice. I went for a third round of the orchard concentrating on the highest branches that still had large accumulations of snow and were getting very heavy as pouring rain saturated the snow.

Late that night the power was still out and I was completely exhausted, but content in the awareness that I had done all that I could do to save the trees. By morning the rain had washed away most of the remaining snow and the danger had passed.

Fruit trees, particularly the older ones, were devastated all over the island in those few days. Decades of work and years of potential harvests were lost. Fortunately the younger and best tended orchards had fewer branches to trap the snow and they fared better.

It was an important lesson for me to trust my intuition. When I felt the urgency to act and followed through with preventive measures, disaster was averted. I am thankful for the love, concern, guidance and empowered effort that enabled me to have this experience. It was also a sobering experience to realize yet again the fragile balance of nature that supports our lives here on Mother Earth.

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### Backyard Herbal Medicine - OREGANO by Visala Hohlbein



Let's take a minute to be thankful for the glorious herb Oregano! Most people call this herb OregaNO, but I call her OregaYES! She is an absolute must for backyard herbalists! It is no wonder that the name Oregano means "Mountain Joy."

Certainly Oregano has brought much joy to so many people and animals alike! Ancient Greeks and Romans considered it the herb of happiness. It has become a cultural symbol of love. That is why you may recollect seeing a drawing of a bride and groom wearing a crown wreath of oregano.

The sweet little Oregano is an herb that many people are familiar with. I imagine you have likely used it for culinary purposes--think pizza and pasta--but did you know that Oregano is an amazing healing herb? Listed below are just a few of the unending benefits of this beauty!

Oregano is easy to grow; she is a perennial, which means that she will return every year to grace your garden in the same spot that you planted her. In mild winters, she may never leave but stay vibrant throughout the dark months. It is very easy to get a start of Oregano 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!

Oregano has an aromatic allure that will keep you hypnotized and mesmerized. She will call you back again and again to the present moment. You may have been a secret admirer of Oregano for a long time but now you can transcend that relationship and start to appreciate her in a new way. Consider yourself challenged to launch into new relationship with this fantastic gem!



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### Oregano has become very well known for its healing properties:

- Anti-bacterial--inhibits the growth of bacteria
- Anti-oxidant--prevents oxygen-based damage to bodily cells
- Calming effects--this is good for any time!
- Good Source of Vitamin K and A, manganese, iron, dietary fiber, and calcium.
- When applied topically, Oregano can be used to treat skin conditions such as acne; it also works well on dandruff.
- Tea made from Oregano, or simply nibbling on the leaves will help with menstrual cramps.
- Oregano can help improve respiratory health.

Please join me in trying to get to know our friend Oregano better. Oregano thrives easily. Take time to talk to her and express gratitude. This healing herb grows well in a pot, so if you live in an apartment you can still enjoy her. This is a great herb to plant in a neglected parking strip. Soon this unloved portion of Mother's Earth will become a frequent gathering spot for neighbors.

Here are **two quick and easy ways to start using Oregano** intentionally and medicinally. Remember to thank the plant before taking any of its medicine, and always give something back in compensation. That choice is up to you--maybe a chant or a song or just a simple message of gratitude, or maybe you will return the used portion of the Oregano back to the base of the plant.

**1. Tea.** Trim off small pieces of Oregano (1-2 tsp.) and cut them into small pieces to release more of the fragrant herb. Drop them into boiling water, then turn off the heat and let the tea infuse 10 minutes before drinking. Incredibly refreshing! You can either strain the Oregano out, or just enjoy the pieces when you drink the water. After all, it is edible. This tea is so amazing to share with friends when they visit your home. OregaYES! much better tasting and healthier than just plain water, and once you plant it, it is always available year round!

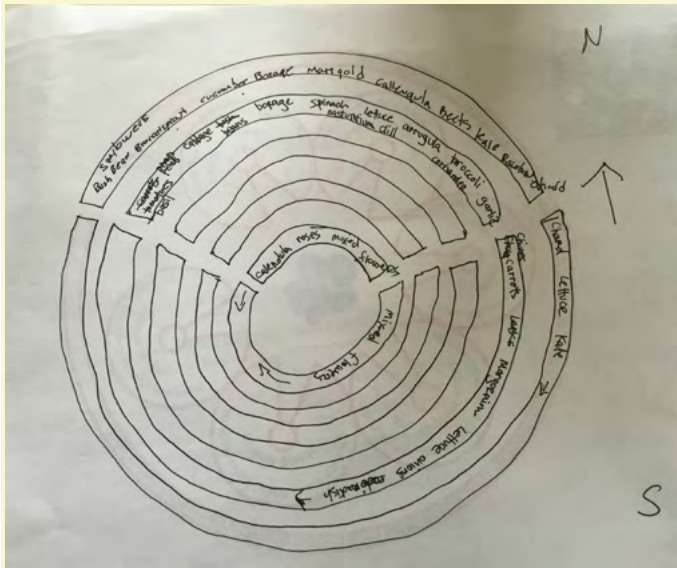
**2. Experience.** Next time you walk by the Oregano growing as a volunteer in a random sidewalk crack, give thanks, then remove one of her small leaves and nibble away!

I hope you will take time to reflect on what connection you feel to the plant OregaYES and ultimately to your Mother Earth by nibbling leaves and drinking the infused tea consciously and intentionally.

Happy Herbing!

## PNW Gardening

### Mapping Our Plantings by Netsah Zylinsky



It may be too soon to work the soil, but we can dream... and we can design. Under and within and inside our gardens are the considerations and choices that create our garden designs.

Design is a process of connection to the Divine Plan. In the big picture, Design is a process of rehabilitation for our Earth; it is also a healing process, a spiritual process, an experiment, and a model.

Gardens are all about Design, and the guide to our personal garden's Design is Nature. We want to use her as our basic principle, and follow her in setting up our designs. Let's observe where the sun crosses our garden in the Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. What direction are the prevailing winds in the different seasons? What is the water source, and can that water be diverted to help our garden during the drier times? We can even consider how many times we might walk out to our gardens for greens or herbs or our full season crops like potatoes and carrots, and how we might like to make that walk more convenient.

Consider too how Nature can influence our plantings. Her use of straight lines is rare, so let's plan our seeding in patches rather than rows.

So, let's begin. Gather your garden map of what you have planted and/or where the new beds will be for the new season. Jot down your ideas for placement. Then gather your seeds and spread them out on a table.

Take a moment to pray over them, asking that they may grow to their full potential for the betterment of all. There's a beautiful little Mayan song we often sing for the seeds:

#### THE SACRED SEED SONG

AYOU HAILLI AYOU HAILLI  
 GREAT SUN MIGHTY FATHER  
 WAKE THE SEEDS AND MAKE THEM GROW  
 HAILLI, PACHAMAMA, HAILLI HAILLI,  
 O EARTH MOTHER, HAILLI



## PNW Gardening

Next, make 4 piles of seeds on the table:

1. One group contains the LEAF PLANTS. These include seeds that are grown for the production of leaf...i.e. lettuce, celery, oregano, thyme, chard, kale etc...
2. Another group holds the FLOWERS, grown for the production of flowers, which look like the crowning glory of the plant world; e.g., all garden flowers, herbs like chamomile and borage, and veggies like broccoli and cauliflower...
3. A third group comprises the FRUIT SEEDS; e.g., tomatoes, eggplant, beans, squash, cucumbers, etc... plus of course actual fruits....
4. And the last group is made up of the ROOTS; e.g., potatoes, beets, carrots...

At this point, identify the kinds of pre-planted starts you might like to incorporate, and assign them to one of the four categories. By looking at the purpose of each seed and plant, we can become more in tune and intuitive to their needs, as Rudolf Steiner advised.

Let's go all out and consider planting by the CYCLES OF THE MOON as well. This will put us in touch with the fluid ebb and flow of Nature's constant draw on the waters-of our Earth, the waters of our bodies, and the waters of our plants. The moon's motion follows the Earth's rotation.

The new moon occurs when the moon is positioned between the earth and sun, making it invisible to us. At a full moon, the earth, moon, and sun are in approximate alignment, just as the new moon, but the moon is on the opposite side of the earth, so the entire sunlit part of the moon is visible. The first quarter and third quarter moons (both often called a "half moon"), happen when the moon is at a 90 degree angle with respect to the earth and sun. So we are seeing exactly half of the moon illuminated and half in shadow. The word crescent refers to the phases where the moon is less than half illuminated. The word gibbous refers to phases where the moon is more than half illuminated. Waxing essentially means "growing" or expanding in illumination, and waning means "shrinking" or decreasing in illumination.

Thus, we plant leaves and flowers that bear above the ground in the waxing cycle in order to support their fluid energy to rise to complete potential. And by planting perennial fruit or edible roots in the decreasing (gibbous) moon cycle, we support the natural downward drawing of their energy and growth. This is a fun and easy way to ensure we are working with and even mimicking Nature.

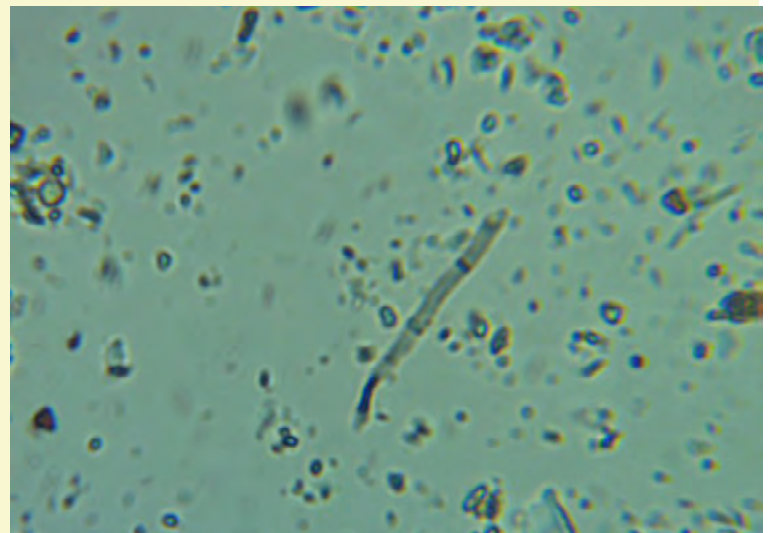
Hopefully, next month we'll look at the ART OF PLACEMENT as we interrelate with our plants...

## PNW Gardening

### Soil Food Web by Maheswari Schaller and Mechas McCrary



In February Mechas, Raji and Yashas attended a class to learn about soil biology. The class was taught by a very respected and well known leader in soil microbiology and researcher of the soil foodweb, Dr. Elaine Ingham. What an incredible class! Dr. Elaine Ingham is brilliant teacher. If you get an opportunity we highly recommend taking the Dr. Elaine Ingham's class, it will solve many of your garden problems.



Who knew that the nematodes, fungi, protozoa, bacteria, arthropods were the little critters that make the soil come to life? Without the biology of these critters we can't grow nutrient rich food or plants. Mechas, Raji and Yashas learned so much about soil biology in just one week and of course there is still a lot more to learn.



## PNW Gardening



So when we have the right biology we have soil and when we don't we have dirt.

When you have a diversity of microorganisms in your soil the plants are healthy because of the balance of beneficial microorganisms and insects. Another added benefit is less water is required because the roots are stronger and they go deeper into the ground to gather nutrients and water due to the soils ability to absorb more water. Dirt is not so good. It does not hold water and requires the continued use of fertilizers that kill fungi and nematodes and other beneficial organisms. Dirt is not great for growing food.



The key to all of this is making rich compost to bring in the good microbiology.

Check out this link to Dr. Ingham's compost making: [http://www.soilfoodweb.com/Thermal\\_Compost.html](http://www.soilfoodweb.com/Thermal_Compost.html)

To learn more about Dr. Elaine Ingham visit these sites:

[http://www.soilfoodweb.com/Home\\_Page.html](http://www.soilfoodweb.com/Home_Page.html)

<http://www.lifeinthesoilclasses.com>

<http://www.soilfoodweb.com/Books.html>

Visit Maheswari and Mechas' website at [Tasty Garden Designs](http://www.tastygarden.com)



## Gardening

### Why I Have "Weeds" by Howard Faxon

What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have never been discovered.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson



I always have some "weeds" in my yard. I let them flourish.  
One reason is that I saw the birds continually feeding on the seeds.





## Gardening



And then there are bees, butterflies, and me. Several plants growing here are edible and have a long history of human consumption and yet they are considered "weeds".  
I find nothing undesirable about free food... and the Finch agrees.





## Tree Planting and Forest Restoration

### Return of the Sitka Spruce and the Power of Volunteers

by Ananya Holterman

A little jewel of natural beauty on the shores of Lake Washington has begun to get a makeover. Local neighbors and student group volunteers from the University of Washington have developed a plan and are carrying out the restoration of an area that is called Yesler Swamp.

Yesler Swamp is a wetland on the edges of Lake Washington. In the past, the area had been dredged, and land nearby had been used as a landfill. While the spot had not always been a wetland, it now serves as a unique wildlife area in the midst of urban development. The swamp is located on the eastern side of the Union Bay Natural Area which is managed by the University of Washington.



The volunteers have worked through a variety of sources to fund a lovely elevated boardwalk trail that winds through the swamp. Evidence of beavers there is displayed by gnawed-upon trees. As the walkway winds through the forest area, a local pair of swans can often be seen out in the water areas.

The most exciting aspect of the restoration for me was stumbling upon small, newly-planted Sitka Spruce trees—ones I hope will grow into gentle giants of the forest such as those that currently dominate the Hoh Rain Forest. The information signs at Yesler Swamp indicate that the Sitka Spruce had originally grown all around the edges of Lake Washington before the areas had been logged. It was an absolute delight to see the sweet three-to-four foot tall Sitka Spruce saplings which have been planted throughout the swamp area. The young Sitkas are the new sentinels of Yesler Swamp. They stand in testament to the power of volunteers.



# NATURE

## The Relationship Between Humans and Nature translated by Swami Amritaswarupanada Puri

**Questioner:** What is nature to human beings?

**Amma:** Nature means life to humans. She is part and parcel of our existence. It is an interrelationship that goes on at every moment and on every level. Not only are we totally dependent on Nature, but we affect her and she affects us. And when we truly love Nature, she responds in kind and opens up her endless resources to us. And just as when we truly love another person, in our love toward nature we should be infinitely faithful, patient and compassionate.

**Questioner:** Is this relationship an exchange or is it a mutual support?

**Amma:** It is both and even more. However, Nature will continue to exist even without human beings. She knows how to take care of herself. But humans require the support of Nature for their existence.

**Questioner:** What happens if the exchange between Nature and human beings become complete?

**Amma:** She will stop hiding things from us. Opening her infinite treasure of natural wealth, she will allow us to enjoy it. Like a mother, she will protect us, nurture and nourish us.

In a perfect relationship between humanity and Nature, a circular energy field is created in which both start flowing into each other. To put it in another way, when we human beings fall in love with Nature, she will fall in love with us.

**Questioner:** Amma, in order to re-establish the relationship between human beings and Nature, what is Your advice?

**Amma:** Let us be compassionate and considerate. Let us take from Nature only what we really need, and then try to return it to some extent. For only by giving will we receive. A blessing is something that comes back to us in response to the way we approach something. If we approach Nature with love, considering her as life, as God, as part of our own existence, then she will serve as our best friend, a friend whom we can always trust, a friend who would never betray us. But if our attitude toward Nature is wrong, then, instead of nature responding with a blessing, the result will be a negative reaction. Nature will turn against the human race if we are not careful in our relationship with her, and the consequences may be disastrous.

Many of God's beautiful creations have already been lost due to people's misbehaviour and total disregard for nature. If we continue to act this way, it will only pave the way for disaster.

**From Amma's Heart (p.198)**



## Nature

### Snoqualmie River by Eric Ewing





## Nature

### Sitting with the Wolves by Wayne Carter





## Nature





## Nature



To read the story behind the photos, and see more photos, [click here.](#)





## Nature

### Zebulon Sunflower by Lalita Lyons





## Nature

### Learning About Centipedes by Karuna Poole



One of the first things I noticed in Amritapuri's Saraswati Garden was that there were a lot of caterpillars. I was confused about that since I thought caterpillars ate plants and none of these caterpillars were on the plants. In fact, there was no evidence that any of the plants were being eaten.

When I commented about that on my blog, two readers told me they weren't caterpillars, they were centipedes. I was also informed that centipedes were carnivorous; they eat insects and spiders, not plants. That explained the mystery of the uneaten plants!

When I looked closely at my photos I could see the creatures had way more legs than a caterpillar. I had no idea that centipedes could be so beautiful. I decided to find out what else I didn't know about centipedes.

#### FACTS ABOUT CENTIPEDES

1. Centipedes have between 15 and 171 pairs of legs.
2. They have two legs per segment.
3. The first legs are not really legs. They are more like fangs. When they catch their prey, the centipede poisons the creature with the venom that is in those fangs.
4. Centipedes can be white, yellow, orange, red, brown or black. Most are a reddish-brown.
5. They can live up to six years.
6. There are 8,000 different kinds of centipedes.

## Nature

7. Centipedes range in size from 1 to 11 inches.
8. Small centipedes eat spiders, worms, flies, roaches and other insects.
9. The big centipedes are in the tropics and they can eat frogs, birds and bats.
10. They are nocturnal and they live under leaves, bark, logs and in other damp places.
11. Centipedes have been on the earth for 430 million years.
12. There are even centipedes near the Artic Circle.

### To learn more about centipedes:

[Amazing Facts about Centipedes](#) (Video)

[Centipede Facts](#)

[10 Fascinating Facts About Centipedes](#)

[Interesting Facts About Centipedes](#)

**From: Christine in Seattle**





# PNW Litter Project

## PNW Litter Project Stats

In February, 39 Litter Project members and their friends picked up litter for 80 hours. (Average 2 hours; Median 1.5 hours; Range 2 minutes to 10 hours) We have picked up litter for 8416 hours since the project began in July of 2011.

## Litter Project Work Party Announcement

We will meet in at Hing Hay Park in the International District of Seattle (423 Maynard Ave S) at 10 a.m. on Sunday, March 5 for our annual cigarette butt clean up in support of Kick Butts Day. Please join us if at all possible. For more information write [karunap108@comcast.net](mailto:karunap108@comcast.net).

## TerraCycle Stats

TerraCycle, an organization that recycles items that are normally considered unrecyclable, has credited us with turning in 300,124 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

### Bala Kendra Litter Pickup Work Party Report



At 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, February 25, the children from Redmond Satsang's Bala Kendra, the children's program, met at the Cheasty Greenbelt on Beacon Hill to pick up litter. Prior to starting the work, Karuna showed them samples of the litter they would be picking up. Much of it would be tiny pieces of plastic. A major goal of this work party was to pick up the tiny pieces of plastic before birds started gathering materials to build their nests this spring.



Six children and two adults participated in the work party. Some of the litter pick up tools they used were too long for them to put the litter into their own bags so most of them worked in teams, dropping their litter into their partner's bags.



## PNW Litter Project

They were successful in picking up the litter that was visible above ground; and that was no small feat. The next three pictures are photos of their haul. Most of the litter in the Greenbelt is decades old. The kids were excited to see what a Twix bar looked like in the past.



Most of the litter that is shown in the photos is relatively small. The children also added numerous items to the ever-growing pile of garbage that has been collected from this Greenbelt lot over the last six months. (The photo below was taken two days after the work party, and hours after it snowed.)



At 4:30 the children finished their work. They carried their tools and garbage back to Karuna's house and went inside for snacks and play. Mission accomplished and fun had by all!



## GreenFriends Projects in Amritapuri

### Kuzhitura Farm by Karuna Poole



Kuzhitura Farm is a twenty-minute walk south of the Amritapuri ashram. When I entered that farm last year, I felt I was walking into paradise. I had that same reaction this year. On this page and the next, you will see glimpses of what I saw there.





## GreenFriends Projects in Amritapuri





## GreenFriends Projects in Amritapuri

