

Green Friends

Nature on its own is indeed beautiful and clean. The hills and rivers do not need us to clean them. In fact it is nature's water which cleans us; it is trees which purify air for us. Because we have littered, we have spoilt its pristine beauty.

Amma



July Greetings

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I've been pondering what to use as a greeting this month. Moments ago, I realized the answer was to share an experience that happened this morning when I was picking up cigarette butts in the International District with Al. While I was kneeling down gathering the butts, a woman walked up to me and asked if I was working with a group or on my own. We talked for awhile and she told me she thought I should go to government offices and tell them they needed to make it illegal to throw down cigarette butts, that just picking them up isn't enough. I had been feeling overwhelmed by the impossibility of picking all the butts up, so I could certainly understand where she was coming from. While I don't plan to follow her suggestion I know it is time for me to do more. In a story later in this newsletter, I shared that I've been feeling more and more inclined to join Visala's project of placing decorated cans in areas where people throw butts-- cans asking smokers to place their butts in the can rather than on the ground. Now I know that I will do that for sure.

Karuna

Green Friends is a global grassroots environmental movement which promotes environmental awareness and local participation in conservation efforts throughout the world.

Green Friends 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 Green Friends Litter Project write Karuna at
pnwgreenfriendslitterproject@gmail.com

Important Information

From Nimala:

25,000 bumblebees found dead in Target parking lot in Wilsonville, OR

http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2013/06/25000_bubblebees_killed_droppi.html#/0

Whole Foods put out a photo of what a grocery store would look like in a world without bees

http://blu.stb.s-msn.com/i/90/4328CFF229C-486C3F868A2C693DAC2_h316_w628_m5_cPJJeJy-wOh.jpg

From Karuna:

I had heard that the French ashram had a bee sanctuary a couple years ago. After reading the above articles, I finally decided to look it up. I was astounded to read about the scope of their Green Friends programs. The report brought tears to my eyes. Maybe someday this will be us.

<http://www.greenfriends-europe.org/index.php/en/m-action-en/m-ecomodele-en/m-frenchcenter-en>
After reading about the French ashram, I looked at the information about the Green Friends projects in Germany and Spain.

<http://www.greenfriends-europe.org/index.php/en/m-action-en/m-ecomodele-en/m-germancenter-en>
<http://www.greenfriends-europe.org/index.php/en/m-action-en/m-ecomodele-en/m-spanishcenter-en>

Different topic, but a very important one - several months ago, PCC's newspaper contained a story stating that that that Americans waste 40-50% of the food they have purchased. That averages 197 pounds a year per person.

http://www.pccnaturalmarkets.com/sc/1302/food_waste.html

Litter Project Membership

As of June 30, 2013, we had 331 members.
(This figure includes the 25 people who signed up at Amma's 2013 PNW programs!)

Litter Project Hours

Forty-five members reported picking up
117 hours of litter during June 2013.

(The statistics below relate to members and guests who report having picked up litter. They do not include those who do not report or who reported 0.)

Average: 2.6 hours

Range 2 minutes to 30 hours

Median: 1.5 hours

Members of the project have picked up litter for 3,758 hours since the project began in July 2011.

Aluminum Can Report

The Washington State Litter Project members collect and sell aluminum cans (soda, beer and cat food cans) gathered from the litter they pick up and from friends, family, neighbors and colleagues.

In 2011, they sold 323 pounds of aluminum cans for \$151.04.
In 2012 the total was 281 pounds for \$134.67.

In June 2013 we turned in 8 pounds of cans and earned \$3.36.
That makes a total of 178 pounds and \$89.98 earned for 2013.

Since the project began, we have sold 888 pounds of aluminum for a grand total of \$411.82. All funds were given to the Pacific Northwest M.A. Center.

Cigarette Butts/ TerraCycle Report

If you want to count cigarette butts when you pick them up, that is fine, but there is no need to do that any more. Counting them was a requirement of the King County grant but it is not a requirement of TerraCycle. TerraCycle must have some way to convert the number of pounds the box weighs to total number of butts.



Amma's new environmental program InDeed, a campaign for nature, was a major focus during the tour this year. The slide show that was shown regularly was impactful. Here is are the words on the beginning slides:

- ✻ So lets stop thinking
- ✻ This world is not an inheritance from the past
- ✻ It is a loan we take from the future
- ✻ It is a loan we take from our children
- ✻ And just like any loan, we have to pay it back with interest
- ✻ We owe it to our children and to future generations to leave it better than we found it.
- ✻ And stop being the cause of pollution, global warming, biodiversity in crisis, destruction of nature's harmony, and instead become the solution.

Sound complicated, it's actually quite simple.

It's as simple as **what we use**, what we reuse, **what we take**, **what we forsake**, what we share, **what we grow that shapes the world we live in.**

Learn more and see the whole video at: <http://www.embracingtheworld.org/indeed/>

My Keyhole Gardens

by Mechas

I am having great success with the spiral herb garden that was built in my front yard this spring. This inspired me to build a keyhole garden in the backyard.

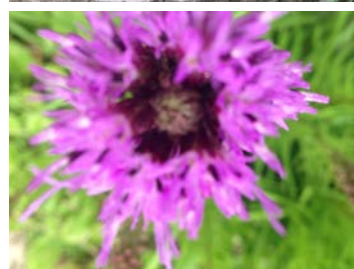
Building the keyhole garden was not difficult, nor did it take a lot of time. Maheswari and I built the outer walls with bricks, filled it in with good soil and made a long six inch wire tube that we put in the middle of the keyhole. Then we planted the garden with several varieties of lettuce, chard, kale, and nasturtiums. Now all I do is put veggie scraps in the tube and water it a little. This keeps the plants moist and fed. The plants are doing very good.

I liked the first keyhole garden so much that I made a second one. In this one I planted tomatoes, broccoli, celery, arugula, nasturtiums, marigolds, basil, beets, chard, and several other plants. The more plants in the keyhole garden the fuller it gets and the less weeds I need to remove.

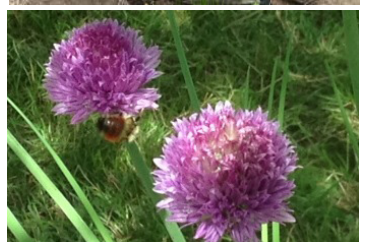
I highly recommend the keyhole garden design. It takes less water, less work to maintain, and it gives me a lot of food from a small space. Did I mention you do not need to bend down to pick the veggies? The keyhole garden is a winner!



keyhole 1



keyhole 2



spiral

Repurpose

by Maheswari

Definition of 'Repurposing'

The use of something for a purpose other than its original intended use, repurposing an item can be done by modifying it to fit a new use, or by using the item as is in a new way. I have always liked the idea of creating a new purpose for something old, instead of discarding it into the landfill. It stirs the artist in me and I find it makes for very interesting conversations. Lucky for me, Keith is a contractor and I have the opportunity to look at discarded items from his remodeling projects before things get hauled away to the dump. I like the idea of making funky, quirky, whimsical planters or garden art.

I've wanted a large container to put on my deck for various culinary and medicinal herbs. I was very happy to see Keith bring home an old sink one day. With his help, I made it into a planter and put it on the deck outside the kitchen door. I love it! I have about eight different herbs in it and I find that I use them more often because picking them is so convenient. I thought I would share what I have done so far even though I still want to do more decorative work on it, perhaps a mosaic tile design along the top and a water feature of some sort. When the days started to warm up I knew I needed to get things planted. I knew I would have time to finish the design later. I hope you enjoy the photos and feel inspired to repurpose something of your own!



The frame for the new planter is made with repurposed cedar boards.



The painted frame!



The sink is set in the frame and the drain hole is covered with a small piece of wire mesh before filling it with soil.



The sink is now a planter for my herbs. The holes along the top of the sink are now covered with pots and decorative features. I hope to tile the border



The flourishing herb planter a couple of weeks later. I pick herbs daily and I love being able to see it from my kitchen window!

My Shitake Mushroom Patch

by Maheswari

A friend recently gave me a shitake mushroom patch. It is a kit to grow mushrooms at home. The process of growing my own mushrooms was intriguing and a bit like a science fiction movie. You start by soaking the “patch”, as it is called, overnight in water. Then it is covered with a plastic hood, which you remove two times a day to mist the patch. It immediately begins to grow. At first it looks like there are “eyes” on the patch, then the stems begin to form and they grow longer with the “eyes” on the ends, until finally the tops begin to grow and replace the “eyes”. I kept my patch on the kitchen counter so I would not forget to mist it. I had no idea how fascinating it would be to watch it grow and change throughout the day.

The whole process takes about 14 days before you harvest the mushrooms. Then you let the patch dry out and before you begin the whole process again. Harvesting the shitake mushrooms is the best part. They were delicious!! I would encourage you to try it for yourself or if you have a child or friend who loves science it would make a great gift.

Mine was ordered from www.fungi.com



Green Friends at Amma's 2013 PNW Tour Programs



The PNW Green Friends projects were a very visible part of the 2013 programs. Located in the hallway just outside of the program hall were displays about our organic gardening classes and about the Litter Project. There was educational information available about the classes, about permaculture, about the dangers related to cigarette butts, etc. There was a notebook filled with two years worth of PNW Green Friends newsletters. In addition to the educational material, many people signed up to receive information about future PNW Green Friends projects.

In the middle of the Green Friends display was a plant sale table, primarily offering vegi starts and herbs. Maheswari and Karuna P. planted many of the seeds a month or so before the programs and Maheswari nurtured them as they sprouted and grew. Achala also brought vegi starts for the table and Nika donated strawberry plants. Mechas donated a ginkgo tree. Donna and Vijaya had invited various businesses to donate seed packets, and those were also available to be purchased. The plant and seed sale brought in \$131 to be used for some of Amma's Green Friends projects worldwide.

Achala, Karuna, Donna and Prashant all took shifts staffing the Green Friends tables.

Eric, once again, graciously let us display one of his gigantic Earth Balls. The ball was located to the left of the Green Friends table. It was a favorite of both adults and children. To the right side of the Green Friends tables was Satyavati's PNW Art for Farmers in Crisis table. The art was made by children and adults. As a result of the Farmers in Crisis project, five children of farmers will be given school scholarships and school supplies.



Downstairs, outside the entrance to the dining room, Karuna Den Uyl from Portland set up her Green Goods Boutique. All items were up-cycled, rescued, recycled, and re-spirited from things that were discarded, abandoned, or orphaned and on their way to landfills.

The boutique was a major success, with excited buyers eagerly purchasing the colorful goods nearly every moment of the day. Green Goods raised and contributed over \$4,100.00 to Amma's Embracing the World's charities!

The last, but not least, component of the 2013 PNW Green Friends offerings was the Water Project. The Water Project made it possible for those who attended Amma's programs to have access to filtered water without the use of disposable plastic bottles. InDeed metal water bottles were also available for purchase. Nika and Mary staffed the water table and Puji-ta led the team that filtered the water and distributed it to the various water stations. One hundred and forty-five water bottles were sold at the Water Table. Additional funds were raised from water donations.

All in all, the 2013 PNW Green Friends offerings were a big success! Thanks to all who made that happen.



Keep plastic out of the landfill and earn money for the Pacific Northwest MA Center

When we turn in cigarette butts to TerraCycle (<http://www.terracycle.com/en-US/>) we help the earth because we keep the butts out of the landfill. At this point, TerraCycle doesn't pay for cigarette butts. However they do pay for all of the other items they recycle.... and there are MANY of them. These are all items that we cannot put into our normal recycling. In order to earn money we need to turn in large numbers of items. So if you would start gathering these items then we can keep toxic items from the landfill plus make money for our future PNW MA Center.

PLEASE start saving the items below, rinse them when possible, and give them to Visala Holbein (at satsang or 8201 Greenwood Ave North, Seattle.....or..... Karuna Poole (3212 25th Avenue S, Seattle). Consider asking neighbors and friends to save them for you too!

1. Dairy tubs such as cream cheese, sour cream, yogurt, butter, whipped topping, ice cream tubs, pudding tubs..... and lids!
2. Chip bags of all kinds
3. Energy Bar Wrappers of all kinds
4. Plastic Cereal bags and the inside lining from all cereals
5. Cell phones
6. Drink pouches
7. Red Solo Cups
8. Candy wrappers
9. Writing instruments
10. Personal care products- toothpaste tube, toothbrushes, floss container, deodorant, soap box, mouthwash containers
11. Lunchables kits
12. Flip flops



As you can see, much of what you normally throw out can be turned in to TerraCycle. Visala has a whole shed ready and waiting for your donations! (Bring cigarette butts and aluminum cans too!) If you are from other areas of the PNW and want to start collecting in your satsangs write karunap108@comcast.net for information.

Please help!

Responses when we announced TerraCycle project to Seattle satsang

From Beverly in Seattle:

This is excellent! Having worked in recycling at Amritapuri I am thrilled that there is a way to recycle even more here. I will start collecting these items now.

From Susanta in Seattle:

This is awesome! I have always felt bad about putting some of this in the garbage. I am going to put out a call to my moms to help our Mother Earth. They can deliver to me. Exciting! Thanks for doing this.

From Donnelle in Edmonds:

Such good news. I absolutely grieve for the earth whenever I have to throw these items away. It just haunts me. Thank you!!

Stories and Reflections

From Ajayya in Olympia:

On most school days, students from South Sound High School stand along an asphalt path to smoke, eat, and socialize. Trash gets pitched here, and cigarettes are stubbed out in the gravel, thrown into the bushes, or ground out on the pavement. While the garbage is periodically picked up, the cigarette butts have continued to accumulate. In this 300 square foot social area, three of us from Olympia Satsang were able to collect 1,642 pieces of cigarette-related trash. It took us only an hour and a half to clean the path, and we all (Achala, Ameya, Ajayya) had fun - it was a great time to do mantra japa. Our collection was sent to TerraCycle for reuse in recycled building materials.



From Rose in New York:

Vanamali and I are here on Cape Cod for a long weekend. We are so impressed as to how clean the whole Cape is. They have very strict littering fines--\$10,000 (yes ten thousand dollars) fine if caught littering along the highway. There really was only the very rare bottle or piece of trash on the many miles we logged going around the Cape. All the towns and villages are also practically spotless of trash and cigarette butts. It's quite amazing however it is that they've managed to accomplish this for the entire Cape. We took a walk on the beach near where we are staying and it's so pristine that any piece of trash stands out screaming to be picked up and disposed of. So we picked up 3 beer bottles, 2 plastic water bottles, a couple of straws, 2 plastic cups, a plastic bag, and a plastic mesh bag over the mile and a half beach we walked. It took us total of about 10 minutes in our 45 minute walk as the sun set behind us. We are so fortunate to be able to have such a lovely vaca-

tion here and to support the communities' efforts in keeping their surrounding so clean seemed like the least we can do. The litter project definitely sends ripples across the country and world.

From Karuna in Seattle:

Al and I frequently pick up cigarette butts in the International District for an hour on Sunday mornings. We can spend the whole hour just cleaning them up on one block. A few weeks ago, I noticed an unmarked metal can sitting in a corner. It had cigarette butts in it and beside it were about five cigarette packets. I remembered Visala making decorated cans to place near businesses so that people had a place to put their cigarette butts. This one was being used even though there were no markings on it at all. When I get a chance I'm going to get some cans and put them other places in the International District and see if it will make a difference. On a different day I went to pick up trash and cigarette butts near the bus stops on Martin Luther King. We have had two work parties in this area. I was appalled at the number of butts that were there. In minutes, I had picked up the pile that is shown here. I was also able to pick up quite a number of the new items we are gathering to send to TerraCycle, plus aluminum cans.



From Stanley from North Cove:

I realized today that my dog "Yoshi" picks up plastic bottles on the beach everyday...and I put them in recycle.....so let's catch up and give Yoshi 5 hours for the year.....!