

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



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June Greetings

There is nothing like grant work parties to bring out the Litter Project members! In 15 days during the end of April and beginning of May we cleaned 5 parks for the King County Tobacco Prevention Project. There is an article in this newsletter about those work parties. In addition, seventy-five project members reported litter pick up minutes/hours for May. That is the most we have had for a very long time!

Karuna and Maheswari

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

Interesting Links

Numerous people have sent in interesting links:

A City Farm Takes Root in Rainier Beach:

http://seattletimes.com/html/pacificnw/2020997572_pacificpgardener02.html

Urban Farm Supplies:

<http://www.seattlefarmsupply.com/> and
www.seattlefarmcoop.com/

Recycling at Its Best:

<http://jhaines6.wordpress.com/2013/05/02/something-to-lighten-and-brighten-your-day-recycling-at-its-best-enjoy-j/>

Ron Finley:

A guerilla gardener in South Central LA | Video on TED.com
http://www.ted.com/talks/ron_finley_a_guerilla_gardener_in_south_central_la.html

Seattle Edible Food Forest:

<http://www.dailygood.org/more.php?n=5523>

The audacious plan to end hunger with

3-D printed food: (The person that sent it to me said after reading this he thought he would plant a garden!)

<http://qz.com/86685/the-audacious-plan-to-end-hunger-with-3-d-printed-food/>

Litter Project Membership

As of March 31, 2013, we had 307 members.
(This figure does not include the people who signed up at Amma's programs.)

Litter Project Hours

Seventy-five members reported picking up
192 hours of litter during May 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: 1.45 hours

Members of the project have picked up litter for 3,639 hours since the project began in July 2011.

Aluminum Can Report

Washington State Litter Project members collect and sell aluminum cans gathered from the litter they pick up and from friends, family 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 May 2013 we turned in 22 pounds of cans and earned \$9.84. That makes a total of 170 pounds and \$86.62 earned for 2013.

Since the project began, we have sold 880 pounds for a grand total of \$408.46. All funds were given to the Pacific Northwest M.A. Center

Cigarette Butts/ TerraCycle Report

In January 2013 we joined the Cigarette Brigade of TerraCycle. To keep the toxic butts out of the landfills and waterways, at their expense we send the butts to Terra Cycle. They turn them into recycled products such as plastic pallets.

In May we sent 13,800 cigarette butts to Terracycle. That makes 60,784 butts for the year!

A \$4,000 Grant from the King County Tobacco Prevention Program!

Mid April we were offered another grant from the King County Tobacco Prevention Program. They wanted us to clean and count the number of cigarette butts in five King County parks. They take this information to the various City Councils to show them the extent of the problem in their parks.

When we told Swami Ramakrishna about the grant, he responded: "Wonderful expression of Amma's teachings. I will inform Amma."

We had beautiful weather for each work party, regardless of what the weather report was for the day!

We cleaned all 5 parks in a fifteen day period and added \$4,000 to our Pacific Northwest MA Center fund!

When Amma arrived from Japan, Prakash had an opportunity to use his iPad to show Amma the pictures from the work parties. At one point Amma took the iPad in her hands and then looked through the pictures on her own. She enlarged each picture and took a close look at the people pictured in them. She stopped at the picture that showed the collection of Cigarette butts from the most recent work party. She gestured at that picture and said we ought to use it to spread more awareness. She mentioned it will help get more people involved in this activity and also deter people from throwing butts.



Cascade View Park (2 acres)

On April 25, 2013 eight litter project members picked up 722 cigarette butts in Cascade View Park in Tukwila.



Marvista Park in Normandy Park (5 acres)

On the same day, we drove to Marvista Park in Normandy Park. Here we picked up 116 cigarette butts. We were so shocked at how clean the park was, we forgot to take pictures! Almost all of the butts we found were in the parking lot.



A \$4,000 Grant from the King County Tobacco Prevention Program! -cont.

Gene Coulon Park (57 acres)

On May 5, in two hours, twenty eight of us picked up 1,864 cigarette butts at Gene Coulon Park in Renton.



From Kalavathi in Seattle:

It was a beautiful day on the day of the Renton park clean-up. And what a beautiful park, on the sparkling waterfront. Many families were there having picnics and enjoying one of the first sunny days of spring.

So many volunteers turned up to help; it actually took some effort to find cigarette butts. I told a friend it felt like an Easter egg hunt. Not soon after, we came across a momma duck with many baby chicks, and after that, we saw a bunny rabbit in the trees! Perfect for the whole 'Easter egg hunt' theme!

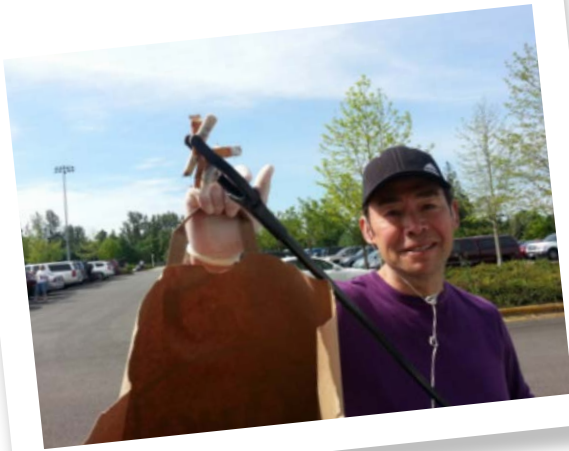
We also saw a bald eagle, and two turtles sitting on a rock that looked as if they were 'enjoying the show'. It seemed as if all of nature came out to encourage us in our endeavors. We also ran into one of the park employees, who was very happy and appreciative that we were there. As usual for the litter pick-up work parties, we left feeling so blessed and uplifted by the whole experience. It really felt that we had just been to a party!

Stanley J Underwood Park (20 acres)

On May 11th our group split into two groups and cleaned two parks at the same time. One was Stanley J Underwood Park in Des Moines. In two hours eight people picked up 976 cigarette butts

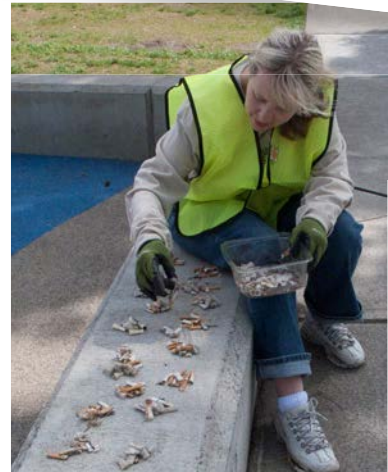


A \$4,000 Grant from the King County Tobacco Prevention Program! -cont.



Lake Meridian Park, Kent, WA (16 acres)

The second park where we picked up cigarette butts on May 11th was Lake Meridian Park in Kent. In 2 ½ hours 25 of us picked up 4,846 cigarette butts!



From Sarva in Bellevue:

The Stanley J Underwood Park parking lot was nearly full when Haley and I got there around 9 a.m. A game was already being played on the south field. By 10 a.m. the lot was full and ball players for the next game were parking on the street. We picked up cigarette butts around all the cars in the lot. Due to the ballgames, we didn't go inside the fence of either field, unless Clarice got to some of the north field before the players got there. Everyone was nice to us or ignored us as we picked around them in the spectator and warm up areas. Haley saw one dad up by the ball field finish his smoke as one of the ladies, maybe Jacqui, came near; he stubbed it out and handed it right to her for collection. A lovely morning, all in all.



A \$4,000 Grant from the King County Tobacco Prevention Program! -cont.

From Prarthana in Seattle:

My friend Gary and I volunteered at the Meridian Park in Kent. Gary is new to the Amma satsang and hadn't been exposed to a group seva project. When I first asked him if he'd be interested in accompanying me to pick up cigarette butts he looked at me like I was crazy. But he remembered the video of Amma cleaning up the huge temple complex in Kerala that was playing throughout the programs last year in Seattle, so he agreed. What else could he possibly have to do on an 80 degree Saturday in May?

After we were done and driving home, he remarked that he was amazed to see how joyful all of the devotees seemed to be while doing such a task.

I bet he'll be back for more. Me, too.

From Yashas in Seattle:

Thank you for this opportunity. I was in Kent, and it was so light and enjoyable. What I found from this experience was that while before I was a user of county parks, now I feel like I am a steward. It is a wonderful feeling that everyone should get a chance to enjoy.

I had the good luck of being with Amma in Calcutta and going out to clean the street with her. Wow! It was amazing. And what was most amazing was to see all these devotees who normally were crowding around Amma at any time, to be close, instead being focused on getting the street clean. At some point I looked up and was surprised to see that Amma was just a few meters away... and everyone continued to focus on gathering trash.

From Madhuri in Tacoma:

At the Lake Meridian Park in Kent, we fanned out to cover a lot of acreage. All of us wore yellow vests to show that we were part of an organized campaign. As I began picking up the many different cigarette butts and filters that people



had tossed onto the parking lot pavement, I heard a man's voice say, "Thanks for doing God's work!" He had noticed my actions as he drove up and got out of his car to enjoy the park on a sunny day. I thought his choice of words was interesting, given that this seva project was inspired by and dedicated to Amma!

From Ajayya in Olympia:

Olympia Satsang participated in the cigarette pickup at Gene Coulon and Lake Meridian parks. Looking forward to more litter projects, several of which are planned for the Olympia area.

From Marvel in Kent :

What a beautiful day to be cleaning up the park.

While I was picking up butts along the shore at Lake Meridian, a guy walked up to me and asked what we were doing. When I told him about picking up cigarette butts, he said, "Well, there sure are plenty here to pick up. I think that's great! Thanks for doing that!"



All of the butts from this grant have been sent to Terracycle to be turned into pallets. The county also gave us the butts that were collected during the last grant.

Follow-up Projects!

In the last page of the March 2013 issue of this newsletter <http://amma.org/sites/default/files/litterprojectnewsletter-mar2013.pdf> we did a short article on keyhole gardens. Since then, both Lin and Mechas have built keyhole gardens!



OK, I'm on the keyhole bandwagon too. I bit off a bit more than I can chew by enlarging my vegetable garden and rebuilding the rock wall... what a job! Now I find I'll need a soil delivery. My plan is to have 3-4 feeding tubes located along the back edge, which will give me easy access and allow water and nutrients to run downhill to the front edge. So it's basically a keyhole garden concept with a different layout. The access to the feeding tubes is in a trench behind the upper edge of the slope. I set it up this way because I want to take the best advantage of the very limited sun in this area. And I'm going to take a tip from the permaculture class and make 2-3 swaled terraces across the slope to hold the water and keep the soil from migrating downhill.

This is giving me way more planting space, so it will be fun to see how things grow this year. I put my mint in pots on a cinderblock platform to make sure the roots never again invade the garden. By the time I get through with this, I will have sifted roots from every square inch of soil. Argh! I'm glad I did it this year, because by next year there would be no hope of recovery. I will send another photo once I've completed the garden.

Lin

This keyhole garden was built by Mechas after the permaculture class at her house. The wire fabric in the middle of the keyhole is continuously filled with kitchen scraps and straw. As the food waste decomposes it feeds the surrounding plants and creates a rich habitat for worms, which will make vermicompost. This is one of the richest fertilizers for plants! The keyhole design allows you to step into the middle of the bed without stepping on the soil. The loose, fluffy soil is ideal for the plant roots to grow deep.



Mechas' spiral garden, which the permaculture class helped to plant, is thriving with herbs and flowers. The straw is used as a mulch to keep the soil moist and the weeds at bay.



Follow-up Projects! - cont.

Karuna's spiral garden was built after coming home from the permaculture class is now flourishing with veggies and flowers! Planting various plants together creates a healthy habitat for plants and beneficial insects.



Tea from Wild Plants

by Achala Devi



Vanilla leaf close up



Batch of Vanilla leaf
(notice the white stem flowers)

Vanilla Leaf

The vanilla leaf doesn't smell of vanilla until it's dried.

The vanilla leaf is mostly for flavoring teas, but I just found this out about it too: When dried properly, the plants are strongly aromatic and smell of vanilla. Besides serving as an excellent tent air freshener, Achlys was used by native tribes of at least southern British Columbia as an insect repellent. The dried leaves were hung in bunches in doorways to ward off flies and mosquitoes, and it's not unheard of for naturalists to rub the dried or even fresh leaves on exposed skin when hiking the Olympics or Cascades during the summer mosquito season.

Tea from Wild Plants-cont.



Stinging Nettles close up



Stinging nettles with cleavers all around

Stinging Nettles

You'll need to bring a pair of gloves with you to pick the nettles. Wrapping a bandana around your wrists will help avoid stinging your forearms.

The nettles can be dried for tea, steamed and eaten like spinach, or steamed and made into pesto. Best to pick them when they have not flowered for the nutrients are mostly in the leaves and not traveled to the flower. When you find a patch of them, don't feel bad about picking them as they grow more with picking. They are super high in iron.

Cleavers

The cleavers can be eaten raw, dried for tea or made into a tincture. They are the most potent lymph cleaner that I know. To make it into a tincture, chop them up and fill a jar. Pour vodka over it and let the chopped cleavers seep for a month or more, then strain. Most tinctures are made with alcohol as it extracts the medicine effectively. Any time I start to feel sick I take a dropper or two and by the next day I am 100% well.

Be sure that the plants are collected away from the road, deep in the forest where the air is clean. Pick some plants from one spot and move to another, not removing all the plants from a patch. I have noticed, especially with the nettles that if you go too fast, are being greedy or don't ask permission first and express gratitude, they will find a way to sting you regardless of your hand protection.