



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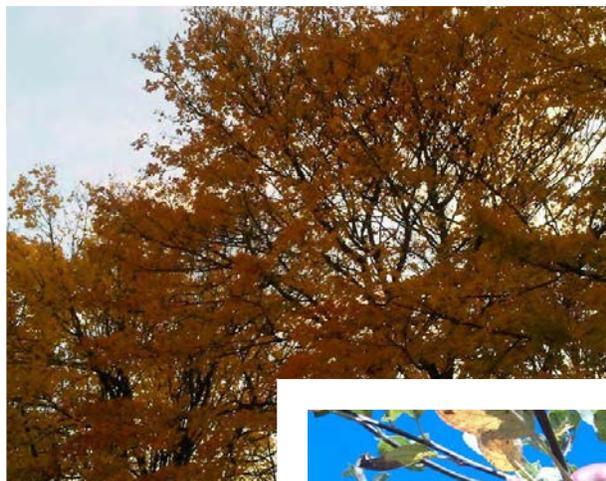
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GreenFriends is a global grassroots environmental movement which promotes environmental awareness and local participation in conservation efforts throughout the world.

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)

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A Day of Permaculture Workshops

by Maheswari



Mechas and I recently completed a Permaculture Course and are now certified Permaculture instructors. We are grateful for what we learned and we look forward to sharing this with our community. Amma has asked everyone to take care of the earth and to try to grow our own food. In an effort to support Amma's wish we want to provide classes where you can learn permaculture principles and techniques to immediately implement in your own homes.

We taught our first class together on October 12th. The one day workshop included: Sheet Mulching, Keyhole Gardens and Fruit Tree Guilds. We began indoors with a brief Permaculture introduction and the "Why's and How" to apply the various techniques in our own yards. It was a joy teaching this class because of the enthusiasm and eagerness from the group to learn about Permaculture. We had several moments of ecstatic laughter when one participant realized she had made up a word and thought we were going to learn "Pan-chaculture" an Indian gardening technique, only to learn it is Permaculture and it was developed in Australia.

By the time we went outside to work in the yard the sun was shining brightly. We began by building the keyhole garden. With twelve hands working together it only took us one hour to build. The class seemed intrigued by the process. The beauty of the keyhole garden is that it is self contained. The design creates an environment that needs very little water, the composting takes place inside the keyhole compost basket and feeds the soil, and in our region the bricks used to build the keyhole not only hold in the soil but also provide added warmth for the plants.



After completing the keyhole garden we went to the front yard to sheet mulch a 30'x30' area with layers of cardboard, straw and composted soil. Sheet mulching is an easy way to get rid of lawn and build a rich and productive planting area for vegetables, herbs, flowers, and fruit trees. The process of building various layers with the sheet mulch provides an environment for beneficial insects and worms to break down the grass and enrich the soil. The best time to do this in our region is in the fall when Mother Nature is in its cycle of breaking things down to nourish the soil and get it ready for spring.

We did not have time to work on the Fruit Tree Guilds, which we will save for another class. Everyone learned that the work goes much faster and is a lot more fun when many hands are working together. We hope to continue working collectively to complete projects in different yards.

Mechas and I would like to thank those who attended our first class and for giving us the opportunity to learn together.

A Day of Permaculture Workshops-cont.

by Maheswari



Expressions of Gratitude

“I went to the workshop to learn how to get rid of my grass but I learned so much more. It was so inspiring in every way for someone like me who has never done any kind of yard work. I was not feeling well both physically and emotionally when I got there and by the time I was leaving, I was feeling so much better. I appreciated all the participants on another level. Thank you, Maheswari and Mechas.” ~Lavanya

“Gardening is meditation for me and I learned how to meditate during the workshop. The workshop was a lot of fun. We went over the techniques indoors and wore our gear and went to work in the afternoon. Though a passionate gardener, I would have never bothered to browse over techniques such as keyhole gardening and sheet mulching if not for the fun workshop. My plants are going to love me more...” ~ Warmly, Kothai

“My day with the Perma Girls was filled with fun teamwork (think Amritapuri brick seva), learning, inspiration for what I can do in my own garden, getting acquainted with someone unknown (Kothai, a new devotee recently arrived from India), and seeing a whole new side of someone known (no one should ever again think that Lavanya is just about decorating altars). One of the highlights of the day was all the laughter generated by Lavanya posing for snapshots in her adorable zebra boots, and removing her work gloves to flash her orange nail polish as we built another keyhole garden for Mechas’ collection. I’m hoping we can supply her with custom

gloves next time with nail polish on the ends of the fingers! Let it be known that that glamour girl carried heavy blocks, pushed wheelbarrows of dirt and manure, shoveled, and generally worked right beside the rest of us doing hard labor laying down sheet mulching to cover up the lawn in Mechas’ front yard. We turned it into a lovely planting area composed of layers of cardboard, straw, and composted topsoil. What a great example of how much can be accomplished by just 6 people working together for 4 hours. And all the laughter and teasing made it light work, I’m looking forward to the next work party.” ~Lin

“I enjoyed the class very much. The knowledge imparted from Maheswari and Mechas got me excited about working in my garden which in the past I haven't expressed interest in participating. I learned I could reuse a lot of the materials that I have been recycling or throwing away. Now I can practice utilizing almost all of the recyclable materials. If anyone has interest in permaculture, I highly recommend taking a course with Mechas and Maheswari. Thank you for inspiring me to practice permaculture!” ~Vangmayi

Lin's version of a keyhole garden (finally finished)



When I dug up the garden to put in the layers of straw for the keyhole concept, I was shocked at how bone dry the soil was after all our torrential downpours lately. I hope the multiple layers of straw, dirt and manure, the 3 wire composting towers, and the cover crop I sowed of seeds I got from Sky Nursery will have remedied that dryness by Spring. The cover crop is supposed to put nitrogen in the soil during the Winter, and to add further enrichment when the plants are dug under in the Spring.

I'm very curious to find out how the composting towers will work. The wire is green, so two of them don't show up very well in the photo. There's a paved depression below the back wall which functions as my keyhole for tending the compost. All 3 towers are placed at the back of the garden (the elevated side) so that they'll drain forward, hopefully downhill along the buried layers of straw. I have just one garden area instead of separate round ones because my one and only sunny spot is very small.

I hope the composting towers work because it was really nice to chop up my spent tomato plants and some fall foliage, and distribute it and my kitchen scraps among the towers. I added some manure and alfalfa pellets to help the composting process along. Perhaps I'll get some red worms and put them in the towers too. This keyhole concept was developed in Africa where water and good soil is scarce. It will be beyond funny if my garden in Bellevue (rainy Washington of all places) turns out to be too dry and I have to resort to watering!

P.S. Putting rocks or screen in the bottom of the compost tower is important to help keep rodents out. I've got a tunneling rat because I forgot to do that.

Fifteen Pound Tromboncino Squash Harvested!



The biggest tromboncino squash from my garden was 5 feet long and weighed 15 pounds! Karuna

Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration Project October Work-Party Update



The Seattle GreenFriends "Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration Project" had its second successful work party at Magnuson Park on October 19th. Our main focus continues to be digging out the invasive plants (primarily Himalayan blackberry) in order to support the growth of newly planted native trees and shrubs. "Tom", our friendly, hard-working Green Seattle steward, did a wonderful job of keeping spirits up and blackberry bushes flying as we worked from 10 am to 2pm. Just when the energy was starting to lag, Tom had us stop for a cookie break (our other Green Seattle steward "Barbara" had been thoughtful enough to bring homemade vegan, wheat-free chocolate chip cookies.)

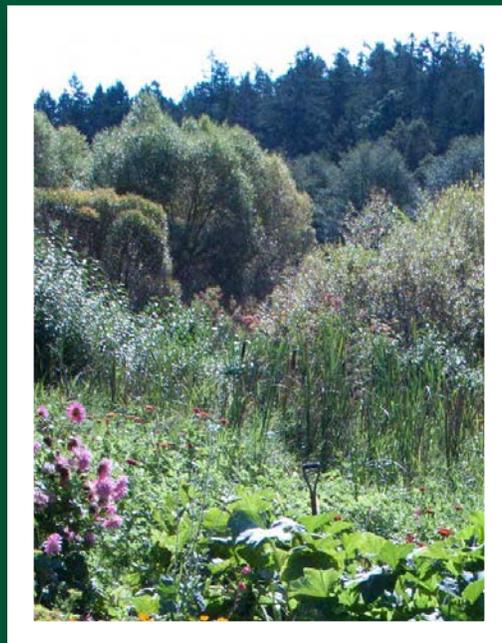
All the while we worked, we were being cheered on by one of the resident tree frogs nearby who kept up chirping the whole time. It was agreed upon that he (she?) did indeed sound enthusiastic about our work-party, which supports a healthy habitat for the native creatures, including birds, squirrels and yes, the tree frog. Amma satsang attendance nearly doubled this month! Will you please join us on Saturday, December 21, for our Solstice work party?

NOVEMBER 10 WORK PARTY!!!!

We will be helping out at the "Freeway Estates" food forest (a permaculture community gardening project), in the Ravenna neighborhood from 2 pm - 4 pm on Sunday the 10th. (Although the time does conflict with satsang by 1 hour, we can all carpool together to satsang when we are done. This conflict will most likely be for one month only.)

The address is: 6030 6th Ave NE, Seattle, WA 98115
It is just West of I-5, with plenty of street parking.
Please feel free to contact Kalavathi at annecrory@gmail.com if you have any questions, or you can go to www.freewayestates.org for more information.

The people in charge of organizing the event have heard of Amma and are very happy to have us coming. Please join us!



TerraCycle Contest



TerraCycle® challenged Brigade® participants across the nation to design and build their own creative TerraCycle collection bin using upcycled waste materials. This year's contest was called "Box that Rocks" and the criteria were that submissions display the TerraCycle logo, communicate the Brigade waste to be collected clearly, and utilize upcycled waste material. Winners would receive 20,000 – 50,000 TerraCycle points which could be converted to money for the artists' charities.

We didn't find out about the contest until very late but Satyavati enthusiastically agreed to give it a try. Since the contest's theme was about rock and roll, she thought- who could be better than "The King of Rock-n-Roll": Elvis! Nika, Sudha and Satyavati made the letters from candy wrappers, chip bags, energy bar wrappers and cereal bags. Mike glued the letters on a repurposed Amma retreat piece of cardboard. Elvis' coat and pants were made from energy bar wrappers. The silver background was made from the lining of chip bags. Elvis' hair and shoes were crafted from wrappers and bags.

The group created an awesome piece of recycled art as you can see from the pictures. While we didn't win the prize this year, it is so perfect that the PNW Litter Project submitted a piece. Satyavati is already busy thinking about next year!

TerraCycle Project Changes: Please Read

Thanks for all your participation so far in TerraCycle (a plastics recycling project).

Starting in November, there will be some changes to how we use TerraCycle.

1. If you are planning to bring stuff to donate, please take a few minutes to go on www.Terracycle.org and familiarize yourself with the "Brigades" and what is actually accepted. For example, plastic netting and compost bags they are not on the list, so unfortunately, they have to go in the garbage. Please pay attention, because if you include "Extras" it makes extra work.



2. After much discussion, the Terra cycle team, has decided that it doesn't make sense to ship our "Dairy Tubs" back East or down South to be recycled when we can put them directly into Seattle Recycling. If your local area does not recycle these, feel free to keep sending them and we will put them in Seattle's "Curbside Recycling". This will help us avoid creating a bigger carbon footprint.

3. Information: These are the Brigades we belong to.

Cigarette Waste Brigade®.....Drink Pouch Brigade®.....Cell Phone Brigade®....Colgate Oral Care Brigade®
 MOM Brands® Cereal Bag Brigade....Energy Bar Wrapper Brigade®.....Personal Care and Beauty Brigade®
 Inkjet and Toner Cartridge Brigade®....Baby Food Pouch Brigade....Cheese Packaging Brigade®
 Jewelry Brigade®

4. Waitlisted Brigades

(Space has become a problem so need to stop collecting these items until we are accepted for the brigades.)

Candy Wrapper Brigade®...Snack Bag Brigade®

Writing Instruments Brigade®Packaging Multi-Stream Brigade

Thanks for your support, please ask

Karuna: karunap108@comcast.net,

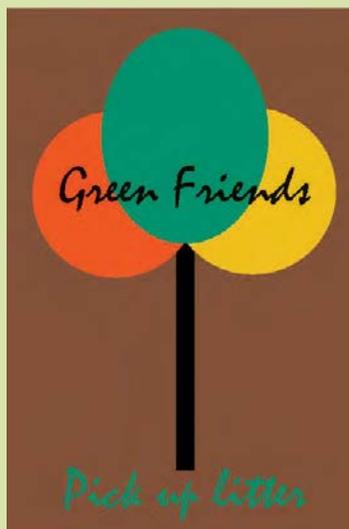
Ananya: ammasananya@comcast.net or

Visala: vhohlbein@msn.com if you have questions.

And, yes! We are still collecting aluminum cans and books!

Litter Project Report

Stories and Reflections



From Prakash and Kavita in Redmond:

Man Made Attractions vs Man Made Mess

On a recent trip to London, Aparna, Kavita and I (Prakash) were roaming the streets. While Kavita and I were focused on admiring the large man-made attractions such as the London Eye, the London Bridge, the Big Ben, each standing tall above the ground, Aparna was focused on the happenings on the ground. To our surprise, her first comment was that we should call

Karuna and ask her to plan a litter pick up work party to clean up the cigarette butts that are littered all over on the London streets.

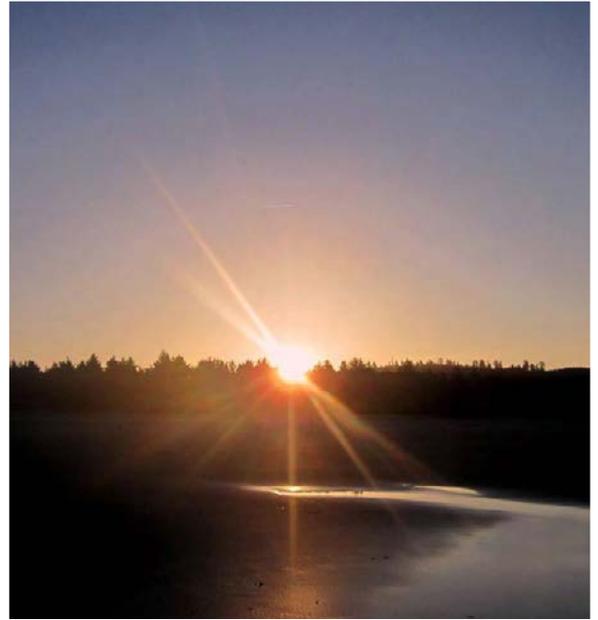
It is so nice to see the impact of Amma's teachings via the PNW litter projects on our kids. They really take it to heart and carry it with them wherever they go. This is such a great example for adults to follow. When we turned our attention to what Aparna was pointing at, it was a sorry sight. People were smoking nonchalantly and simply disposing of the cigarette butts on Mother Earth.

From Rosemary in New York City:

I always enjoy reading the GreenFriends newsletter. I find it very inspiring. I am working on making the NYC Satsang (Amma's downtown Satsang) a little more green. We have a simple meal at the end of our satsang and having been using disposable eating ware which has been driving me a little nuts so I am finally doing something about it. This past Sunday, I "rescued" 46 solo cups and a lot of plastic ware from being thrown into the trash. So even though I wasn't technically picking up litter, I did avert trash from going into the landfill. Vanamali and I are replacing the plastic eating ware with stainless steel forks and spoons and we also hope to replace the plastic and paper dinnerware and cups with more sustainable and reusable stainless steel or corelle-like dishware. I'll be sending the cups to TerraCycle--I've created an account with them to send them various items. I also joined my food coop's environmental committee (Park Slope Food Coop) and will be working on reducing their use of plastic bags and better recycling/reuse options for those that are used. I've been in direct communication with TerraCycle and they are great to work with. Keep up the really great work. It's making a difference and creating real change. Very cool!

Stories and Reflections-cont.

From Stanley at North Cove:



Thanks for the pictures of the Safeway cleanup.....Happy Earth-Day birthday Amma. My front yard (Pacific Ocean) has been pretty clean lately; a couple of plastic bottles and a bit of Styrofoam pretty much every day.

The fireworks seem to be over for the time being. There are high tides but and no more erosion as yet; still 19 1/2 feet from the high tide line.

Stats

As of October 31, 2013, we had **346** members.

Forty-three members reported picking up 109.88 hours of litter during October 2013. Those members average pick up was: 2.79 hours; the range was 2 minutes to 30 hours and the median was 1 hour.

Members of the project have picked up litter for **4,398** hours since the project began in July 2011.

TerraCycle has credited us with turning in **114, 534** cigarette butts in 2013. There are 2 shipments that are still outstanding!

In September and October 2013 we turned in 72 pounds of aluminum cans and earned \$30. That makes a total of **243** pounds and **\$116.18** earned for 2013.

Since the project began, we have sold **1,025** pounds of aluminum for a grand total of **\$ 468.02**. All funds were given to the Pacific Northwest M.A. Center.