



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

Contents

PNW Gardening

[Composting- Dr. Elaine Ingham Method](#)

[Microclimates and Permaculture](#)

[Growing a Sweet Potato Plant Indoors](#)

Nature

[Gnome-Home Birdhouses](#)

[Nature Photos](#)

[Caring for Hummingbirds in the Winter](#)

[Smoke and Delusion](#)

[Talking Plants](#)

Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

[More Suggested Readings](#)

PNW Litter Project

[Stats](#)

Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose and Recycle

[AYUDH Plastic Awareness Workshop Report](#)

[Basket Making with Invasive Specie](#)

GreenFriends Newsletter-

North America



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

Composting-Dr. Elaine Ingham Method



Ran the browns and greens through the shredder



Put together the 6 ft in diameter wire cage

- Ran the browns and greens through the shredder.
- Put together the 6 ft in diameter wire cage.
- Built the compost pile by layering the browns, greens, grass and comfrey.
- Watered each layer.
- Covered compost pile with tarp.
- The initial temperature was 70F.



Greens



Green and browns after shredding



Grass clipping



Built the compost pile by layering the browns, greens, grass and comfrey



Thermometer

PNW Gardening



Pile cover with tarp

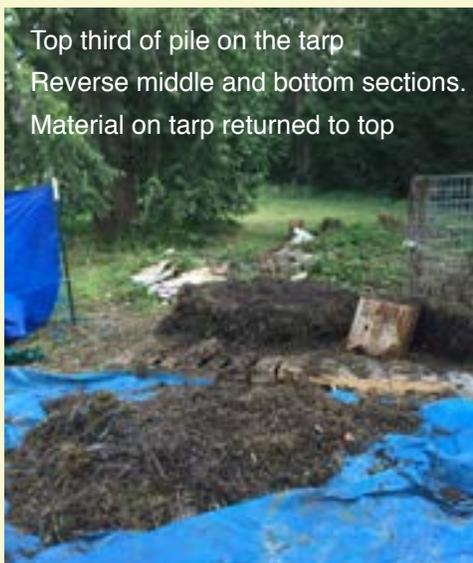


Using pitchfork, turned the compost pile 3 days later when the temperature went up to 163F

- Using pitchfork, turned the compost pile 3 days later when the temperature went up to 163F.
- The compost pile was a little dry so we added water.
- Turned pile again 3 days later. The temp. was going down and we saw that material was decomposing. Greens were all brown.



Pile ready for 1st turn



Top third of pile on the tarp
Reverse middle and bottom sections.
Material on tarp returned to top



mushrooms

- Mushrooms were growing on top of the compost pile.
- Turned pile one more time and covered it so it could finish decomposing.
- The color of the compost will become dark brown (the color of 70% dark chocolate). That process will take a few more months of composting.

Note: It is VERY important that anyone who uses this composting technique have proper training. Tirtha will be offering classes in the future.



compost after the last turn

PNW Gardening

Microclimates and Permaculture by Josh

The reality of microclimates in nature is a very important consideration in permaculture design. Not only do natural microclimates influence all aspects of a permaculture system, but, more importantly, we as humans can create microclimates in order to enhance our permaculture goals.

What is a microclimate?

Dictionary.com says that “climate” is the “generally prevailing weather conditions of a region.” Weather is the way natural conditions are at a given time, but climate is the trend of weather conditions over a larger period of time. We know the Earth’s climate is changing overall, which means that average weather conditions are changing, though on any given day this may not be obvious.

A microclimate is a climate on a smaller scale, which differs from surrounding climatic conditions. How small it is depends on what scale you look. For instance, at the bottom of the Grand Canyon the climate is rather different from the surrounding surface land. A stalk of corn will create its own microclimate in a very small area around it, since it affects the way sun, rain, wind, etc. affect its small area of growth. A body of water can warm the land around its shores, while, in cities, the asphalt, brick, concrete, and metal absorb the sun’s heat, and then radiate it, causing the city to be warmer.



The above picture is from the Santa Monica Mountains in southern California. The slope on the left-side is north-facing, the slope on the right is south-facing. Since the sun is in the south in the Northern Hemisphere, a south-facing slope will be more exposed to the sun, and therefore get hotter and drier. Notice the stark contrast between the two slopes, with a lot of vegetation on the north-facing slope, and much less on the south-facing slope.

PNW Gardening

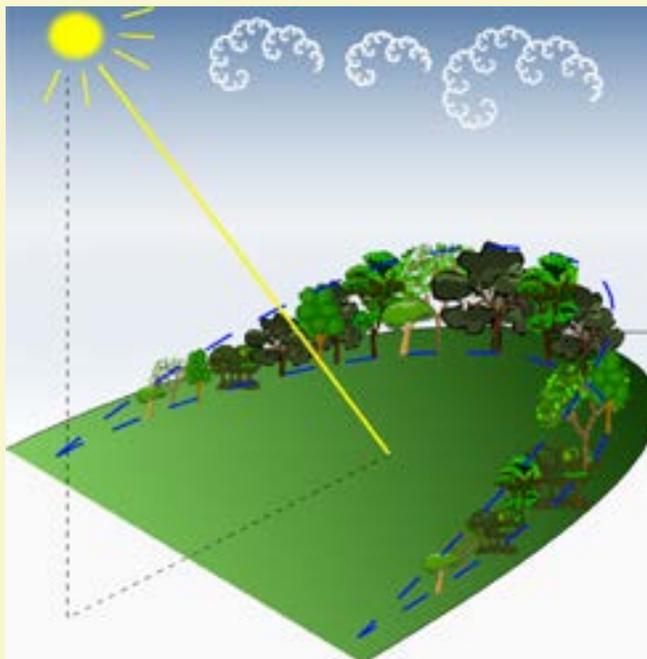
Microclimates in Permaculture Systems

When designing food-productive permaculture systems, microclimates will affect the way we can grow food. If you are in a river valley, or on a hillside, or if your local elevation is relatively lower or higher, your land-local climate conditions may differ from that of the surrounding area. Also, the features of your land can create microclimates, such as small humps in the land, a group of trees, ponds, etc. And we can create microclimates that can be useful in permaculture design.

If you have gardened before you might be familiar with the USDA Hardiness Zone scale, which generally breaks up areas that are good for certain plants to grow in. This scale is based on general climatic conditions, but it may not be accurate for any given piece of land, or even for every section of that piece of land, since microclimates can significantly cool or warm their areas of influence. So you might actually be able to grow plants from outside the zone you are in according to the USDA scale if you have or create an appropriate microclimate.

While there are many factors that go into creating microclimates, three very important factors to consider are sun, wind, and water. Obviously, the sun is warm, so places that get more sun will be warmer, and of course shade inhibits the sun from warming; so, for instance, a tree itself will have a few microclimates – warm on the top and outside where the sun is hitting, and cool below the leaves near the trunk in the shade.

Consider this design called a sun trap:



Building a sort of “enclosure” like this facing the sun can “trap” the heat of the sun and focus it on a certain spot. It is not necessary to have such a large trap with trees, etc. as shown, they can be made smaller. For instance, you could use straw bales, or even larger rocks to create a smaller sun trap.

PNW Gardening

The wind generally cools things off, so places that get more wind will be cooler. Bodies of water can also have effects on the surrounding conditions. Since water absorbs heat it can cause warming around the immediate area. Reflection of light off water has the same effect. Water can also cool areas in hot, dry climates by creating humidity, especially with air flow.

Rocks as well tend to absorb heat, and then radiate that heat when the sun goes down. In his book Sepp Holzer's Permaculture, Sepp Holzer tells about growing strawberries in his garden when he was young. One side of the garden was lined with rocks, and he noticed the strawberries that grew there grew better than the strawberries further from the rocks, which, he surmised, was because the area around the rocks stayed warmer from their absorption and radiation of heat.

Finding Microclimates

So how do you know what kind of microclimates are in a given area? Essentially, we must apply the first permaculture principle: Observe and Interact.

You can start by looking at broad features, starting with the sun. Where does it shine most? Are you on a slope? Are there any rollings in the land that change how much sun a certain spot gets? Where does the wind generally come from at certain times of the year? Are there features that block the wind? Are there features that channel the wind, causing it to move faster along a certain path? Is there a pond on your land? How does that affect the surrounding temperature and how far does that effect extend?

Physically walking the land multiple times a day at different times can also help you to feel the microclimates, as cool and warm air may both be present, and the lay of the land may affect how they move and interact with each other. Observing animals may also give information: does an outside cat go to a certain spot for warmth when it is cold outside? When it is hot, is there a certain place the animals prefer for shelter?

It might also be helpful to take more precise measurements—for example, using thermometers and other scientific tools to get specific readings, since even sustained change of a few degrees over days or weeks could affect a plant's ability to grow in a certain spot.

Also of course consider your goals. For example, in western Washington state, tomatoes are often grown in greenhouses (themselves an example of a microclimate), but if you have a good south-facing, non-shady spot, you might consider building a small sun trap which could heat that area enough to grow tomatoes outside. There are many many possibilities for employing microclimates, and a good place to start is considering a goal or problem that you have, and how microclimates may help.

PNW Gardening

Growing a Sweet Potato Plant Indoors by Karuna (Seattle)

In mid-August, after being away from my house for six weeks while dealing with health issues (not Covid!), I discovered that a sweet potato on my kitchen cabinet had sprouted. By the time I returned home, the sprout was at least 8 inches long and it had many 1/8 – 1/4 inch leaves. I watched it grow for a few weeks and then decided to cut off the part of the sweet potato with the sprout. I put the cutting in a cup of water.

I was shocked by how fast the roots grew. Pretty soon the glass cup was filled with roots. I took a photo at that point, but when I looked for it on my iPhone camera later, it was nowhere to be found.

The third week in September, I decided to plant the cutting in dirt. It was too late in the year to plant it outside so it would have to be a house plant. Once planted in dirt, it seemed like the leaves doubled in size every day. It was hard to imagine they had only been 1/8 – 1/4 inches weeks before..



September 23



October 6



PNW Gardening



October 13

The sweet potato plant continued to send out shoots. Towards the end of November, I decided to buy a trellis and attempt to get the shoots to go up the trellis rather than cross the dining room carpet!



November 28

PNW Gardening



December 6



December 13

PNW Gardening



December 16



December 21

It is almost to the top of the trellis! I wonder if the plant is likely to produce sweet potatoes. Does anyone know?

Nature

Gnome- Home Birdhouses by Prarthana (Bainbridge Island)

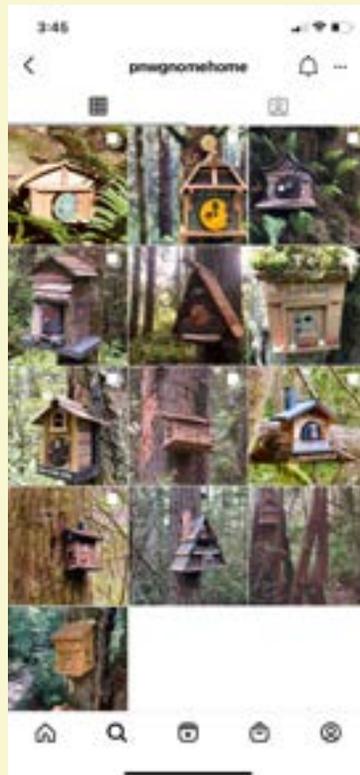
I spotted these Gnome-home birdhouses in the Bainbridge Island forests. No one seems to know who's making them.



Nature



There's an instagram page for 13 of them: [pnwgnomehomes](https://www.instagram.com/pnwgnomehomes).



Nature

Nature Photos

From Kelvin in Seattle:

Photo of Mt Rainer from Frink Park Leschi. Taken during the evening of December 5, 2020.



Nature

From Sarah in Eugene:



Nature



Nature

From Kaarisa in Seattle:



Nature

From Visala in Maltby:

Beautiful to see roses blooming in December!



Nature

Caring for Hummingbirds in the Winter by Emma S. (Lake Stevens, WA)

It brings me so much joy to watch the hummingbirds in the spring and summer months. With their dazzling colors, they look just like flying jewels as they dart, swoop and sore from flower to flower collecting nectar.

It may surprise you how well hummingbirds will thrive even in cooler temperatures! Over time these tiny birds have adapted to a wide variety of climates and environments. In Washington State, and along the West-Coast, the Anna's hummingbird can be found year-round.



Many species of hummingbirds only need to migrate because of lack of food, so by having nectar feeders available all year, you are helping hummingbirds survive during the fall and winter months.

Making homemade nectar is simple!

You'll use a 1:4 ratio of sugar to water. 1 part white sugar to 4 parts water, mixed in a sauce pan, then brought to a boil, removed from the heat to cool to room temperature and added to the feeder to be placed out.

Refill feeders frequently to ensure there is always an adequate supply of nectar. And just like in the summer, always keep feeders clean to prevent mold that could be fatal to hummingbirds.

As we creep into the coldest part of the winter, your feeder may be at risk of freezing. Here are my tips for keeping your nectar from freezing:

- Find a location for your feeder that is protected from the elements, like under a covered porch.
- Bring feeder inside if expecting a deep freeze. Just make sure to place your feeder back outside early in the morning, before sunrise is best, to have the nectar readily available to the hummingbirds as they wake.
- Wrap the nectar holder with a small string of Christmas lights. Using pink or red lights will also help to attract hummingbirds! This is best for glass feeders; plastic feeders may melt if the lights are too warm.

Nature



Bring the joy of hummingbird watching into all seasons of your life. Your hummingbird friends will be so thankful you have taken extra care to nurture them during the cooler months!

Nature

Smoke and Delusion by Tirtha G (Vancouver Island)



Smoke and delusion

Here in this warm, southwest corner of Canada
the wind carries in a cemetery
from Washington, Oregon,
even California.

The choking, smoky remains
of thousands of acres of trees...
burning.

Like they've never burned before.
Fossil fuels have a lot to answer for.
And those who have used them so extravagantly
and those who continue to defend them,
so yet more money can be made.

So much planetary healing power – gone.
So much beauty – gone.

So much life – gone.

A memorial token:

I lay a flower at our feet...

A plastic rose, for our undying love
of delusion.

Nature

Talking Plants by Kathie (Bellevue)

I try to go for a short walk every single day, rain or shine. Physically limited, short is about all I can manage these days, so I wanted to find a way to make the same old walk more interesting. I started having conversations with plants and flowers along my usual route. I know this sounds crazy, but I did not initiate these conversations. The PLANTS did!

(Hey, I saw Little Shop of Horrors, starring Audrey, talking Monster Plant!!)

Here are some of my favorite quotes from these mouthy guys...



“We're not flowers! We are Ballerinas!”



“If we hurry, we can take this wall by Winter!!”

Nature



“Uh oh. I don't think I'm s'posed to be here...”



Wait, I think I'm wearing the wrong color!!”



“Yikes! Get it off me, get it off me!”

Nature



“Where there’s a WILL.....”

Nature



“Uh oh, Mr. Madrona, I think your daughter brought home another Roadie!”

I bet the plants in your neighborhood talk also...
you just have to listen!

Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

More Suggested Readings from Tirtha G. (Vancouver Island)



1. Forestry professor Suzanne Simard in a webinar about her latest discoveries, e.g. Leaving the largest trees standing, in a cutblock, facilitates faster growth of regeneration, or the growth of newly planted seedlings.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=--secsuooko&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR0wFH0fYo0BNNb2OdII7wdTvJIG-KANk89QGkixXPzy0_Gz9gQEtTBrFuWM

2. Depaving -- a movement to remove concrete and pavement, and replace it with trees and greenery:

"The removal of impervious pavements will reduce stormwater pollution and increase the amount of land available for habitat restoration, urban farming, trees, native vegetation, and beauty, thus providing us with greater connections to the natural world."

We have heard about depaving happening in Montreal, New York, San Francisco, Ottawa, and Portland as well as other cities.

<https://lifeandsoulmagazine.com/2019/09/11/depave-tearing-up-concrete-in-cities-and-transforming-them-into-green-spaces/?fbclid=IwAR3byQY8hblZnSW4xlsmIWO0LwHuXcr5fohaUGgsUxQTBlIdcfW1nwOs01cl>

3. Green Cities: Good Health website – lots of science:

<https://depts.washington.edu/hhwb>

4. Trees and respiratory health:

<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/4443045-Mrao-Env-Pollution-2014.html>

PNW Litter Project

Litter Stats

In December 2020, **23** Litter Project members and their families and friends picked up litter for **77.4** hours. (Average **3.4** hours; Median **1** hour; Range **1** minute to **24** hours). We have picked up litter for **11,882** hours since the project began in July of 2011.



TerraCycle Stats

In December, we mailed 6,350 cigarette butts to TerraCycle. We have sent TerraCycle **363,224** cigarette butts since 2013. [TerraCycle is an organization that recycles items which are normally considered unrecyclable.]



Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle

AYUDH Plastic Awareness Workshop Report by Sonali (Redmond)



On December 5, I held an educational AYUDH Plastic Awareness workshop over Zoom. It was aimed at grade and middle school kids, but anyone could attend. It was a huge success with over 20 people signing up! Several parents shared that their kids passed on new information to them and their siblings once the event was over! It was so fun to see the kids interested and asking questions about how to help the environment.

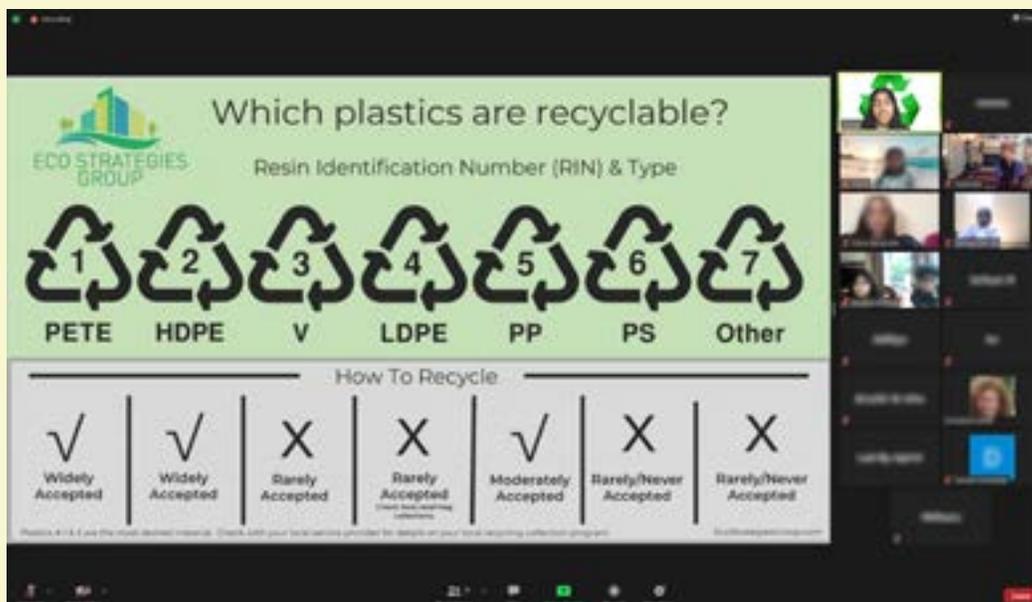
I started the presentation by discussing the effects of plastic pollution. Unfortunately, a lot of the plastic ends up in oceans and harms marine species, who are often found entangled in plastic litter or having ingested marine debris. One of the most toxic plastics affecting our marine wildlife are plastic bags. They gradually break up into smaller and smaller pieces, and eventually, toxic chemicals can leach out from the plastic.

One of the questions that we explored was: How does plastic even end up in oceans or landfills? There are various ways that plastics can end up in the wrong place. For example, plastic which is thrown into trash cans ends up in landfills. Furthermore, wind can blow plastic out of trash cans or recycle bins onto the streets and from there, it can enter oceans and rivers. Additionally, when trash is being transported in a garbage truck, it is often blown away because it is so lightweight. So, even if you responsibly put plastic in a recycle bin, it is possible that it might not be recycled properly and instead end up in an ocean or landfill.

Next, we talked about microplastics. Plastic never fully biodegrades; instead, it just keeps breaking into smaller and smaller pieces. These pieces are called microplastics, and they are typically plastic particles smaller than 1 millimeter. They harm marine wildlife since the microplastics get eaten by fish and plankton. Microplastics also affect humans because when fish swallow these harmful microplastics, the chemicals from it get passed up the food chain and eventually make their way into our food supply. A new study has even found microplastics in our ordinary table salt when testing samples from all around the world!

Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle

What happens when you recycle something? We looked at examples for how many people assume that it's a perfect process where you can buy something and recycle it, allowing it to become something new. However, this logic is incorrect. We looked at a story of 3 different plastic bottles as an example. The first bottle was thrown into the trash instead of the recycle bin. Rainwater runs through the plastic in the landfill and absorbs the water-soluble compounds it contains, some of which are highly toxic. This can create leachate, which is very harmful and can make its way into groundwater and streams, poisoning ecosystems and harming wildlife. The second bottle was found on the ground; maybe the wind blew it from the recycle bin which was overflowing or somebody carelessly threw it on the ground. It ends up in a stream which eventually led to an ocean. Lastly, the third bottle was correctly placed into the recycle bin, and so it got recycled into something new. As you can imagine, it's not a reliable process and there are no guarantees that it will end up in a recycling factory even if recycled properly.



We also discussed how not all plastic is recyclable. Just because it has the recycling sign doesn't mean it actually gets recycled. Every plastic product has this sign at the bottom, but they all have a different number inside. The numbers indicate what kind of plastic it is. Depending on where you live, not all types may be recyclable so you should check with your local landfill company to learn more. Aluminum foil is too small and so it should be made into a ball before recycled so that it doesn't fly off. Plastic bags should never be thrown in the recycle bin, and we watched a video to see what happens if somebody does discard it incorrectly. Thin plastic bags get caught in the machines, stopping them from working properly. As a result, employees have to go into the machines themselves to remove the bags and so it gives them a lot more work. To properly dispose of plastic bag, some grocery stores like Fred Meyers, QFC, and Kohls have bins where you can recycle plastic bags. They recycle it in a special way and the bins specify that they are meant for plastic bags. Another way is by bottle bricking. EcoBricks are plastic bottles which are packed tight with used plastic to make a reusable building block. EcoBricks can be used to build furniture, gardens, shelters, and more. EcoBricking puts plastic on a safe and secure road out of industry and out of the biosphere and it's awesome for the planet and communities. I highly recommend that you go to [EcoBricks.org](https://www.ecobricks.org) to find out the specific instructions and locations where you can donate your bottle bricks.

Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle

Another important thing we discussed was that you can't recycle dirty plastic. Any plastic material with food residues on it can't be recycled. For plastics to be transformed into recycled goods, they have to be decent quality. To ensure your recyclable has a chance to end up in a recycling factory, rinse out and wash your plastics before you recycle them and clear all food residuals. Most of the time, a "dirty" recyclable doesn't even get a chance to end up in a recycling factory since it's deemed useless. Even if a single dirty plastic is found lumped with other plastics, the whole batch will be thrown out and end up in a landfill.

Lastly, we talked about what can be done to help the environment. The 5 R's are: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, and Recycle. The first one is Refuse, so refuse things that you don't really need, like one-time use plastics like grocery bags and water bottles. Refuse products with multiple layers of packaging, like coffee cups, and show companies what you value by purchasing carefully. Support organic, sustainable packaging and sustainable business practices. The second R is Reduce, so reduce your waste. For example, try bringing your own shopping bag to the grocery store so that you won't have to use a plastic bag, stop using plastic water bottles and buy a reusable one instead, reduce purchases of products in non-recycled packaging, and shop in bulk to reduce packaging altogether. The third R is Reuse so try to select reusable versions of one-time use products like water bottles, travel mugs, and lunch containers. Reuse plastic or glass containers that originally contained food or other products. The fourth R is Repurpose, which you can do by upcycling projects. There's a lot of inspiration for upcycling online on places like Pinterest and YouTube. Lastly, only when you can't Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, or Repurpose, then Recycle! But just remember to recycle it right so it doesn't end up in a landfill or oceans.

I know many might be thinking to themselves that changing their lifestyle won't make any significant difference, but your actions do make a difference! For example, your friends might change their plastic use habits because you changed yours. People may ask you why you say "No Straw please." Start a conversation about plastic pollution, and you can convince them to reduce their plastic use. Over time, your behavior will influence the behaviors of many people you interact with! In turn, each of these people will have the same effect on the people around them. The Domino Effect!



Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle

Before the event ended, we talked about the upcycling project ideas for the project competition I was hosting. At the end of the presentation, I asked the kids to write one thing they had learned (see picture below)!

From [redacted] to Everyone:

5 Rs

From [redacted] to Me: (Privately)

not all plastic can be recycled

From [redacted] to Me: (Privately)

I learned that recyclables need to be empty, clean, and dry to end up properly in the factory

From [redacted] to Everyone:

Plastic bags aren't recyclable, ecobricks, micro plastics in salt, empty clean dry

From [redacted] to Everyone:

you have to clean plastic before you recycle.

From [redacted] to Me: (Privately)

This is [redacted] and I learned animals get effected by plastic and not all tings can go in the bin

From [redacted] to Everyone:

I learnt about bottlebricks.. 5Rs was cool

From [redacted] to Me: (Privately)

5 r

From [redacted] to Everyone:

I learned that recyclables need to be empty, clean, and dry to end up properly in the factory

From [redacted] to Me: (Privately)

i learned how plastic gets reused if you recycle. ♻️

From [redacted] to Everyone:

empty clean and dry

AYUDH Seattle aims to contribute to the Seattle community based upon the 17 Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda for 2030. To learn more about AYUDH [click here](#).

If you are between the ages 15-30 and would like to participate in helping AYUDH Seattle plan events in the future, please feel free to reach out to me at: vaid_sonali@outlook.com

Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle

Basket-making with Invasive Species by Tirtha G. (Vancouver Island)



Image by rsteve254 from [Pixabay](#)

This past fall I took a class in basketmaking, using invasive species. I'm not really a crafts person, so I was a bit surprised I was interested. But I'd always meant to join in one of the local invasive-pulling days, and so far hadn't.

I was so glad I went! There is something magical about making something useful with your own hands and natural fibres. This is a skill that almost every ancestral group would have had, in some shape or form. Basketmaking has got to be in our DNA. Somehow I felt this process gave me a deeper connection to those simpler, quieter times.

It was a socially distanced group, working outdoors, six feet apart with masks on. Pulling the ivy was surprisingly easy. We were not attacking the thick older vines around the trees, but instead pulling up the long vines running across the forest floor. We pulled the leaves off, and to ensure we didn't inadvertently start any new plants, collected any vine pieces on a tarp, so they could be safely disposed of later.

We coiled the long, stripped vines in circles that would easily fit in a bucket. We were also shown how to shave or peel off the dark, outer bark, if we wished, and to scrape off the irregularities. However, it was liberating to hear one teacher say she liked "anomalies" in her baskets. I knew chances were slim that I'd make a perfect first basket, and I like the rustic look, so I didn't opt for the peeling, and saved myself a fair bit of work.

The same teacher also mentioned that to some degree, the basket will do its own thing. She said you can fight it, but that in her opinion, the best baskets allow that uniqueness to shape the process. This reminded me of something a friend once said. She had a shop where she sold handmade pottery by local artists. She described one woman as a "potter's potter". An inexperienced eye might even think that potter was not highly skilled. But in fact, her work really celebrated the qualities of clay. Many fellow potters, even those who worked in a very refined way, loved her rough-looking, simple, earthy work. Her pieces always felt good in your hands, and did their jobs well.

After collecting the ivy vines, we were shown how to make a very free-form basket, like a nest, which is called a random-weave basket. We were encouraged to finish them at home. Those whose free-form baskets, like mine, were

Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle

less than successful, were told we could leave them in trees for birds to recycle. Then we were instructed to soak our vines overnight before the next class. Some people peeled most of their ivy during the week.

On the following weekend, we were shown how to make a simple, woven basket. At least, it sounded simple. Apparently I was doing it all wrong. I could feel my brain freezing, trying to grasp what the teacher was patiently repeating and demonstrating until I could assimilate the information. It looked to me like I was doing what she was saying. But no, apparently I was holding it wrong, which made all the difference. Once I had the technique down, it went fairly quickly. It grew into a recognizable basket. Not perfect, but I had expected that.

I liked the rough, rustic look. Those who had peeled their ivy now had white baskets, with a more refined look. It was lovely to see how different and unique each of the participants' baskets were. The two teachers were enthusiastic about all of them.



We were also taught how to twist stalks of yellow iris into a twine that could be used to make a different type of basket (but we didn't learn how to make them). Yellow iris is invasive in wetlands and can choke out native species. However, it can make beautiful baskets! Apparently even broom can be used to make a lovely stitched basket.

Even though I found it a bit challenging at one point, I found the experience of making a basket with my own hands, from materials I had harvested, was very satisfying. It also felt very grounding and mind-clearing, to simply devote myself to learning and practicing this repetitive skill for a few hours. No wonder they used to teach basketmaking in mental health institutions! One of the teachers' daughters, who is about 7, is already pretty accomplished and was helping several of us slower learners.

It was such a rare treat these days, to spend hours outside, close to nature, and in community. I felt a golden glow of happiness at the end of the day. I might even end up doing more of it. I'm feeling the urge to go and pull up more ivy soon!

Recently I watched a webinar in which an indigenous woman explained her practice of gathering medicinal wild

Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle

herbs and plants. She said she would bathe the evening before, make an offering of tobacco, and say prayers, as well as asking the plants for their permission to be picked. She said that when she followed this protocol, everything went well and she could feel nature helping her.

My initial thought was that ivy didn't need to be asked, because it's invasive. But I've changed my mind and hope I remember to do it in future. After all, ivy and the other invasives are part of Mother Nature too. They didn't ask to be brought to our region. And they too are living things, with a purpose on this earth, so they too deserve to be treated with respect.

Video references:

Here's a YouTube video on making the same type of basket we made. We started with eight lengths of ivy about 20 inches long. Make sure any branches have been cut off. The "weaver" is another piece, which you will weave between the spokes of the eight pieces. The weavers should be as long as possible. For all the pieces, use ivy that was harvested earlier and dried, then soaked overnight, so it's pliable. (You can use fresh ivy, but it will shrink and have wider spacings than when you made it.)

You can spray it with water to keep it damp. Dry ivy can break. You can also reshape the basket somewhat while you're working on it, if need be, but only while it's damp.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWMTnuc_Xm4

Here's a video of a fellow making a random-weave basket out of another type of invasive species. His is quite large and loose, but they can be made smaller and tighter. (But his is much better than mine was!)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uobfLe0cO3g>

Pictorial: Making a Basket from Invasive Ivy



1. Invasive Ivy

Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle



2. Coils of freshly picked ivy vines, with leaves and branches removed.



3. Peeling ivy bark.



4. Starting a random-weave basket.

Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle



5. Finishing a random weave basket.



6. A basket made with both peeled (white) and unpeeled (brown) ivy. Behind it is a small random-weave basket made with freshly picked ivy. This will soon turn brown as it dries.



7. Finished basket

GreenFriends- North America Fall 2020 Newsletter

To download this newsletter click on [this link](#) or the photo of the newsletter's first page.



GreenFriends-North America

living in harmony with Nature

Some small and big actions for a greener reality

Fall 2020

Greetings GreenFriends!

Welcome to the Fall 2020 (Holiday Edition) GreenFriends newsletter! This edition is jam-packed with interesting personal experiences from devotees, tips on composting and taking care of house plants, guidance on how to shop consciously and reflections on Amma and her relationship with Nature. Plus, the pigeons are back!

[Respect for All Life](#)

[Listening to the Trees](#)

[Confessions of a Cloth-O-Holic](#)

[My First Vegetable Garden](#)

[Trench Composting](#)

[The Healing Benefits of the Humble Houseplant](#)

[How to Be a Conscious Shopper](#)

[The Pigeon Chronicles](#)

With no end in sight to the pandemic, Amma has clarified that COVID is not a punishment from Nature, but a warning to help humankind correct its behavior:

"We may feel that such times of crisis are a form of punishment from Nature, but don't take it like that. Treat it as a clarion call from Nature for us to mend our ways. Think of it as a shock treatment from God, or Nature, to prevent us from doing worse things. Both Mother Earth and Mother Nature are considered as paragons of patience. However, man has taken this patience as a license to commit all manner of atrocities. It's time to correct this mistake."

GreenFriends strives to communicate the importance of treating Nature with respect and gratitude. We invite each of you Green Friends to share your ideas and experiences with your own gardening efforts as well as experiences with animals. Please send your stories, comments and feedback to info@greenfriendsna.org
