



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

Calling all Gardeners!
The Amazing Osage Orange
Nature's Bounty Crafted into Tasty Delights

Nature

Nature Takes a Sunbath
Sunrise and Sunset at MA Center- Chicago
Interesting Facts about Termites

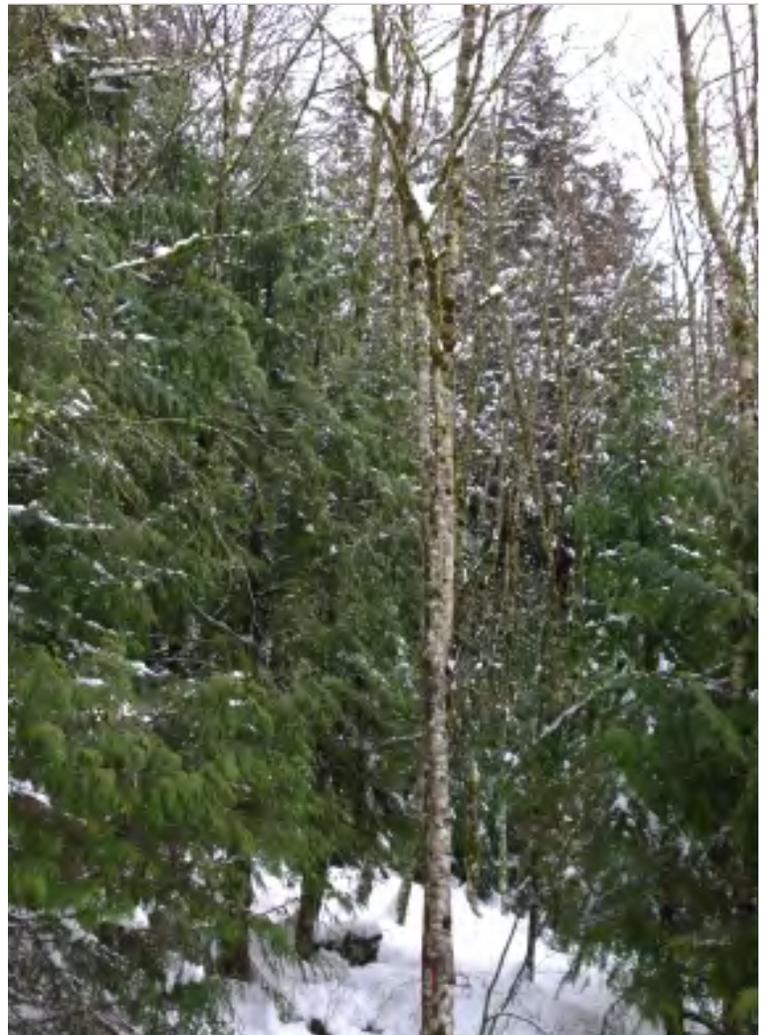
PNW Litter Project

Stats

GreenFriends Projects in Amritapuri

Amritapuri Flowers
Amrita Sree Gardens

Interesting Information from our Readers



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 Calling all Gardeners



In July 2015, MA Center purchased a property in Maltby, northeast of Seattle, to serve as a future Center for the Pacific Northwest region. The property is a thirteen-acre former horse farm, with open pastures, a house, beautiful stands of trees, and a serene peaceful atmosphere. After the property was acquired, local devotees started working with county planners and engineers on plans and permitting for building a meeting hall, parking, and more residential accommodations.

Meanwhile, GreenFriends from around the region started thinking about gardening and permaculture possibilities on the property! In November, replying to questions from PNW devotees, Amma said that the future center should serve society (through programs such as Mother's Kitchen and litter pick-ups), be a place for preservation of nature and farming, and offer meditation and yoga programs for the area and region.

When Dayamrita Swami came to Seattle in December, he encouraged us to begin planting vegetable gardens and planting trees now since the land is already permitted for agriculture.

Would you like to participate? Get involved in the ground floor planning? Or do you want to hear about plans as they develop? GreenFriends is going to sponsor three events in January and February, listed below. All gardeners are invited to come to any or all of these programs. If you are interested, please send an email note to Visala (vhohlbein@msn.com) or Yasas (drenn108@gmail.com) and they will keep you informed as the events unfold.

Gardening and Permaculture

Amma encourages the use of permaculture in all her centers. Large projects are already under way in San Ramon and Chicago. The Maltby property likewise will be planned using permaculture principals.

PNW Gardening



What does that mean? you might ask. Is it different from organic gardening? GreenFriends asked Mechas McCrary for an explanation since she has agreed to serve as a consultant to the planning committee for the design, planning, and maintenance of the future PNW Amma Center's edible permaculture garden.

Mechas said, "Organic gardening and permaculture both use methods such as composting and natural fertilization and pest control. But permaculture enlarges the organic concept with its broad scope of intention and the way plantings are organized. Basically, permaculture's goal is to design a mini-ecosystem of edibles based on the way nature does it in the wild. In the end, we get greater yields with less work—a garden that's easy to sustain."

Permaculture planning requires an initial year of observation of the site through all the changes brought by seasons, weather, sun and shade, water movement on the terrain, etc. Currently, the Maltby property is in the middle of this observation period. When the observation period is over, a master plan will be drawn up to designate locations for trees and vegetables in accordance with Swamiji's advice. Mechas's training and experience will be a great asset in this process.

You can help with the pre-planning of the garden's overall concept by filling out a questionnaire that Mechas has provided to gauge what components interest our satsang members and gardening community. Contact Visala (vhohlbein@msn.com) or Yasas (drenn108@gmail.com) for a copy. Please contact us and let us know your level of expertise and how you would like to participate. More about permaculture will be shared in this newsletter and at future seva events at the property.

PNW Gardening



Upcoming Events

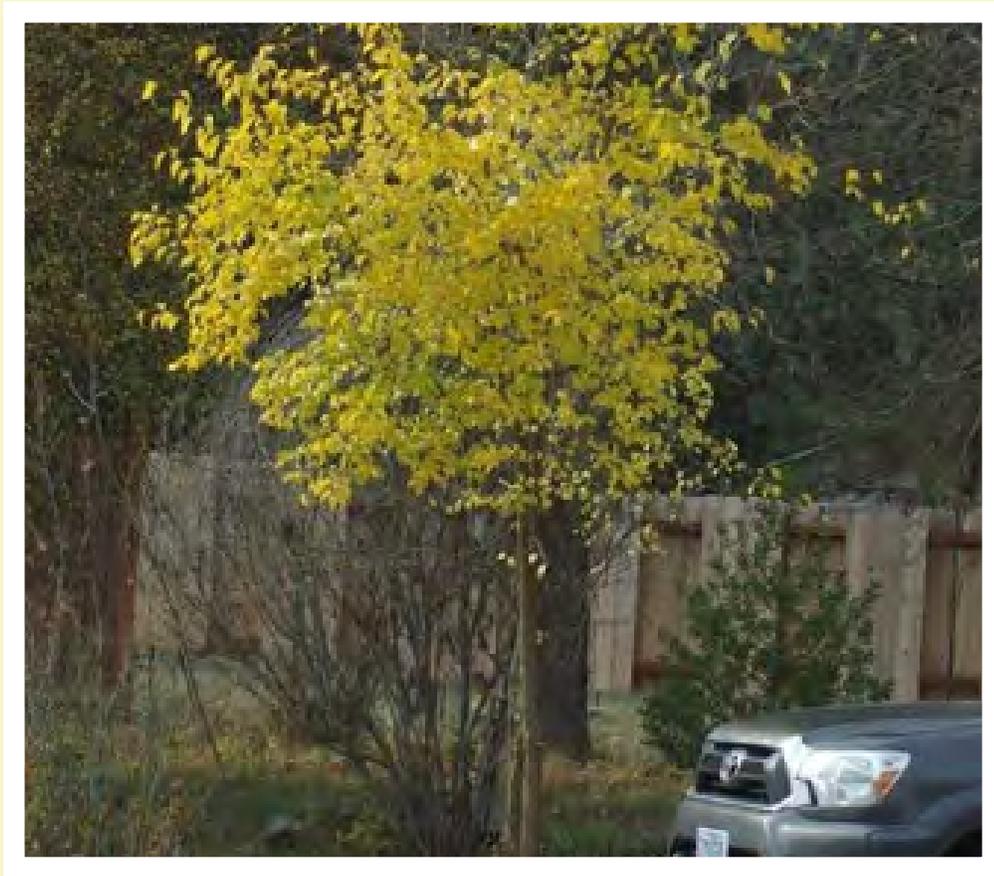
On both January 17 and February 21, Eswar Cortelyou will lead a seva day of pruning. Eswar is a Green-Friend, homesteader, and recently retired forester. The program will go from 10:00 a.m to 4:30 p.m. Eswar will give tips on pruning and tree care, and we will go out in teams to clean up all the trees and shrubs. Lunch will be served mid-day (please RSVP to Visala, vhohlbein@msn.com; or Yasas, drenn108@gmail.com, to help in their planning), and plenty of time will be reserved to mingle and discuss the work and garden possibilities. Tours of the property will also be given.

February 6-8, between the two pruning days, is the annual PNW region's Winter Retreat. This year, it will be held again at Loon Lake camp near Vancouver, BC. GreenFriends will have an information table at the retreat and will also host a meeting for those interested in gardening and being involved with the planning, preparation of beds, planting, etc., at the new property in Maltby.

Keep your eyes peeled – more activities and events will be announced in future issues of our newsletter. Please join in – everyone's input and help is valued!

PNW Gardening

The Amazing Osage Orange Tree



This Osage orange tree (*Maclura pomifera*) showing fall coloration by the nose of my truck was multi-stemmed as a sapling. I kept it trimmed down to two trunks and kept cutting off the lower branches, which were dangerously thorny given its location near the driveway.

What an amazing beast is the hedge-apple! The fruits, alas, useless to humans, have convoluted, deeply-textured yellowish-green husks. According to some theories, the fruits were eaten by giant sloths (now extinct) which distributed the seeds in their scat. As boy scouts, we were told Osage oranges would repel spiders, so we experimented by placing the fruits near our tent openings, even though we were not particularly afraid of spiders.

The wood of the tree is indeed very useful, being a superior firewood, a long-lasting fencepost, and a wonderfully thorny living fence that will keep just about anything in, or out. Native Americans greatly prized the strong and resilient wood for making bows.

I keep the trees on my land as handsome hardwoods. They will reign far longer than I, which, to tell you the truth, is a really comforting thing to think about!

PNW Gardening

Article by Richo Cech, [Horizon Herbs](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Horizon-Herbs/348837717347?fref=nf), Williams, Oregon

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Horizon-Herbs/348837717347?fref=nf>

<https://www.horizonherbs.com>



Photo: [wikipedia](https://www.wikipedia.org)



Gardening

Nature's Bounty Crafted into Tasty Delights from M.A. Center, Chicago

As I mentioned in my last post, some of the produce harvested here in MA Center Chicago was transported far away to help people in need. Throughout the growing season, we also regularly provided fresh, organically grown vegetables to the local food bank. And, I must confess... we did eat a lot of them ourselves, too.

Here are some other ways in which the local devotees utilized the bountiful harvest, in mid-September.

Before the growing season began, one devotee had the inspiration to start a "salsa garden", with the intention of growing all the veggies needed to make our own salsa. At the end of the season, the produce from the garden was harvested, and any shortfall was supplemented with produce from another organic farm nearby.

Then, they set about chopping everything...



Gardening



After cooking the ingredients for some time, they canned them nicely in mason jars... Soon, we had our first batch of salsa — both mild and hot varieties. I received a jar of each and I can confirm that they were both quite delicious. Though a decent amount was made, every last jar quickly disappeared. :-)



Next year, if we get more help with the gardening, we can certainly make lots more.

Gardening

The same cooking crew made a large number of apple pies, utilizing just a fraction of the apples harvested from the trees here. These were also extremely popular, and needless to say, very tasty...



Next spring, we plan to revive the roadside farm stand that used to be very popular a few years before we acquired this property. There, we hope to make fresh vegetables and other items like these available to the general public.

NATURE

Nature Takes a Sunbath by Lin Rose



It isn't just humans who love to sprawl in the sun. Especially in our chilly Pacific Northwest. It's early afternoon in mid-December and a weak ray of sunshine is streaming from a hole it burned moments ago in the days-long damp gray cloud cover. The light caught my eye, making me turn from my computer screen and look out the window beyond my desk.

Surprise. Sunlight is hitting one side of the springly, scraggly filbert tree's leafless upper branches. They're filled with a dozen Oregon juncos, their hooded charcoal heads facing into the sunbeam. Slightly larger than chickadees, they've puffed out their dove-colored chest feathers like down parkas. They could be skiers lined up in deck chairs taking a break on an alpine resort's icy sun-drenched terrace. Their ivory beaks glint orange as they perch in perfect stillness. Who wants to chatter at a time like this?

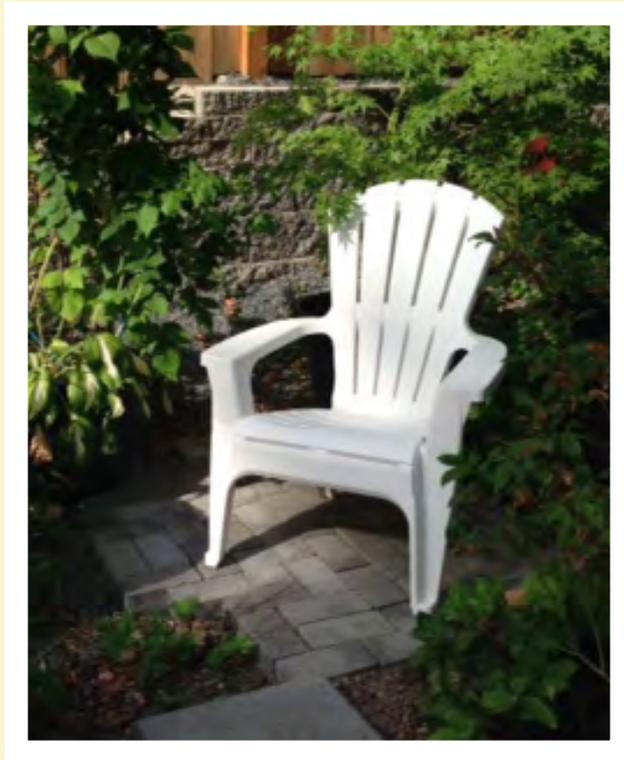
Then the cloud cover shifts. The sunlight dims. In the lowered light, the birds stretch their dark wings, preen a little, and flash the white side-feathers of their tails. They change position and scratch.

The sunbeam returns. The birds all turn sideways to absorb its meager warmth. Like bronzed humans on the Riviera, they seem to follow an unwritten law that group sunbathing must be done facing the same direction. The light

NATURE

goes gray again and they fly off to peck for tasty bits on my patio. In a moment they're back, twittering, perching on twigs and wiping their beaks with flicking movements against the greenish lichened bark. Somehow they know there will be another moment of warmth before it's time to fly. I've seen squirrels sunbathing before, but this is my first experience with birds.

This urge to soak up the sun's warmth must be universal. Such pleasure it gives. On one of the big Douglas firs towering above my little filbert tree, there are two hefty branches in particular favored for squirrel sunbaths. They're level, with smooth bark that's free of lichen and the ubiquitous carpet of emerald moss. If there's any sun to be had, especially in spring, that's where it falls. As with humans, it's the older dominant squirrels who own this prime real estate, the ones whose bank accounts bulge with peanuts. I snicker whenever I see one spread out comfortably face down on his chubby white belly, all four feet dangling from his soft gray coat, tail stretched out behind. Squirrel heaven. The memory makes me long for my Adirondack chair, now turned upside down outside, mothballed for the winter.

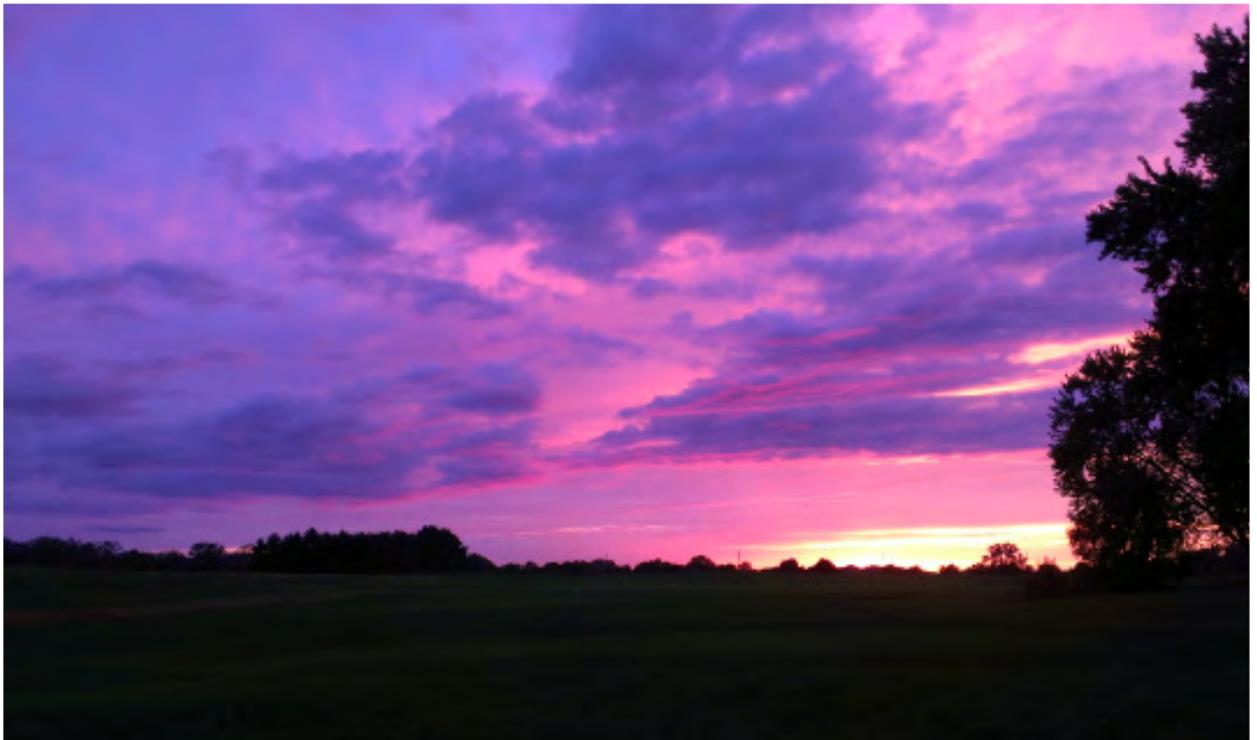


Junco hyemalis photo: [wikimedia](#)

Dark-eyed Junco photo: [wikimedia](#)

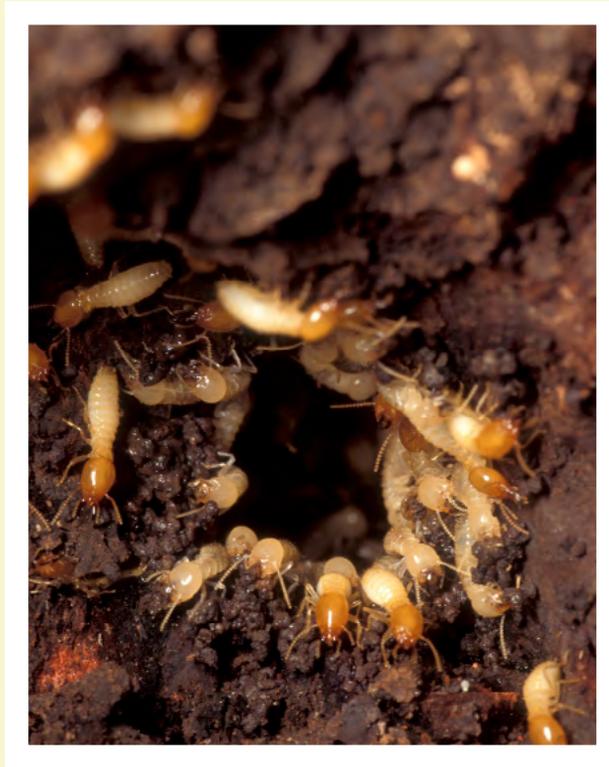
NATURE

Sunrise and Sunset at M.A. Center - Chicago



NATURE

Interesting Facts about Termites



[Wikimedia photo by Scott Bauer](#)

Did you know...

- There are more than 3000 varieties of termites.
- Termites work 24 hours a day 7 days a week.
- If you calculated the weight of all of the termites in the world and the weight of all humans, the termites would weigh more.
- Termites eat dead plant materials and cellulose in wood, leaves, soil, animal dung, etc. They are considered to be a pest when they are in our houses because of the damage they cause by eating the wood.
- They are important to the environment because they are decomposers. They aerate and improve the quality of soil.
- Termites have been around for 300 million years.
- They descended from an ancestor that was similar to a cockroach.
- New kings and queens have wings. The wings are needed in order for the pair to find and build their colony. Once the colony is established, the king and queen break off their wings and begin to reproduce.
- Termite kings and queens stay together for life. The king helps the queen in raising their young .
- The video below says that the queen may live for 15 years and during that time she will lay more than 164 million eggs. (One article I read said the queen may live 50 years.)

NATURE

- Termite workers and soldiers are sterile. The workers build and maintain the nest and take care of the king and queen. The soldiers defend the nest.
- Both the workers and the soldiers are blind since they live in the dark and don't need eyes. (The king and queen need eyes to pick the location for their nest.)
- The termites communicate with each other using pheromones, a chemical scent. They talk to each other in this way as well as leave trails to guide other workers. The soldiers communicate danger by banging their heads against the walls of the nest.
- The size of a termite colony can vary from hundreds of termites to millions.
- Cleanliness is important to termites. They spend a lot of time grooming each other.

Here is an interesting two minute YouTube video about a termite queen and her attendants.

<https://youtu.be/ta2rF6Syi0U>

You can read more about termites in these articles:

[10 Fascinating Facts about Termites](#)

[Termite](#)

[Termites](#)

[Termites- Insects That Eat Wood](#)

[Termites, Order Isoptera](#)

Adapted from <https://livinglearningandlettinggo.wordpress.com/2015/12/18/interesting-facts-about-termites>



PNW Litter Project

PNW Litter Project Stats

Thirty three litter project members and friends reported picking up **76** hours of litter in December 2015. The average pick up time was **2.3** hours; the range was **2 minutes to 14 hours** and the median was **1** hour.

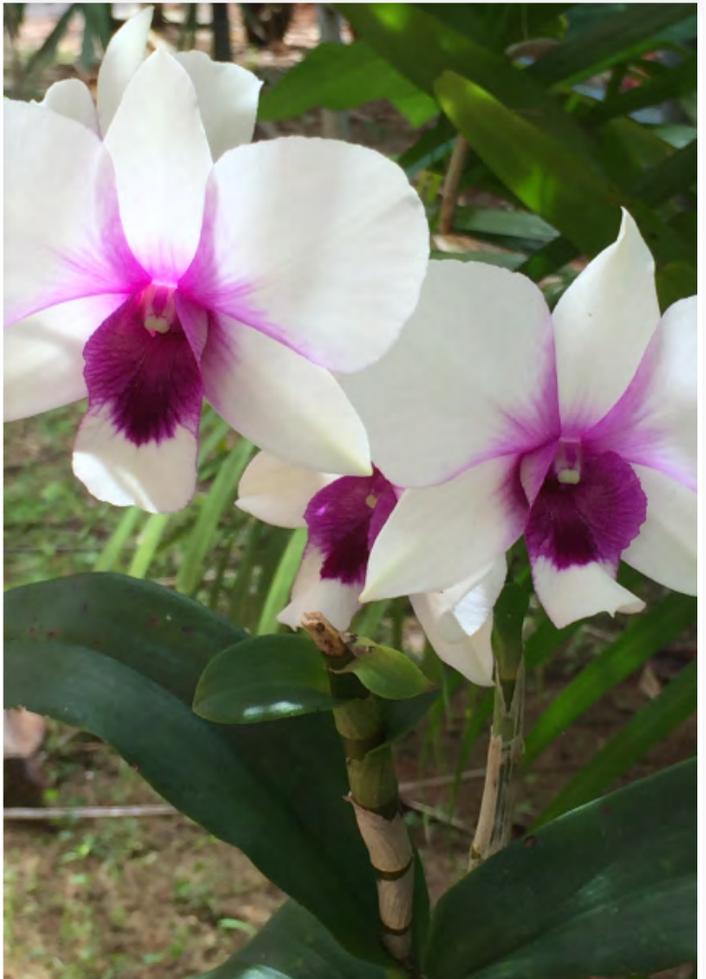
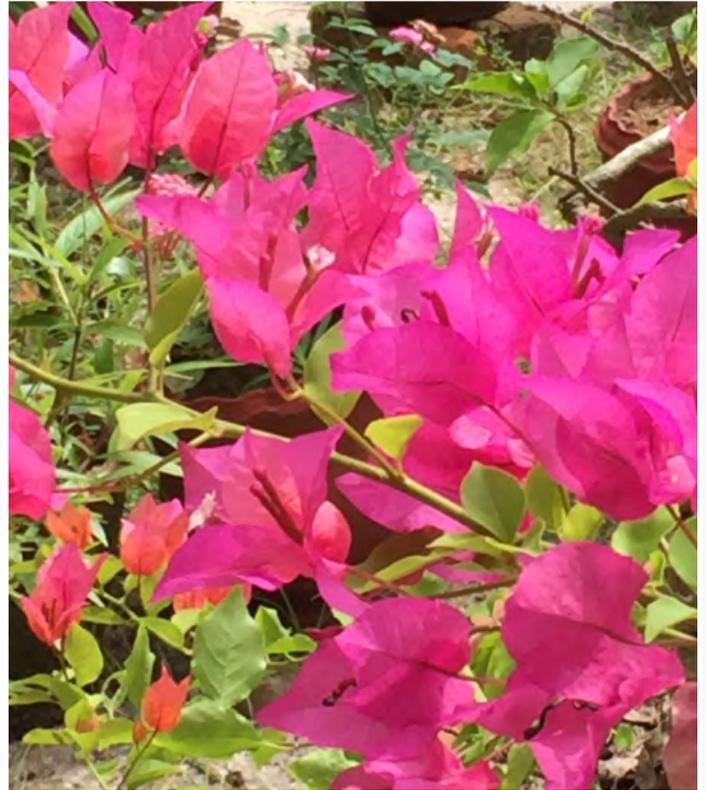
Members of the project have picked up litter for **7147** hours since the project began in July 2011.

TerraCycle credited us with turning in **139,534** cigarette butts in **2013** and **55,200** in **2014**. Our **2015** count stands at **60,900** butts, bringing us to a grand total of **264,624** butts since we started sending them to TerraCycle in January 2013. (In addition to the butts we turned into TerraCycle we also have a 5 gallon jar of cigarette butts we use for the litter project display)

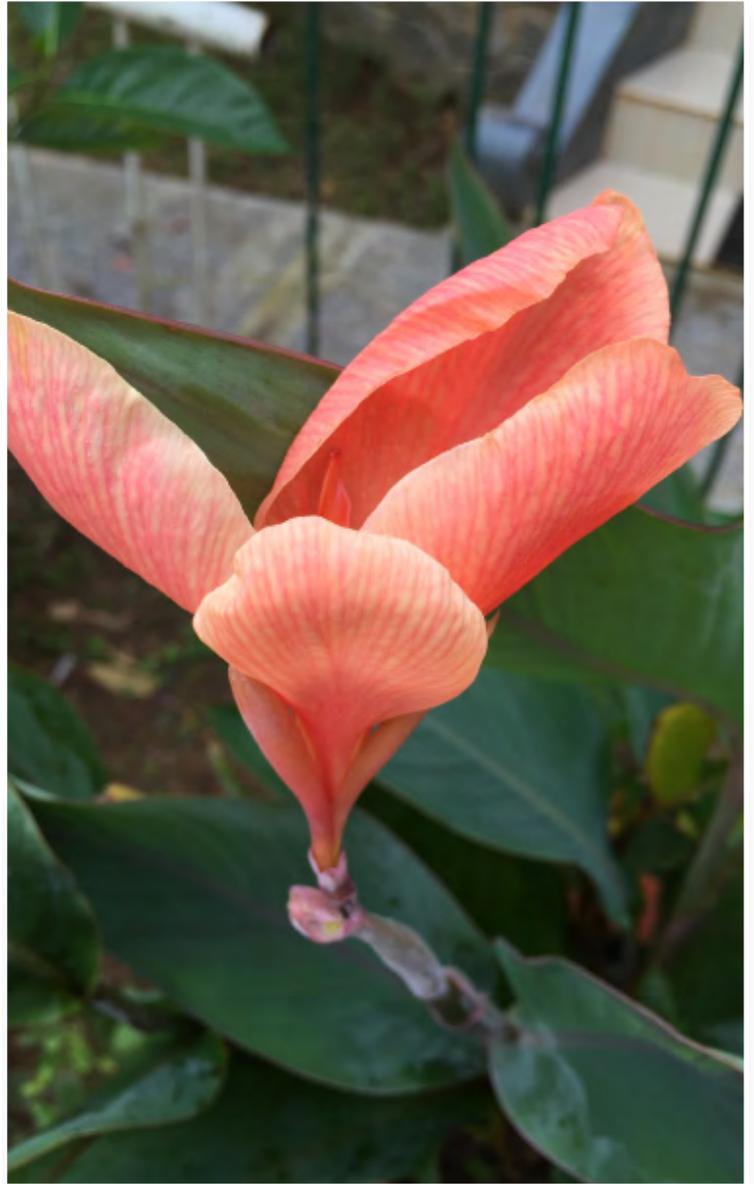
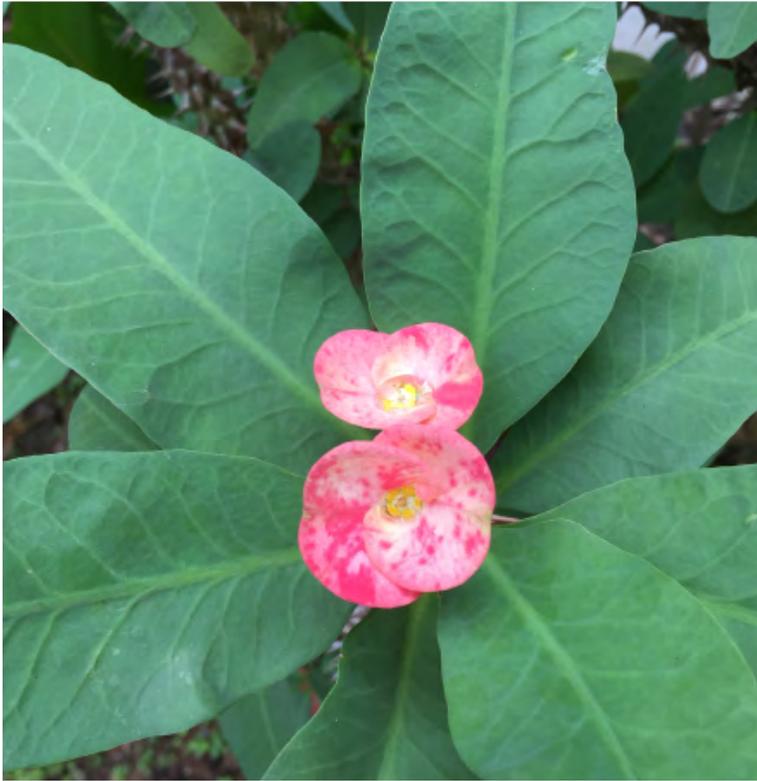


GreenFriends Projects in Amritapuri

Amritapuri Flowers by Karuna Poole



GreenFriends Projects in Amritapuri



GreenFriends Projects in Amritapuri

Amrita Sree Gardens by Karuna Poole

Two years ago this area was a construction zone. Now there three buildings with many flats. Each has a roof garden tended by brahmacharinis and/or residents. There are also gardens in every spare space on the ground. On December 23, Prema Rupa gave me a tour of these gardens.

Sambar Spinach



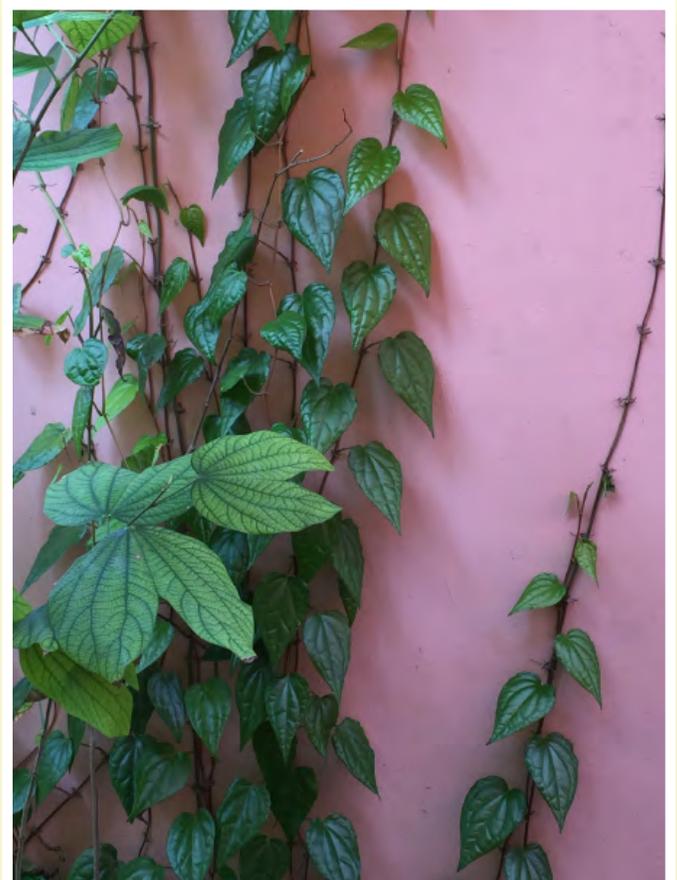
Red Spinach



Prema Rupa and Spinach Tree



Spinach Vine



GreenFriends Projects in Amritapuri



Yams



Young banana palm



Older banana palm

Tomato, aloe and unknown plant



Seedlings



Interesting Information from Our Readers

From Jovanna in Seattle:

This is a [fun video](#) of a man in Milwaukee, Wisconsin dancing down the street as he picks up trash.

From Prema Rupa in Amritapuri:

A few leaves of red spinach and my favorite, sambar cira, which I eat raw.



and

A [new study](#) finds gardening can help improve self-esteem, calm anger and ease depression.

and

Willem Malten suggests we rethink the way we look at amaranth:

“So I propose that we adjust our research, technology and diets and start a more wide-spread processing of the mighty amaranth into food. We potentially have millions of acres of it. Amaranth is a gift and we better learn how to use it.” <http://ourworld.unu.edu/en/rethinking-a-weed-the-truth-about-amaranth>

From Visala in Seattle:

Cascadia Farms is a local organic farm in Skagit Valley. Their website has lots of information about growing things here in PNW. Interesting stuff. <http://www.cascadianfarm.com>