Pacific Northwest

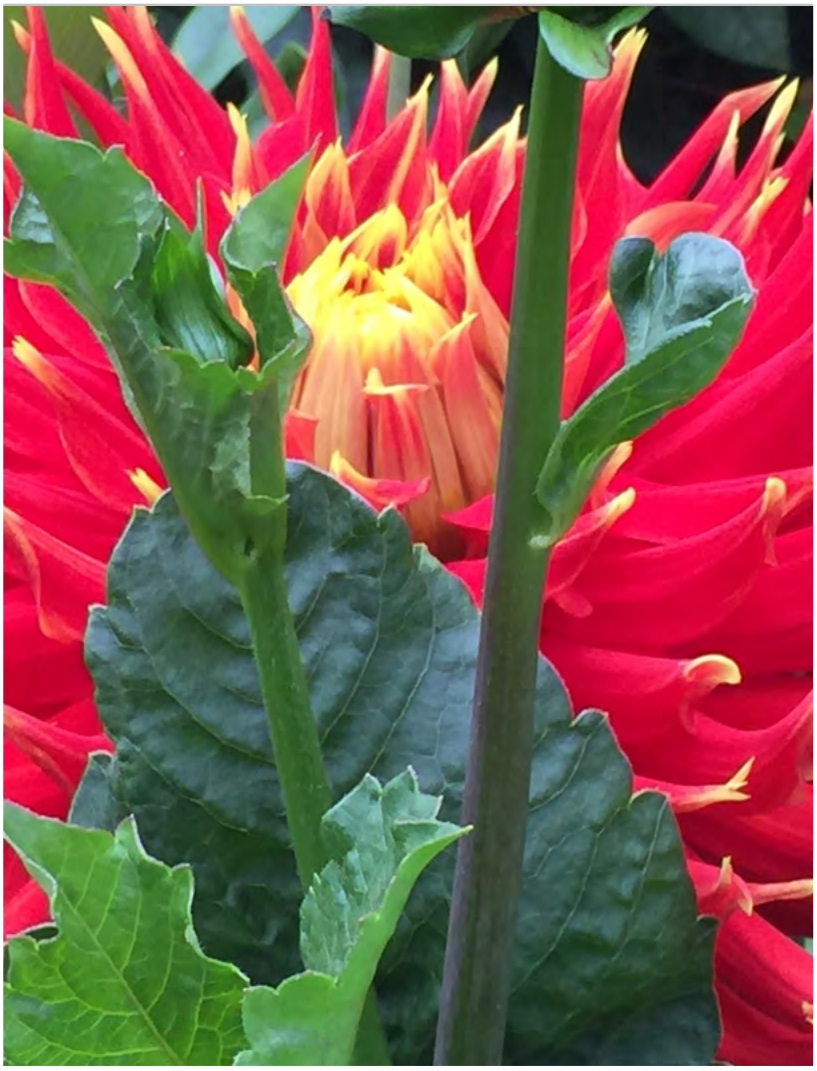
Issue 61 August 2016

GREEN FRIENDS

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



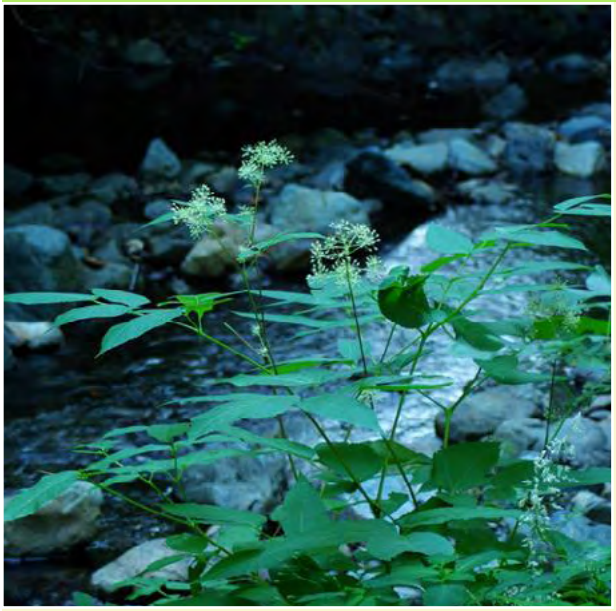
GreenFriends is a global grassroots environmental movement which promotes environmental awareness and local participation in conservation efforts throughout the world.

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

The Powerful Ginseng Plant



Aralia California (Spikenard, Elk Clover) is in full flower right now streamside. What a powerful plant!

Family: Ginseng (Araliaceae)

(California Ginseng, Western Spikenard)

This is the largest herbaceous member of its family that occurs here in the US. The root, aromatic and dripping with sticky white oleoresin, is the part normally used, and it has a long history of effectiveness in treating upper respiratory complaints and as a partus preperatur in childbirth. The plant gives great strength to weakened parts (and weakened people). Preferring to grow near rushing streams in the part shade, California Spikenard is nonetheless sufficiently robust and adaptable to be grown in regular garden conditions--it is probably the most forgiving, adaptable and easily grown of the "ginsengs."

https://www.facebook.com/Strictly-Medicinal-Seeds-348837717347

Article by Richo Cech from Strictly Medicinal Seeds, formally Horizon Herbs.

PNW Gardening

Sitting it Out: Observing in your Garden by Rachael Fairbanks

Sitting in your garden is one of the best ways to get to know the land around you, what grows well and what does not, and what the plants, bugs, and soil are doing around you. In this article we are exploring the importance of choosing a spot in your garden, forest, or land called your "sit spot" where you can relax and observe nature on a regular basis. In this way you will not only get in touch with your garden but also with nature's rhythms, patterns, and movements, which are also your own.

Choose a sheltered spot where you feel called to spend time and observe. Bring a journal and your curiosity and get comfortable (tea is always a nice addition). As you sit, begin to ask these questions:

- What do I see around me?

-What is happening with the weather?

-What time is it? Where is the sun in the sky?

-Is there moisture in the air, on the plants, in the soil?

- What color are the leaves around me? (colors can show deficiencies or excess of certain nutrients in the soil)

- Are the plants flowering? Fruiting?

PNW Gardening

- What bugs or creepy crawlies are present?

- What does the soil look/ smell/ taste like? (sweet soil is a sign of fertile, balanced soil)

-What weeds are popping up? (Some weeds indicate particular soil imbalances)

- Are there any signs of animals in the garden? (slugs, rabbits, moles, others?)

These and many other questions can be asked and answered, bringing you into a state of inquiry and relationship with your garden. After a sitting session, you can leave the garden knowing quite a lot from your observations. For example, I like to leave the spot with at least three questions (i.e., What is this bug that I saw? What does it mean when my bean leaves are yellow? What are the holes in the calendula from?). I try to have these questions answered by the time I next come to my sit spot.

The key to a good sit spot, as with all mindfulness practices, is frequent use. Go back again and again to get to know the spot. Your garden will benefit a lot from this practice, as will you and your faculties of inquiry.

If you come enough, you may even hear the garden fairies singing! Happy sitting!

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Artichoke Flowers

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Photos From Our Reader's Gardens

From Lin in Bellevue


herbs


french crisp lettuce

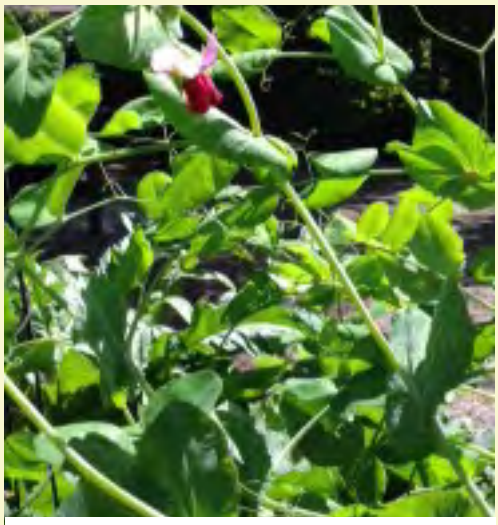

zucchini


artichoke


mint


strawberry


red kale


peas


tomatoes (Sun Gold and Stupice)

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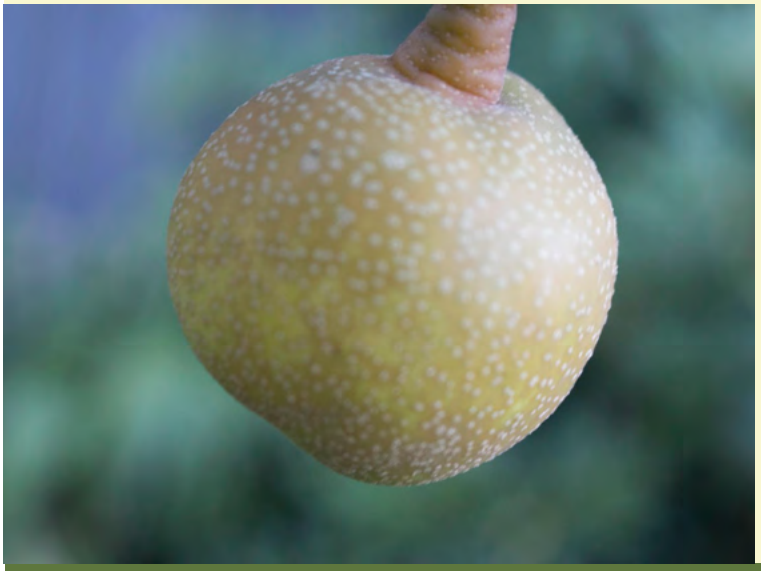
From Mechas in Bellevue



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From Rajeshwari in Quebec

finally, the red onions!

good luck little pear tree

Two little veggie patches

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now we can get to the raspberries

and the herbs

new berry patch (gooseberries, gojis, sea buckthorn, autumn olive, aronias, cranberries - high bush and low bush, and 2 fruit trees: apricot and persimmon)

Can't wait for the plums on this one - maybe next year!

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Maltby Garden, July 23, 2016

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Caring for Container Gardens

by Leonard Perry, UVM Horticulturist and Charlie Nardozzi, Garden Consultant

Container gardens are increasingly popular for several reasons. They're an attractive way to add color to a patio, porch, or small space. They satisfy the urge to garden if you have a green thumb but have limited space in which to plant flowers, or even some edible plants. Although easy to plant and to get a more instant effect, they do need some care throughout the season to ensure healthy plants and continual bloom.

If the container plantings you made in spring are beginning to look a little leggy, or the foliage is yellowing, or they're not blooming, don't despair. These and other problems are generally readily fixed. Here's a list of common problems–and the solutions–to help you get your container gardens back on the road to recovery:

Problem: You water regularly, but wilting still occurs. The probable cause is poor drainage and aeration of soil. The solution is to repot using a lighter soil mix containing more organic matter. Or, if that's not a viable option, increase the number of drainage holes in the container.

Another possible cause is too many plants in the pot, taking up too much water. You may need to repot, removing a few plants.

When repotting, add a water absorbing or soil moistening ingredient. You can buy these at full service garden stores.

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They are generally pellets that absorb many times their weight in water, releasing it and keeping soils moist. They're especially useful in clay pots or coir (coconut husk) lined baskets that dry out quickly.

Problem: Plants are tall and spindly. The probable cause is too little light, and perhaps too high nitrogen levels. The solution is to move the containers to a location that receives more sun or light a day. Stop fertilizing the plants, or decrease the amount.

Problem: Plants have stopped flowering. There may be several possible causes. An end to its flowering may be natural for this variety. However, if you planted annuals, deadheading (removing spent flowers) often promotes branching and rebloom.

If the buds don't open, the cause could be disease and rots. Dig up a plant; if roots are brown and not white, root rots are likely. Dispose of infected plants and replant the container with fresh potting mix. Use one made for pots, and not garden soil which usually has disease organisms and doesn't work well in containers. If tops appear to have disease, this could be gray mold (botrytis). Give plenty of air movement around plants to help dry leaves off, and don't water late in the day so leaves will be dry over night.

Too much fertilizer can cause excess leaf growth at the expense of flowers, so fertilize less if the plant is lush but has no flowers. On the other hand, if leaf growth looks fine and not excessive, plants may need more fertilizer. Many of the new "vegetative" varieties (those grown from cuttings and not seeds) need very high levels of fertility.

Problem: Yellowed foliage, especially the lower leaves. The probable cause is too much water or too little fertilizer. If leaves yellow from the bottom of the plant first, and plants lack vigor, it often means excess water in the soil. If leaves are just generally a bit yellow overall, this is likely from too little fertility. The solution would be to water plants less often if the soil appears wet, and make sure the container has adequate drainage. In addition to watering less, fertilize more, especially if using low nutrition organic sources.

Problem: Edges of leaves are brittle and dry. The probable cause is too much salt present in the soil, most likely from overfertilizing. (You might notice a whitish crust on the soil surface or pot edge, another sign of excess salt.) Moving containers quickly from shade to more sun also may be the cause. The solution, if from too much fertilizer,

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it to water generously–until water pours out of the drainage holes–to cleanse the soil and remove the salt. Avoid changing locations and light levels rapidly.

Problem: Leaf spots, powdery or rusty areas. Probable causes are low temperature, inadequate phosphate, or disease. Solutions are to move the container to a warmer location. Apply a fertilizer containing high phosphate (the middle number of the three in the analysis), such as a plant starter fertilizer. You also might try fungicides, although if the problem is serious you probably will need to toss the plant. To help identify if a disease, and if so which one, work with your local garden center or contact your state master gardener network to help identify the pest. (Note: Master Gardener hotline in King County is 206-296-3440; in Pierce County, call 253-798-7170; and in Snohomish County, call 425-357-6010.)

Problem: Foliage is riddled with small holes. The probable cause is insect pests. Again, work with your garden center or local master gardeners to identify the pest. Solutions are to apply the least toxic insecticide that will do the job, following the instructions on the label carefully. If the pest problem isn't serious, you and the plants may be able to tolerate some damage.

https://perrysperennials.wordpress.com/2016/06/09/caring-for-container-gardens

Gardening

MA Center Chicago by Karuna Poole

MA Center Chicago is located outside of the city on 145 acres of land. I have wanted to visit the property ever since I heard about it after members of Seattle satsang attended Amma's programs there in 2012. I was particularly interested in walking on the land and seeing all of the farm work that was being done there.

During the first day of the programs Br. Shantamrita Chaitanya gave a tour of the property. The next day I walked to many of the places that he had pointed out from a distance.

I headed first towards a gigantic greenhouse. Between the greenhouse and me was an area that a local farmer uses to grow alfalfa. Part of the alfalfa had already been rolled into cylindrical bales.

Gardening

As I walked, I spotted a bird's house and two bee hives.

I finally made it to the big greenhouse.

Gardening

When I left that area, I saw the first of the big fields. I remembered that we had been told that 34 different medicinal herbs were being grown on the property. There were many other types of plants as well.

I was most eager to see the Echinacea field. I had previously seen a video of the fields when they were in full bloom last year. At this time of year, I could see Echinacea flowers at all stages of their growth cycle.

Milkweed, nettles and other beneficial plants are allowed to grow throughout the Echinacea field. The milkweed, in particular, attracts butterflies. In fact, it is the only food that Monarch caterpillars eat. Br. Shantamrita told us whenever they see milkweed on the Center property, they mow around it.

Gardening

Br. Shantamrita shared a lot of interesting information when he talked to us. One piece that really caught my attention was that the Center's children gather the monarch butterfly caterpillars . In the wild 80% of those caterpillars die before they become butterflies, but if they are gathered and fed, then only 20% die; 80% become butterflies. He also mentioned when the butterflies first come out of their chrysalis they move very slowly, staying in one place for an extended period of time. That reminded me of a photo I had seen on Br. Shantamrita's blog last year. https://shantamrita.wordpress.com/2015/08/16/monarch-meditation

Here is the video of the Echinacea field when it was in full bloom last year. https://youtu.be/XpYTJs4TOEc

Gardening



After leaving the Echinacea field, I discovered there were more fields; many more. I even saw the new orchard.


These are only a small portion of the photos I took of the fields. You can see more at: https://livinglearningandletting-go.wordpress.com/2016/07/04/my-dream-is-realized-part-2. I feel very privileged to have been able to attend Amma's program in Chicago and look forward to going back next year.

Saving the Earth's Resources

An Innovative Way to Reduce the Use of Plastic Wrap

During Amma's North American tours, many of the items sold in Amma's Bookstore need to be boxed and stacked onto wooden pallets for transport. The seven-foot high stacks become towers wrapped in long sheets of plastic to stabilize them for loading onto trucks. When the towers are off-loaded at their next destination, the plastic is thrown into the trash. No one has been happy about adding plastic waste to the local landfills.

This year a new method of transport was devised, resulting in a 60% drop in the amount of plastic wrap that is being used. Tall three-sided plywood containers have been built and placed on 16 of the 26 pallets normally in use. They easily hold stacked storage bins, suitcases and other items. Plywood panels gradually close the front of the container as it's filled, creating a solid tower securing the contents and making the container ready to load onto the waiting truck. What a brilliant idea!

Saving the Earth's Resources

NATURE
Free flight by Cindy Knoke

Penetrating eyes,

miss nothing.

The most intelligent,

successful birds,

NATURE

are often resented.

I wonder why?

Are we jealous they are free, and fly?

Cheers to you from the free-flying gulls~

https://cindyknoke.com/2016/06/14/free-flight

Nature

Nature's Beauty by Chris Borys in Everett

Nature

Hummingbird Facts and Tips for Attracting Hummers

by Jyotirmayi Elmore

Wikipedia

There are four species of hummingbirds found in the Pacific Northwest: Anna's Hummingbird, the Black-Chinned Hummingbird, The Calliope, and The Rufous. Of these four species, only one of these hummingbirds stays through the winter when the temperature starts to drop. Anna's Hummingbird can be found year-round in the Puget Sound region of Western Washington. All of the other Hummingbirds migrate back to Mexico and into The Gulf of Mexico. For this reason, many people keep their feeders going year round so the resident Anna's will have a food source through the winter. https://www.beautyofbirds.com/hummingbirdswashingtonstate.html

Hummingbirds are nature's stunt flyers. They can fly forwards and backwards, straight up, straight down, to the left, to the right, and even upside down! They can very often be seen hovering in one place over flowers while feeding as well. Hummingbirds hover by moving their wings in a figure eight formation. They seem to bring joy and wonder to gardens and they also are often a lot of fun to watch feeding at sugar water feeders. It's often best to hang two feeders so bullying is kept to a minimum. They are very competitive and territorial.
http://www.defenders.org/hummingbirds/basic-facts

So how can we best serve our hummingbirds here in The Great Northwest? How can we best attract them to our gardens while keeping them safe? One way is to use a hummingbird feeder.

Most sources tell us to stick to a ratio of 4 cups of water to one cup of sugar. Too much sugar can harm the liver and kidneys of hummingbirds. http://seaandsageaudubon.org/Conservation/TreeTrimming/HummerFeederCare.html

Nature

Views differ on whether or not to add red coloring to the sugar syrup. http://wildbirdsunlimited.typepad.com/the_zen_birdfeeder/2010/07/top-5-reasons-to-not-use-red-hummingbird-nectar.html

Boil the mixture and stir about a minute to kill any bacteria. Then set aside to cool to room temperature. Make sure the nectar has cooled sufficiently before putting the feeder out. More detailed tips can be found here: ashttps://nationalzoo.si.edu/scbi/migratorybirds/featured_photo/bird.cfm?pix=Anna's_Hummingbird

It's also important to wash the feeders twice a week using a scrub brush and hot water to make sure they are kept very clean before pouring the nectar in.

A more natural way to attract hummingbirds into your garden is to plant lots of colorful flowering plants, especially ones that produce long bell shaped blossoms, which are well suited to the shape of hummingbirds' bills. Red is famously attractive to hummingbirds, but any brightly colored flowers will do.

Nature

Here is a list of some flowering plants that hummingbirds will love!

FLOWERS

Annuals

- Petunia (Petunia spp.) April - Oct
- Snapdragon (Antirrhinum majus) June - Oct
- Fuchsia (Fuchsia spp.) June - Oct
- Jewelweed (Impatiens capensis) June - Oct
- Scarlet Sage (Salvia splendens) July - Sept
- Dahlia (Dahlia merckii) July - Oct

Perennials

- Lungwort (Mertensia sp.) April - May
- Bleeding Heart (Dicentra spectabilis) May - June
- Columbine (Aquilegia spp.) May - June
- Delphinium (Delphinium spp.) May - July
- Hollyhock (Althaea rosea) May - July
- Gladiolus (Gladiolus cardinalus) May - Sept
- Scarlet Bergamot (Monarda didyma) June - July
- Foxglove (Digitalis purpurea) June - July
- Penstemon (Penstemon spp.) June - July
- Blazing Star (Liatris sp.) June - Aug
- Cape-fuschia (Phygelius capensis) June - Aug
- Coral bells (Heuchera sanguinea) June - Oct
- Tall Phlox (Phlox spp.) July - Sept
- Cardinal Flower (Lobelia cardinalis) July - Oct

http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/hummingbirds

PNW Litter Project

PNW Litter Project Stats

Thirty-two Litter Project members and friends reported picking up 72.8 hours of litter in July 2016. The average pick up time was 2.3 hours; the range was 1 minute to 12.5 hours and the median was 1.5 hours.

Members of the project have picked up litter for 7898 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 2016 count stands at 25,400 butts, bringing us to a grand total of 300,124 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)

PNW Litter Project

Recycling Bottle Caps

From Nika while she was visiting Greece

PNW Litter Project

Decomposition Chart
Roadside Litter

	Time to Decompose
Glass bottle	1,000,000 years
Monofolament fishing line	600 years
Disposable diapers	450 years
Plastic 6-pack cover	450 years
Plastic beverage containers	450 years
Aluminum can	80-200 year
Tin can	50-100 years
Rubber boot sole	50-80 years
Foamed plastic cup	50 years
Leather	up to 50 years
Nylon fabric	30-40 years
Plastic film container	20-30 years
Plastic bag	10-20 years
Plastic-coated paper	5 years
Wool clothing	1-5 years
Cigarette butt	1-5 years
Rope	3-14 months
Carry-out food bag	4-8 months
Newspaper	3-6 months
Apple core	2 months
Cotton rag	1-5 months
Banana/orange Peel	2-5 weeks
Traffic Ticket	2-4 weeks
Napkins	1-3 weeks

Source - http://www.co.macon.il.us/downloads/EnvironmentalManagement/Curriculum/Roadside%20Litter%20Decomposition%20Chart.pdf