



# GreenFriends North America NEWSLETTER

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APRIL – JUNE



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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.

For more  
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# MAN AND NATURE



## EXCERPT FROM MAN AND NATURE, AMMA'S ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS POSED TO HER IN 1994

**Question:** *How serious is the environmental problem?*

**AMMA:** In days gone by, there was a fixed time for everything. It was the practice to do cultivation during a certain month or season, and a particular month was fixed for harvesting. There were no deep tube wells in those days. The farmers depended solely on the water and sunshine which was graciously bestowed by Nature. The people lived in harmony with Nature. They never tried to challenge Nature. Nature was therefore always helpful to man. Nature was his friend. People were completely confident that it would rain if the seeds were sown during a particular time of the month. They also knew the exact time when the crop would be ready for harvest. Everything went smoothly. Nature bestowed both rain and sunshine at the right time, without fail. Excessive or untimely rain never destroyed the crops, nor was there any excess or lack of sunshine. Everything was balanced. Human beings never tried to act against the laws of Nature. Mutual

understanding, faith, love, compassion and cooperation existed among people. They loved and worshiped Nature, and in return Nature blessed them with an abundance of natural wealth. Such an attitude alone will help to uplift society as a whole.

But things have changed.

Scientific inventions are highly beneficial. But they should not be against Nature. The constant harm done by human beings has destroyed Nature's patience. She has begun to retaliate. Natural calamities are greatly increasing. Nature has commenced Her dance of final dissolution. She has lost Her balance owing to the unrighteous actions perpetrated against Her by humans. This is the main cause of all the suffering that human beings are undergoing during this present age.

The scientist who is inventive and who experiments may have love within him. But that love is limited to a narrow channel. It is directed only to the scientific field in which he works. It doesn't embrace all creation. He is more or less bound to the laboratory where he sits, or to the scientific equipment which he uses. He does not think of real life. He is more interested in finding out whether there is life on the moon or on Mars. He is more interested in inventing nuclear armaments.

A scientist may claim he is trying to find the truth of the empirical world through an analytic approach. He dissects things in order to analyze how they function. If he is given a kitten, he is more interested in using the animal for research than in loving it as a pet. He will measure its rate of breathing, its pulse and blood pressure. In the name of science and the search for truth, he will dissect the animal and examine its organs. Once the kitten has been cut open, it is dead. Life disappears and any possibility for love is gone. Only if there is life is there love. In his search for the truth of life, the scientist unwittingly destroys life itself. Strange!

A rishi is a real lover because he has dived into his own Self, the very core of life and love. He experiences life and love everywhere — above, below, in front, behind — in all directions. Even in hell, even in the nether world, he sees nothing but life and love. For him there is nothing but life and love shining forth with splendor and glory from all directions. Therefore, Mother would say he is 'a real scientist'. He experiments in the inner laboratory of his own being. He never creates division in life. For him life is one whole. He always dwells in that undivided state of love and life.

The real scientist, the sage, lovingly embraces life and becomes one with it. He never tries to fight with life. While the scientist tries to fight and conquer life, the sage simply surrenders to life and lets it carry him wherever it may. Man has turned against Nature. Man no longer cares about Nature. He is more interested in exploring and experimenting. He is trying to break all bounds. But he does not know that by doing so, he is paving the way for his own destruction. It is like lying on one's back and spitting up. The spittle will fall on one's own face.

Today, in addition to the exploitation of Nature, humans are also polluting Her. There was a time when cow dung was used as a disinfectant in India, when children were given their vaccinations. But now, a wound would become septic and the person would die if cow dung were to be applied. The substance that used to be a medicine that healed the wound has now turned into something that causes infection. So much poison must have gone into the cow dung through the grass, hay and oil cakes with which we feed the cows.

Now there is no longer any rain when it is supposed to rain. If it does rain, there is either too little or too much, and it comes too early or too late. It is the same with sunshine. Nowadays humans are trying to exploit Nature. This is why there are floods, droughts and earthquakes, and everything is being destroyed.

There is a tremendous decline in the quality of life. Many people have lost faith. They do not feel any love and compassion, and the team spirit of working together, hand in hand, for the good of all, has been lost. This will have a bad effect on Nature. Nature will withdraw all Her blessings and turn against man. Unimaginable will be Nature's reaction if man continues like this.

There is a story about a couple who had a liquor shop. The husband always told his wife, "Pray to God that He will bring us more customers." The wife sincerely obeyed her husband's words. One day, one of their customers noticed that she was praying, and said to her, "Please pray for me also, so that I will get more work". What is your job?" asked the wife. "I am a coffin maker," said the man. This is the present state of the world. It has become a world in which people are only concerned about their own interests.

*The attitude of mutual understanding and respect between humans and nature must be incorporated into society.*

– AMMA

*It is the duty of human beings to serve and take care of Nature.  
In return, Nature will return all the good.*

– AMMA



# AMRITACULTURE: GROW AS WE GO WORKSHOP SERIES



"EVEN IF WE ONLY HAVE A TINY PLOT OF LAND,  
WE SHOULD TRY TO GROW A FEW VEGETABLES,  
USING ORGANIC FERTILIZERS.  
SPENDING SOME TIME WITH OUR PLANTS,  
WE SHOULD TALK TO THEM AND KISS THEM.  
THIS RELATIONSHIP WILL GIVE US A NEW VITALITY."

~ AMMA

If you ever wanted to follow Amma's advice to grow your own organic food, now is the time. Grow as We Go is a super fun workshop series for all levels of gardeners. We will help you get started from the basics, or share tips and tools for intermediate and experienced gardeners. Our panel of instructors have a combined gardening experience of over 170 years, with degrees in plant physiology, horticulture, and more, as well as decades of dedicated gardening in home gardens, agricultural or garden-based employment, or Amma's ashram gardens.



The Amritaculture team is excited to present “Grow as We Go”, an interactive workshop series where you will be growing vegetables along with the instructors!

“Grow as We Go” will help you learn all aspects of vegetable gardening, from planning to harvesting. Expand your understanding of how to select seeds or seedlings, how to transplant and care for them, and how to mulch, fertilize and protect them from common adversaries such as bugs and weeds. Learn more about how and when to harvest your vegetables. In addition, we explore more ways to stay connected to devotion and spiritual practices while we have our hands in the soil.

Each month, receive a new set of pre-recorded materials relevant to the 2022 growing season, followed by a live interactive workshop with our panel of instructors.



- **Enrollment is open!**

You can enroll at any time—there is no cut-off date.

Monthly pre-recorded content  
in the form of slideshow presentations, articles and videos  
will be released on the 2nd Sunday of each month  
and be available for 1 year.

Interactive Live Garden Workshops  
will be held on the 3rd or 4th Sunday of each month,  
March to September 2022.

Follow along in your garden with experienced gardeners!

- **Bonuses!**

Get one free workshop plus bonus material  
when you enroll for the full workshop series,  
as well as access to the interactive Community Discussion Board  
to connect with the Amritaculture Gardening Community all year long.

- **You decide the content!**

Participants enrolled in the full workshop series  
will have the opportunity to submit questions or topics  
they wish to cover on the Community Discussion Board.  
Those questions will have priority in the Q&A of the Live Workshops.

- **Instructor and Community Interaction!**

Enjoy monthly live Q&A Sessions with a panel of seasoned,  
experienced gardeners. Share and exchange knowledge  
in monthly live presentations, and get practical support  
in helping your garden to thrive.

Gain access to an exclusive online community of like-minded  
sustainable gardeners in our Community Forum.

Amma keeps stressing the importance of everyone learning to grow organic food, and changing our relationship with Nature to be more honoring and caring towards all living beings. Our time in the garden can absolutely be a spiritual practice, and if we are able to feed people as well, that will be a great gift to our communities. Everyone can do some gardening. All you need is confidence and a willingness to try.

"I'm really enjoying the courses. I've been doing the two previous ones. I'm really learning a lot about gardening - thank you so much. I live in Ireland. We have a huge grounds and gardens but I feel I really came into a jungle before I knew the basics. So I feel I'm really learning from you a lot of basic things that I was missing and also of course with the whole background of how Amma sees things, and the bigger picture, and I love it!"

-Aparna Ireland



"I'm very grateful for this course, thank you so much. I'm a total beginner at starting a garden on my own. This course is perfect because I can get oriented on how to do this process. Now I can plan my garden and prepare the soil."

-Ahalya USA



# HENS, SEVA, ECO-FRIENDLY LIVING AND FUN



**IN EPISODE THREE OF FROM AMMA'S HEART,  
SHE NARRATES HOW HER MOTHER RAISED CHICKENS FOR THEIR EGGS.**

She said, "There are people who live off raising 10-20 chickens. If they get 20 eggs a day, they make 20 rupees, they spend 15 rupees on food, that means they make a profit of 5 rupees per day. When a hen starts laying eggs again, she saves the family depending upon her." ~ [From Amma's Heart](#), Episode 3.

Eleven years ago, my mother passed away unexpectedly. Sadness and grief spiraled into depression. I am grateful to share how the gifts of hen seva and Qigong helped to lift my depression.

A few months into my depression, I met Dr. Wu, who is a Tai Chi and Qigong Master, a doctor of Traditional

Chinese Medicine, and a 20<sup>th</sup> generation herbalist from Southern China. I started taking his Qigong classes. Qigong is an ancient Chinese practice of body movements which encourages oxygenation in the blood. These movements aid in bringing the organs and systems into balance, creating an internal flow of wellness.



Dr. Wu received Amma's darshan at her Boston program a few years ago. Throughout the years, I have had the blessing to learn from him how people survive in the countryside of Southern China through a combination of vegetable, rice, and herb farming along with raising chickens.

I was immediately in awe of Dr. Wu's vegetable and herb garden. He was growing eggplant, squash, bok choy, broccoli rabe, peppers, green beans and traditional Chinese herbs. His hen coop looked like a double shed with two windows. The person taking care of the hens was in the process of relocating out of state. Dr. Wu asked me if I was interested in tending to the hens in his absence.

When I asked Dr. Wu if I could interview him for GreenFriends North America, he was happy to make time for me.

I hope this interview with Dr. Wu will spark an interest in exploring the simplicity of raising chickens.

Lovelle: Why did you choose to raise chickens?

Dr. Wu: In the countryside of southern China, everyone grows the food they eat and raises their own chickens. We did not have electricity, or refrigerators, and we walked a mile to the well to get water. The hens we grew were for egg-laying and not for meat. Every meal was fresh.



Baby chicks inside the coop

Lovelle: Where do you source your chicks and how many do you raise?

Dr. Wu: I raise 12 chicks, and purchase them locally from a farm less than 10 miles from here. Which is a minimal carbon footprint.

Lovelle: Do you sell the eggs?

Dr. Wu: No, the hens do not produce enough eggs to sell. At my clinics we serve fresh lunch to our patients with eggs from our hens and vegetables from our garden.

Lovelle: What are your greatest challenges in raising chickens?

Dr. Wu: Predators. I have lost many hens to raccoons, hawks and fisher cats. The pen is now caged by metal wire from above and around the parameters of the pen. With those layers of protection, we can leave the coop door open.

Lovelle: What do you do with the hen poop?

Dr. Wu: I have a compost area in the back of the yard. It takes 2-3 years before I can use the poop for fertilizer in the garden.

Lovelle: What do you feed the hens?

Dr. Wu: It depends on who is eating the eggs, I will feed the hens herbs to help improve my patient's ability to heal. Otherwise, they are fed raw/cooked rice, occasionally hard kibble from the feed store, and grass. Just like for humans, it is good for them to fast a few days a month.

Lovelle: Do you have concerns about freezing temperatures in the winter?

Dr. Wu: No. The coop is not heated. If the water freezes in the winter, Lovelle takes care to bring fresh water in buckets up to the coop. She also shovels the pen, allowing for the hens to come outside for sunshine during the winter days.

Lovelle: In closing, do you have any advice for individuals looking to raise chickens?

Dr. Wu: Always very important to check with your town or city to confirm that raising chickens is allowed in your area. For me, the max is 12 chickens, as the number is determined by the space you have available for the chickens. The town animal inspector comes once a year to inspect the coop.



Hens in the snow

I had a rooster, but he clucked very early in the morning, waking the neighbors. Animal control told me I needed to remove him from the premises. I took him to a farm. Therefore, my eggs are not fertilized by a rooster. The average lifespan of my hens has ranged between 7-10 years old.

Having a vegetable and herb garden, along with raising hens, provides me the security to know my family will never go hungry.

Lovelle: Thank you Dr. Wu for your time today.

In reflecting on my hen seva over the last 10 years I developed a nurturing relationship to Nature and her animals. Dr. Wu is only in Maynard two days a week. In his absence, I am responsible for cleaning and filling the water buckets, mucking up the coop stalls, cooking their food, chopping up any scraps left over from dinner and watering the garden. While I am mucking up the hens' stalls, I feel Amma's presence with me. I chant my mantra and my seva becomes a meditation. I often think of her as a young girl in the Kalari taking care of the cows, talking to them and wanting to be sure they are happy. Taking care of the hens is a boon; they are always happy to see me, and quick to forgive me if I am late. My depression shifted from a heart full of grief to a heart full of gratitude by becoming a steward of these hens and practicing Qigong.

“Do your work and perform all your duties with all your heart. Try to work selflessly with love. Pour yourself into whatever you do. Then you will experience beauty and love in every field of your work. Love and beauty are within you.

Try to express them through your actions and you will definitely touch the very source of bliss.”

~ from [Amma on Selfless Service, July 8, 2004](#)



Hens in the summer

Dr. Wu's clinic is located in Maynard, MA in a middle-class neighborhood. His property has come to be respected and admired by everyone in the neighborhood. Families make it a point to walk by to greet the hens. Dr. Wu's lifestyle is eco-friendly, and I continue to learn lessons of simple eating and living from him.

“When humanity serves Nature, Nature serves humanity.  
When we serve animals and plants, they too serve us in return.”  
~ Amma

Aum Amriteswaryai Namah

**~LOVELLE, MASSACHUSETTS**

# JOYFUL TREE ADVENTURES IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



## THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA (SOCAL) EMBRACING THE TREES TEAM

The Southern California (SoCal) [Embracing the Trees Team](#) has been enjoying lots of tree planting opportunities as we build our team spirit to join Amma's pledge to support the UN's Trillion Tree campaign! We have many enthusiastic members, some who are very knowledgeable and others who are learning as we go.

Peter Ash, who has been advising Amma's gardeners at her ashrams and centers around the world for many decades, trained some gardeners on our team to plant different varieties of trees on a devotee's 10-acre property in Santa Ysabel. Over 200 trees, including grape vines and apple trees, were planted on the property over the course of several weekends with the help of Daya, Surya, Sandra, Anahita, Jonah, Laura, Madhava, Theresa, Nandan, Santhosh, Corina, and Chris.

Peter was on hand to train the group on how to plant the trees to ensure the greatest chance of their success. We began the planting with chanting of the Dhyana Shloka to invoke the grace and blessings of our beloved Guru.

As gophers are quite prevalent in the area, gopher baskets were inserted around the root balls before placing them in the ground. Jonah, Madhava and Santhosh were on hand to build a nursery on the property as well. Now that all the trees are in the ground, we can start propagating trees and planting seeds in the nursery.

Our SoCal team has also made some happy partnership connections with other tree planting entities, including the Amplify Urban Forests group (a project of a CALFire grant), who sponsored a tree planting event at the UCSD campus. A number of our team showed up with other community members to plant 65 trees that day, including Theresa, Tripti, Madhava, Santhosh, Laura, Ajit, Corina, Chris, and Thushara. We planted Camphor, Oak and Japanese Blueberry among other species. We enjoyed demonstrations by Mike Hogan, the UCSD arborist, who gave an informational presentation about trees and their biology, including a demonstration on how to plant them. After the event (which included free t-shirts celebrating Amplify Urban Forests, hats, gloves, sunglasses, a raffle and even guitar music!), Mike Hogan offered the empty 15-gallon pots for Santhosh to use in the nursery when we plant new saplings and seeds.

A number of our members participated in an online Tree Stewardship Training sponsored by Tree San Diego, a project of the city of San Diego. They helped us understand not only how to plant trees, but how to maintain and take care of them. They even provided us with free tree seeds.

We meet bimonthly to discuss our progress and future plans. One of our members, Rosa, has contacted her daughter, an arborist, to talk to us about Redwood trees at one of our meetings, as it is her area of expertise. We are considering the option of using our meetings as educational opportunities, especially after the planting season slows down.

It's all TREEly joyful!



Chanting Dhyana Shloka before planting

~EMBRACING THE TREES, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA



Ajit



Chris



Getting the tree out of the pot



In the ground



Santhosh, Theresa, Nandan, Anahita



Anahita, Sandra and Surya



Santhosh, Jonah and Madhava built the greenhouse



Corina and Theresa

# NATURE CAKES



## WHAT ARE NATURE CAKES?

What are nature cakes? Nature cakes are the culinary creations of Sonali Said, an AYUDH member hailing from Sammamish, WA in the Seattle area. She describes her first offering, a Bees Cake, in the [March 2021](#) edition of Karuna Poole's inspired Pacific Northwest GreenFriends Newsletter.

She refers to these creations as "nature as art." They are truly unique in that they combine nature, art, beauty, food and an environmental message. Each cake has a lesson about nature baked into it. You can read more about her inspiration and the process of putting these cakes together by clicking on the links under each image.



[Tree Stump Cake](#)



[Campfire Cake](#)



[Pumpkin Cake](#)



[Frog Cake](#)

GreenFriends was curious to know more about Sonali and how she got into making these fabulous cakes.

**Q. WHAT LED YOU TO START MAKING NATURE CAKES?**

Ever since I was young, I have always been fascinated by cakes. Even today, some of my most precious childhood memories are about the immense joy at first sight of magnificent cakes on my birthdays. What started out as a hobby in middle school baking simple cakes with decorations, evolved into a deep passion as my confidence grew that I could translate my vision into any kind of cake possible. As my skills set increased, I wanted to create cakes that did more than celebrate an occasion and incorporated other passions of mine like environmental sustainability. I found that by creating nature cakes and publishing them in GreenFriends, I gained an increased appreciation for the environment around me. Additionally, by researching and synthesizing my findings on these current environmental challenges, I was able to drive awareness for both myself and GreenFriends readers.

**Q. WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THE NATURE CAKES AFTER THEY ARE DONE? DO YOU EAT THEM?**

It depends on the cake - I usually give them to friends or family!

**Q. HAS AMMA SEEN ANY OF YOUR NATURE CAKES?**

Not yet since I started making nature cakes after the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, after Amma's tours had been cancelled.

**Q. WHAT GOT YOU STARTED IN WANTING TO HELP THE ENVIRONMENT?**

When I was younger, I was a part of Amrita Bala Kendra Seattle, where we participated in various community activities such as green belt restoration and litter pick-ups. These activities raised my personal awareness on the importance of caring for nature and maintaining its original state. Later, I wanted to continue this effort by finding ways to combine it with my passion for baking and found nature cakes to be a perfect vehicle to do so.

**Q. ARE THERE MORE NATURE CAKES IN THE WORKS? ARE YOU FORMULATING ANY NEW IDEAS?**

Yes! I'm hoping to make an ocean-themed cake to raise awareness of plastic pollution in the oceans. I am also thinking of making a glacier themed cake in light of glaciers melting.

**Q. ARE THERE OTHER MEMBERS OF YOUR AYUDH GROUP THAT WANT TO SUPPORT NATURE AND IF SO, HOW ARE THEY DOING THAT?**

The goal of AYUDH Seattle is to sustain and preserve the beauty of the local community and environment. Past projects to meet these goals include: tree planting, litter pick-ups, plastic bag reduction drives, and educational Zoom sessions.

**Q. IF YOU HAD ONE WISH FOR HELPING THE EARTH, WHAT WOULD IT BE?**

I would hope that more people would realize the detrimental environmental effects of their actions and use this understanding to make the Earth a better place.



[Sakura Cake](#)



[Robin Cake](#)

Shouldn't we express  
our *gratitude*  
to *Mother Earth*,  
who **patiently** provides her lap  
for **us** to run, jump and play upon?

~Amma



f @/MataAmritanandamayi



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