

Pacific Northwest Green Friends

Nature on its own is indeed beautiful and clean. The hills and rivers do not need us to clean them. In fact it is nature's water which cleans us; it is trees which purify air for us. Because we have littered, we have spoilt its pristine beauty.

Amma



Peacock in flight

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-JrPRVMxA-s>



In Amritapuri
Tulasi Garden

January Greetings

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This definitely a newsletter that is packed with interesting information!

Before I say anything else, let me mention that on page 3 there is announcement for permaculture classes that Netsah Zylinsky, a certified Permaculture instructor, will be teaching for us in March (Seattle area) and April (Pt. Townsend). Please register early!!!

Several PNW devotees were at Amma's ashram in Amritapuri during December and January. Among the articles in this newsletter are reports about the tulasi gardens and recycling, as well as food and worm composting processes

Maheswari has also written an interesting article about making homes for birds and insects.

There is even more! Enjoy!!!

Karuna

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

Green Friends 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 Green Friends Litter Project write Karuna at pnwgreenfriendslitterproject@gmail.com

Interesting Reading

From Jeff in Seattle:

Reusing Toilet Paper Tubes

Create bird feeder, seed starter, computer cord holders, gift boxes and many other things from toilet paper tubes!

<http://www.networx.com/article/10-clever-uses-for-toilet-paper-tubes>



From Lin in Bellevue:

3 D Printing

Last month's newsletter had a section about plans to create compostable toilets using a 3 D Printer. This article gives more about 3 D printing.

<http://video.seattletimes.com/1279920256001/3d-printing-at-uw/>

Also take a look at how Jay Leno uses 3D printing to make parts for his antique car collection (way quicker, more accurate, and less expensive than having them machined). He can even make moving parts! The video shows an example. The printer can be programmed to place different kinds of plastic in different places (e.g., there's a type that melts easily, so when the newly-built unit is exposed to heat, the parts made of that type melt away... and that's what allows the other parts to move freely; incredibly ingenious).

<http://www.jaylenosgarage.com/extras/articles/jay-lenos-3d-printer-replaces-rusty-old-parts-1/index.shtml>

Litter Project Membership

As of December 31, 2012, we had 276 members.
3 new members joined in December!

("Members" are individuals who signed up for the project or who have participated in work parties.)

Litter Project Hours

In December 31, 31 members and their guests reported picking up 84.5 hours of litter.

(The statistics below relate to members who report having picked up litter. They do not include those who do not report or who reported 0.)

Members Average: 2.7 hours

Range 1 minute to 20 hours

Median: 1 hour

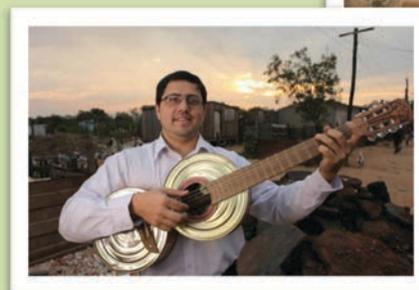
The group has picked up 2773.57 hours of litter since the project began in July 2011

From Marmot in Renton:

Amazing story about kids from Paraguay playing instruments made from trash!!

Video story: <http://vimeo.com/52711779>

Article: <http://matadornetwork.com/change/landfill-harmonic-a-story-of-creativity-hope-and-endurance-interview/>



Stories and Reflections!

From Kirtana in Brazil:

Something I was completely delighted to see here in Brazil, is how much better the litter situation is in the area I worked with last year. Areas where I spent hours on knees in the rain picking up thousands of cigarette butts, and where I bagged loads of litter from wooded areas that still looked like untouched garbage heaps, has now been cleaned up so much that I can't help but feel someone was watching and made a move to do a mass cleanup since that time and has now implemented a regular maintenance schedule. (Jai Ma!)

From Aditi in Iowa:

5 degrees here this morning and might get to 9-10 degrees if we're lucky. a foot of snow just before Xmas and well below freezing since. Ice everywhere that just can't melt. 10 minutes tops. Can't pick up litter... stuff frozen or buried in ice....

From Achala in Connecticut:

I've no hours to report this month as I'm buried in snow in the north east!

From Karuna and Joyce in Seattle:

I asked Joyce to "babysit" my worms while I went to India. I wrote her midway through the trip to see how they were doing. I thought you might enjoy her response. I sure did! Karuna

Well, we haven't seen much of each other – they seem to have dug down deep in the bin. I feed them every Tuesday and Friday – they got squash and carrots and some tired lettuce last week, and beets and some miscellaneous veggies this week. I do turn the stuff over, and added some shredded newspaper, and saw a few little wigglers, but that's about as much interaction as we've had! Joyce

From Rajani/Julie on Whidbey Island:

Picking up litter on South Whidbey is one of Dylan's passions. Dylan, a developmentally delayed 15 year old high school student, verbalizes what many of us think. With arms spread wide in exasperation, Dylan says, "Why do people litter? I hate trash! Pick it up!" And that's just what he did!

Permaculture Classes Scheduled

GreenFriends is proud to announce our first Permaculture Classes in the Pacific Northwest. Netsah Zylinsky, a certified Permaculture instructor from Oak Harbor, will teach an "Introduction to Permaculture" class in Seattle and in Port Townsend this spring.

- Permaculture principles and ethics
- Basic Permaculture design
- Permaculture strategies for the Pacific Northwest
- How to get started and implement Permaculture design and sustainable living

Seattle: March 23, 9-5 pm,
Mechas' home in Bellevue, WA

Port Townsend: April 13, 10-6 pm,
Vandya's home in Port Townsend, WA

Cost: sliding scale \$65-\$75. Price includes a vegetarian lunch.

Registration: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/viewform?fromEmail=true&formkey=dDcxU1ctSzhxWjU0bHd4aFVUZEZLakE6MQ>

Gifts for our Feathered Friends and Insects



As winter approaches, many birds begin to look for reliable sources of food for wintertime survival. Winter can be a difficult time for birds. The days are short, and nights are often cold and long. The natural food supply has been consumed or is hidden by snow. Most insects are dead or dormant. Water can be hard to find, and food needed to provide the energy to keep birds warm might be scarce. Finding shelter may not be easy. If there are limited natural evergreens or shelter, birds may seek manmade houses or habitats that can provide refuge from the winds, rains, ice or snow of winter.

Birds are warm-blooded. In general, this means that they maintain their body temperature within a certain range even when the temperature around them changes. The maintenance of body temperature within a normal range depends on the amount of heat the bird produces.

On cold, wintry days, most birds fluff up their feathers, creating air pockets, which help keep the birds warm. The more air spaces, the better the insulation. Some birds perch on one leg, drawing the other leg to the breast for warmth.

To keep up their high metabolic rate, most backyard birds eat rich, energy foods such as seeds, insects and suet. There are some times, however, when birds are not prepared to deal with sudden drops in temperature or sudden winter storms. At times like these, it is especially helpful to have feeders full so that birds can find food easily.

Bird feeders should be located out of the wind. The east or southeast side of a house or near a row of trees is ideal. It is best to have a perching spot such as a bush or tree for the birds to use to survey the feeding area and provide sufficient cover for safe refuge from predators and shelter from the wind and weather. The feeders should be positioned near cover but in the open to allow birds to watch for danger. For ground feeding, an area near cover with a clear view of the surroundings is desirable.

Placing seed in a ground feeder entices birds such as sparrows, juncos, Mourning Doves, quail, pheasants, towhees and Brown Thrashers. Even the Red-bellied Woodpecker, which is thought of as a tree dweller, does some foraging on the ground.

Platform and hopper feeders are especially good for attracting cardinals, wrens, chickadees, titmice, jays, and grosbeaks. Hanging feeders, because they blow in the wind, are generally used by those species that are able to hang on while feeding such as chickadees, titmice, nuthatches and finches.

Oil sunflower is a great overall seed to offer in the winter. It has a high calorie/ounce ratio due to its high fat and protein content and its relatively thin shell. Oil sunflower has twice the calories per pound than striped sunflower and its smaller shells make less mess when discarded by the birds.

Suet is a good food to offer many of the birds that will visit backyards in the winter. Suet is a high energy, pure fat substance which is invaluable in winter when insects are harder to find and birds need many more calories to keep their bodies warm.

Peanuts are another excellent food source, with high protein and fat.

Birds also need a source for water in the winter. You can help birds find water by providing an open source of water. Use a container that will endure the cold weather and check it regularly after a snowfall or icy weather.

Roosting boxes or natural plant covers can also aid birds seeking protection from cold weather and offer protection against natural predators, such as birds of prey. Cats are unnatural predators and birds also need shelter to escape from them.

A rotten log or stump can also be a house for birds and insects. Children enjoy building bug houses! (See the above photo on the right) You can use rocks, bricks, hollow bamboo, and wood where ground beetles, spiders, mason bees and other insects can find shelter for the winter. Shallow containers filled with water and rocks will provide a place for insects to land and sip water as it evaporates.

So, bundle up and go outside to feed your wildlife friends!!

Amritapuri Tulasi

From Rajani/Julie in Amritapuri:

On the way to breakfast one day, I saw a poster looking for people to help with Planting Tulasi Baby Plants. Twenty people eagerly arrived to help with the planting of over 300 tulasi babies. The early morning seva began by chanting the 108 Names of the Tulasi Devi, Goddess of Devotion. It was lovely experience learning about how to care for these tiny seedlings, as we carefully laid each one into its own pot.

From Karuna in Amritapuri:

After hearing Rajani talk about her tulasi garden experience, my interest in seeing the gardens was heightened. On my last morning in Amritapuri, Amala (from Austin) and I visited tulasi gardens at two different locations.

The garden Rajani was talking about is closest to the ashram, behind Kapila flats. It was way bigger than I thought it would be. There are many different gardens there actually, mainly divided by the age of the plants. We arrived at about 6:30 a.m. so I also participated in chanting the 108 Names of Tulasi Devi. It was a beautiful chant. Below is a picture from the puja that was held to dedicate the newest of the gardens. The baby plants were later planted in this spiral. The other picture is of Supriya, one of the devotees in charge of the garden, among more mature plants.



Later in the morning Amala and I went across the backwaters to the oldest of the gardens. These are on a huge parcel of land. There are tulasi planted in many different sections of that land. Amma has also instructed them to plant vegetables in these gardens. The morning we visited two devotees were building structures to start hydroponic gardening as well.

I was very inspired by my experiences that day and there is much I haven't said here. I hope to be able to include a much longer article on tulasi and the gardens in next month's newsletter.

Amritapuri Recycling

Karuna in Amritapuri:

I went to the Amritapuri Recycling Center to talk to Mahita about changes that have occurred there since last year. There are many. The center is even more organized than it was last year. It looks like it is functioning so smoothly. The level of recycling they do is as impressive as ever, for example, rather than just having a paper bin, they subdivide the paper into many different types, newspaper, cardboard, glossy, etc. The biggest change is that they are no longer washing all of the plastics. Instead of preparing all of the plastics to meet the specifications of recyclers, all of the plastics from the ashram are being stored at AIMS in Cochin. There are tentative plans to buy a pyrolysis machine which will convert the plastics to oil. The plastics don't have to be clean in order for the pyrolysis process to work.

There is much more information about the Recycling Center in last year's January Green Friends newsletter.

<http://amma.org/sites/default/files/groups/projects/documents/litterprojectnewsletterjan2012.pdf>

Amritapuri Bird Rescue

When I first walked into the Recycling Center, I saw that there were a series of bird cages in one corner. There were three birds, each having its own cage. Later, I learned there are groups of caged birds in several places in the ashram. The birds in the recycling center were babies when children first brought them to the center. Some of the birds staying in other areas were birds who had injured wings.

Apparently doves recover and fly off fairly easily but some of the other types of birds don't. The herons who came when they were babies, feel shocked when they are let out, so they are taken outside on lightweight tethers. They get to practice flying a little at a time. Even a little bit of outside activity wears them out. The hope is that all of the birds will be able to be released in time.