



Embracing Nature Magazine

A Project by GreenFriends,
Amma's Nature Organization



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GreenFriends strives to communicate the importance of treating Nature with respect and gratitude.

Embracing Nature Magazine invites you to share your meaningful experiences with nature. From sustainable living, connecting with the environment, encounters with animals and birds, your story can inspire a deeper connection to Mother Earth.

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GREENFRIENDS FARM VOLUNTEERS



LOCATED IN THE ROLLING HILLS SURROUNDING AMMA'S SAN RAMON CENTER, GREEN FRIENDS FARM IS A FLOURISHING LANDSCAPE OF ORCHARDS AND VEGETABLE GARDENS.

Serving Amma's vision to bring harmony to nature through sustainable and compassionate techniques for the cultivation of land and resources, the orchard was established in 1989 and since 2007 at Amma's request, has been expanding to plant 1,000 fruit trees. The GreenFriends Farm draws visitors, students and volunteers due to its natural beauty and uncompromising dedication to treating Mother Nature with respect.

Jeong Ae Yoon (originally from South Korea), a longtime caretaker of the orchard at GreenFriends Farm, has witnessed the transformation of the land and the hands-on dedication it inspires. Here she reflects

upon the connection and fulfillment that both she and the volunteers experience when working amidst nature at the farm.

When we see Mother Nature as the embodiment of God, we will automatically serve and protect her. If we approach nature with love, it will serve us as our best friend, a friend that won't let us down. — Amma

October in San Ramon can be hot, but it is the perfect time to winterize the orchard. The fall season merges right into spring, as we have no truly frozen winter. In the orchard, the tree roots get all dried out during the long summer with no rain here in this land. In October, we work to cut grasses low and weed around each of the 1,000 fruit trees on the orchard hillsides. We want the trees to get as much water as they can during our rainy season during November to February. When the rain starts coming in November, we turn off the irrigation system.



Once the rain is on the way, it is time for us to plant trees and seeds. As December 2024 approaches, volunteers have been preparing the ground to plant lavender and milkweed among the trees to attract beneficial insects. This will take two to three Saturday volunteer workdays. Meanwhile we have an ongoing mulching project, and the persimmon harvest is happening as well.

All year round, we harvest an abundance of fruits as they ripen: apricots, plums, apples of many varieties, pears, pomegranates, persimmons, our first crop of olives, oranges, pomelos, lemons, kumquats and pineapple guavas. Our farmer's market seva team enjoys selling the produce from GreenFriends Farm each week at the San Ramon Farmer's Market. This joyous weekly celebration allows us to share the fruits and tell local community members about our farm, and some of them have shown interest in coming to experience nature in our orchard.



A lot of care is needed in our gardens and orchards: We have orchard care, beehive care, native plant care, seed ball care and selling and donating fruit to the community. A lot of jobs are done by volunteers. Many of our volunteers have been coming every Saturday for many years. The active volunteer count is over 50 people. This year, monthly community seva days helped us to have even more people coming in to work together. Two internationally known seva groups, Seva International and Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, enjoy working with us once a month. Often, families from these groups will come with their youngsters, as they value the chance for their entire families to serve and enjoy nature.

The joy we share while taking care of nature has been the bond bringing us together. It has been eye-opening for some people how nature opens up as we touch the soil and the tree branches, and work with bees. As we work in the orchard, whether digging holes for

planting, cutting down 10-foot-tall hemlock weeds, making a path of mulch, or harvesting fruit, we come to know that the trees feel our presence, and that the trees are enlivened when people come to do selfless service in the orchard. When we are in the orchard, we get to see the beauty of the sky, the hills, and the trees. We touch the earth, the tree branches and leaves. It brings a lot of joy to work on behalf of the abundant life in the orchard. We have much more appreciation for all the fruits and vegetables that we eat, after seeing how much care and continuous effort go into them.

When our trees blossom, our bees will pollinate them. Bill and Dan, the “Bee Guys,” have been tending our beehives for many years. They have been sharing their expertise and their love of bees with a motivated group of seva volunteers. We are learning practical ways to care for the bees, and also how to look more deeply at the bees in all their magnificence. Somehow the focused activity of the bees, humming as they selflessly



serve their hive, opens the heart and makes us feel connected to all of nature. One of our bee volunteers, Muneebah, led the honey harvest this year; we tasted honey in its chewy comb as we took turns uncapping bee frames and spinning them in the centrifuge, with lots of hand cranking. We became aware of how much effort the bees put into each drop of honey, and how their work uplifts the entire orchard as they pollinate each flower that becomes a fruit.

Our seva in the orchard spills over to touch many people. One of our beekeepers-in-training shared her experience with her young students at a school where she teaches. The children ended up feeling a lot of love for the bees, and it helped them to feel a connection with nature. Another time, many teenagers from Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh came to work with us, and they learned about the meaning of selfless service and caring for nature. This week, our Mother's Kitchen in Berkeley gave out 7 crates of fruit from our orchard to the unhoused. And some people in the local community, having tasted our fruits from the farmer's market, have shown their interest in coming to work in nature in our orchard.

Every little part that each individual gives is so vital to make San Ramon GreenFriends Farm thrive. No effort is too small or insignificant because it is the expression of their love, one love.

Nature is benefited by the concentration of spiritual people. Prayer and spiritual concentration are powerful means for purifying the atmosphere. At the same time, we can also draw spiritual power, hope and trust from being in nature—through prayer, chanting and meditation, in words or in silence. — Amma



**~ JEONG AE YOON,
GREENFRIENDS FARM ORCHARD SAN RAMON CARETAKER**

YEAR-ROUND BIRDS AT MA CENTER CHICAGO: PART 1



A deer in front of MA Center Chicago's South Lodge.

IN THE PAST 5 YEARS, OVER 150 SPECIES OF BIRDS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AT MA CENTER CHICAGO'S 140 PLUS ACRES.

Most of these birds are migratory, some just passing through in the spring and fall to their breeding or wintering destinations, while others stay and breed here during the spring and summer months. But there are 16 species of birds that make MACC their home year-round. These hearty birds have adapted to the cold, snowy winter months when food is scarce and the winds are bone chilling.



Often celebrated in folklore as harbingers of happiness and hope, **Eastern Bluebird males** fill the air with melodious warbles, defending their territory and attracting mates with songs that seem to echo the joy they symbolize. The males are brilliant blue with a reddish breast and white belly and females have the same but more subdued coloring. During spring and summer they take up residence along the prairie and other locations at the Center. Bluebirds are cavity nesters, relying on natural tree holes or nesting boxes for raising their young. Nesting boxes provided at the Center mimic their natural habitats and are essential for their conservation in areas with fewer natural cavities. They eat mostly insects which are abundant near the nesting boxes during the warmer months. In the winter, the small trees and plants around the ponds provide berries for them.

A pair of **Great-Horned Owls** nested in the trees lining the Center's Satsang Hall patio in 2022 and 2024. Each time 2 owlets hatched. Great-horned owls often pick a different nesting site every year, usually adopting a nest previously used by other species. During winter nights the pair can be heard hooting back and forth to each other with the female's hoot a higher pitch than the male's. The female lays her eggs in late January or early February. The eggs are incubated by both parents and hatch after 4 weeks. By April, the downy owlets will come out of the nest onto the tree branches and soon learn to fly. The owlets can be heard making a begging call usually at dusk or nighttime for several months and seen in trees by the ponds and occasionally in the quad by the South Lodge.



Black-capped Chickadees are tiny black-, white- and buff-colored birds with a round head that appears large for its size, with a short thin beak. They eat insects, seeds and berries. Chickadees seem to like the Queen Anne's Lace that grows around the ponds once the plants go to seed. They don't spend long lengths of time at the bird feeders but fly over quickly, grab a seed and fly away, repeating many times. Chickadees have remarkable memories, capable of storing thousands of food items in different locations to eat at a later time and remembering where they've hidden them, even weeks later. Their dee-dee-dee call makes them even more adorable than they already are.



The **Cooper's Hawk**, named after the 19th-century naturalist William Cooper, is one of the most adept fliers among raptors, capable of weaving through trees at astonishing speeds. It is, however, not a welcome visitor to the bird feeders as its main diet is smaller birds. The sight of one makes the birds scatter and hide. About the size of a mourning dove, yet smaller than the formidable Red-tailed Hawk, with a striking gray back and reddish-streaked chest, it is a picture of speed and precision. In contrast, the juvenile, with its brown back and striped white chest, is less graceful and slower in flight.

American Goldfinches are another colorful bird species that live here. The males in spring and summer are bright yellow with a black forehead and wings and more drab in winter resembling the females. Goldfinches have a bouncy flight pattern and can be heard calling as they pass overhead. Strict vegans, they eat only a plant-based diet mostly of seeds. They are often in the prairie or other areas when seeding plants are available and in winter gather at the bird feeders.

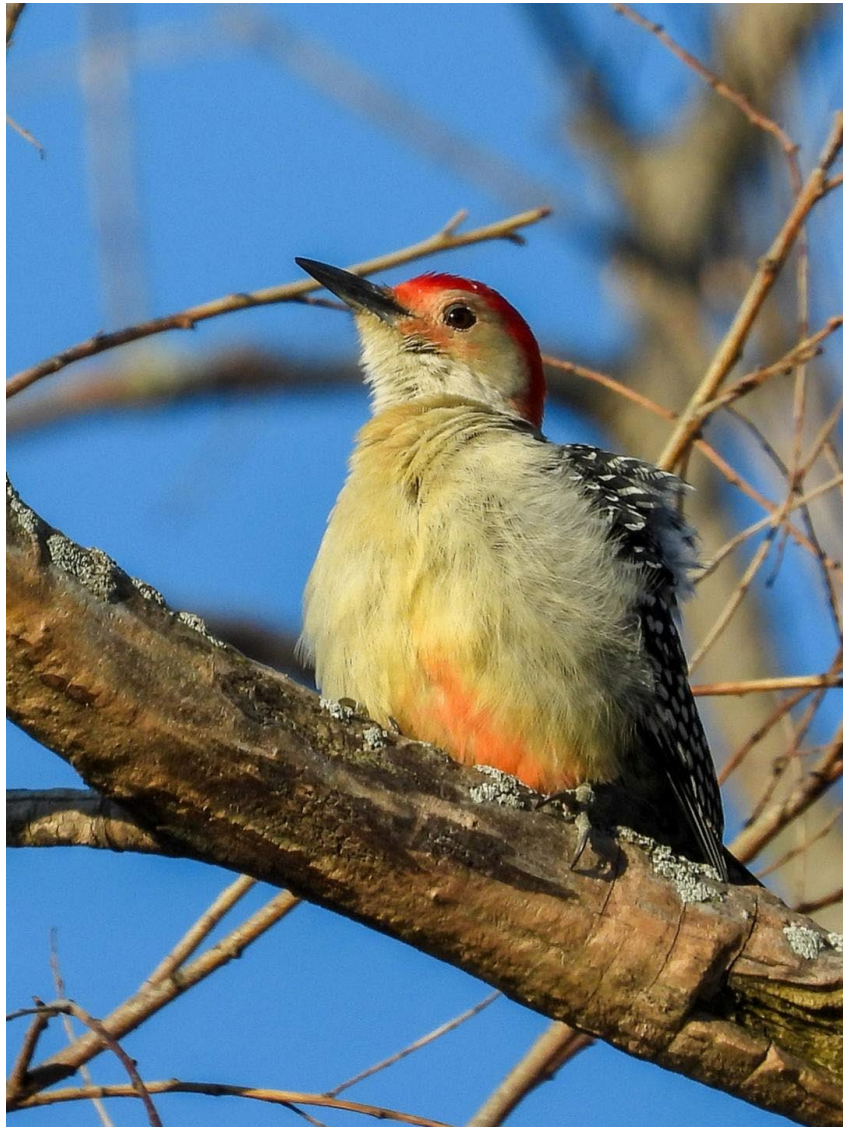


Mourning Doves, so named for their haunting cooing sounds, are plump tan-colored birds with a small head and long tail. A pair often nests under the canopy at the entrance to the South Lodge lobby. Their soft cooing is heard all year but more prominently in the spring. Their wings make a whistling sound when they take flight. After breeding season the doves will form flocks often perching along power lines. In the winter over 60 can come to the bird feeder area at the same time.



American Crows aren't full-time residents but about a half-dozen frequent year-round visitors are seen or heard here at least a few times a month. You can't miss their loud cawing when they are in the area. They will eat just about anything including small rodents. These intelligent large black birds will sometimes come to the trees in the quad and around the feeders.





Red-Bellied Woodpeckers are black and white with a red patch on the back of the head on females and continuing around the head to the bill on the males. The reddish hue on their bellies, from which they get their name, is not always easily visible. They are solitary except during breeding season, nesting in tree limbs or poles. Their diet consists of insects, nuts and seeds, often caching food in tree bark to retrieve later. They are more present at bird feeders during the winter months.

~ NISHKAMA, MA CENTER CHICAGO

AYUDH NEW ENGLAND URBAN TREE-PLANTING



AYUDH MEANS “AWAKEN YOUTH, UNITE FOR DHARMA.”

At Ayudh New England, we actively seek events where we can participate as a group and bring about meaningful change. For us, any opportunity to follow Amma’s guidance is extremely precious. During Amma’s 69th birthday celebrations, she said that many of her children wanted to offer her gifts on her birthday, and Amma suggested the following:

“Take a seed and put it in some soil with some manure and wrap it up in a piece of paper. Drop those seed balls in a place where they can sprout—either around your house or in some wooded area. The more saplings you can plant, the better. This would be the greatest gift you can give to Amma.”

The Watertown Miyawaki tree planting festival scheduled for October 26th, 2024, resonated deeply with us as a way to fulfill Amma’s wish, so we decided to attend to see what we could learn and how we could help.

A Miyawaki forest is an ultra-dense, biodiverse forest that recreates the complexity of natural forests and the processes that help them grow strong and resilient. The Miyawaki method, developed by the late Japanese ecologist Akira Miyawaki, allows forests to grow quickly and become self-sustaining in just three years. The concept is now immensely popular and has been adopted in various countries across the world—in the Netherlands, France, Malaysia, South Korea, and more. The Watertown Miyawaki project was inspired by an existing Miyawaki forest in Danehy Park in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which was grown on a former city landfill.

The goal of the Watertown Miyawaki forests project was to plant a forest with 700 trees in 2,000 sq ft of land on the grounds of the Lowell Elementary School in Watertown, Massachusetts. In addition to the environmental benefits, the forest will serve as an outdoor classroom, enabling students to engage with nature while learning about climate resilience and ecological restoration. The project was organized by local residents, city leaders, and other environmental volunteers, who were committed to seeing the project through from start to finish, including during the three-year maintenance period.



In preparation for the tree planting festival, the plot of land was divided into squares, with each square given a number and designated to receive 3–4 different saplings. The saplings were carefully selected and pre-grouped for each numbered square. The soil had been prepared in advance. Each group was tasked with selecting a numbered square, picking up the saplings assigned to that square, receiving guidance from a planting guide, and planting the saplings.

The varieties of tree saplings and shrub seedlings included oaks, hickories, maples, pines, birches, cedars, dogwoods, viburnums, hazelnuts, witch hazel, roses, blueberries, summersweet, and more.



Our Ayudh group of seven split into two smaller groups. The planting guides patiently explained how to use a large shovel to dig each pit to the appropriate depth, and then to ensure that the saplings' roots were properly positioned. With care and attention, we planted each sapling, added manure, filled the pits with soil, and watered them thoroughly. Over the course of five hours, more than 200 volunteers planted all 700 trees. Our group successfully planted 27 trees and shrubs. From the trees planted at the event, the Sugar Maples, White Pines, several Hickories, and all the Oaks, have the potential to thrive for several centuries, a humbling and awe-inspiring reminder on how small steps we take today can impact many generations to come.

After we had planted the trees, the organizers served us bagels, cider, and brownies which we enjoyed thoroughly. Since it was such a beautiful, sunny fall day, we all walked around to admire the foliage on the trees on the school grounds.

Durga Thakkal, one of the Ayudh volunteers, beautifully captured the essence of the day: “We were all very happy to be able to plant 27 trees specifically for Amma’s birthday! A few of us went to a nearby park afterward to continue admiring nature and enjoying the fresh air while remembering our connection with all of creation.”

Our experience helping plant trees for the Watertown Miyawaki tree planting festival gave us an opportunity to reflect on some of Amma's teachings about nature.

“When we see Mother Nature as the embodiment of God, we will automatically serve and protect her. If we approach nature with love, it will serve us as our best friend, a friend that won't let us down”
— Amma

We were grateful to do our part in conserving nature, while also recognizing that there is still much more we can do. To that end, Ayudh New England will be on the lookout for similar tree planting events in the spring.

May we all remain committed to conserving Mother Nature in every way possible.

**~ ALAMELU THINNAPPAN,
FOR AYUDH NEW ENGLAND**



NURTURING OUR ESSENTIAL POLLINATORS



**“TO MAKE A PRAIRIE IT TAKES A CLOVER AND ONE BEE,
ONE CLOVER, AND A BEE, AND REVERY.”**

~ EMILY DICKINSON

Editor’s Note: We are grateful to The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation ([xerces.org](https://www.xerces.org)) for their permission to use materials and research from their site for this article. Pollinator conservation is a very vast topic, and we have attempted to share some of the important highlights with you. There are links to various research papers throughout the article (underlined text is a clickable link). We

encourage you to review the research linked here to learn more about helping our native pollinator friends.

“To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee, One clover, and a bee, And revery.” Emily Dickinson’s words remind us how vital pollinators are to entire landscapes. Pollinators, including bees, butterflies, moths, beetles, flies, birds, and even bats, power the production of foods like apples, almonds, blueberries, cucumbers, pumpkins, and tomatoes. Reducing pesticide use helps maintain safe environments for bee nesting. According to the [USDA](#), bees of all sorts pollinate approximately 75 percent of the fruits, nuts and vegetables grown in the United States. And one out of every four bites of food people take is courtesy of bee pollination, making them vital for human diets and ecosystem health.



However, as per the [assessment report](#) on pollinators by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, 16.5 percent of invertebrate pollinators are threatened with global extinction, with the number being even higher for some species of bees and butterflies. In the US, 141 out of 800 species of butterflies are at risk of extinction. The Center for Biological Diversity in its 2017 [analysis](#), reports that nearly 1 in 4 (347) native bee species is imperiled and at increasing risk of extinction. The declines are caused

primarily by habitat loss, heavy pesticide use, climate change and urbanization.

When we think of bees, mostly we think of the honey bee. However, did you know that honey bees are not native to North America! They were introduced by the Europeans in the 1600s. There are 3,600 bee species that are native to the United States and Canada including most species of bumble bees. While honey bees live in social colonies, more than 90% of native bees species lead solitary lives, in which each female constructs and provisions her own nest, without the assistance of others. These nests can be made in natural or existing cavities in the ground or in hollow stems, branches or logs depending on the species.

When we think of “saving the bees”, one of the efforts we might consider is starting a honey bee hive. However, Conservation Biologist Rich Hatfield and his colleague, Matthew Shepperd in their article from xerces.org, “[Want to Save the Bees?...](#)”, state that introducing a single honey bee hive means 15,000 to 50,000 additional mouths to feed in an area that may already lack sufficient flowering resources which results in increased competition with native bees. Additionally, honey bees can spread diseases to native bees and can also amplify and distribute diseases within a bee community. There is also growing evidence of negative impacts in towns and cities from the presence of honey bees due to competition for floral resources.

As the critical native bee species face decline due to habitat loss and other pressures, the [Bee City USA](#) movement has been encouraging municipalities all over the US, to take active steps in pollinator conservation. The Bee City USA and Bee Campus USA initiatives of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation rally cities and campuses across the country to protect pollinators by providing a framework for communities to conserve native pollinators. Affiliate cities and campuses provide bees, butterflies and moths with a healthy habitat that is protected from pesticides, provides nest sites, and is rich in a variety of native plants. There are currently 225 Bee City USA affiliates, and 202 Bee Campus USA affiliates located in 47 states. A list of the current affiliate cities is located at the end of this article.



Each of us can take steps—even if small—to help pollinators. A Lancaster University ScienceDirect [research paper](#) confirms the importance of local habitat efforts. Local conservation efforts that focus on floral resources significantly improve pollinator density in surrounding landscapes such as farms and city parks. Additionally, researchers found that both flower abundance and diversity attract more pollinators.

The National Park Service [recommends](#) using native plants adapted to local conditions to create pollinator-friendly habitats. Over time, flowers evolved to be more enticing to certain pollinators and pollinators evolved to better feed on the flowers they visit. Non-native plants may even be inedible to pollinators!

Another [consideration](#) per the University of Missouri's Center for Regenerative Agriculture, is to incorporate a variety of flowering plants to ensure continuous bloom from early spring to late fall,

providing consistent food sources for pollinators. Even modest efforts—such as a few native flowering plants in a yard—can make a difference, especially when repeated across neighborhoods.



Seventy percent of native bees nest in the ground. When it comes to ground nesting bees, even a 1-inch layer of mulch can be impenetrable to these small bees. Consider using compost or shredded leaves instead of wood chips, mulching only the first two feet while leaving the back of the area uncovered for pollinator access to the bare ground. For cavity-nesting bees, it's important to avoid aggressively cutting back plants or removing debris. You can enhance your garden's habitat by leaving small piles of twigs, branches, or logs. Brush piles are particularly effective in providing shelter for diverse wildlife, including bumble bees and ground-nesting bees. Reducing pesticide use also helps maintain safe environments for bee nesting.

"In a way, it is because of bees that we have food. Bees play a vital role in the preservation of Nature and society. They pollinate the plants that provide us with fruit and grains. Similarly, humankind benefits from each and every living creature. All beings on earth depend on one another for survival. If the engine of a plane is damaged, it cannot fly. But even if just a single vital screw is damaged, the plane also cannot fly. Similarly, even the tiniest living being plays an important role. All living creatures need our help as well in order to survive. They are also our responsibility."

- Amma

We hope the information provided in this article inspires you to create your very own native pollinator habitat even if in a small space.

Additional resources:

- [List of pollinator-friendly plants by state](#) (xerces.org)
- [List of pollinator-friendly plants by region](#) (US Fish and Wildlife Service)
- [Guide to buying bee-safe plants](#) (xerces.org)

Bee City USA affiliates:

- Alaska: Fairbanks
- Arizona: Phoenix, Scottsdale, Tucson
- Arkansas: Fayetteville
- California: Capitola, Claremont, Costa Mesa, Culver City, Irvine, Richmond, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Barbara
- Colorado: Denver, Fort Collins, Longmont, Paonia
- Connecticut: Mansfield, New Haven
- District of Columbia: Washington
- Florida: Eau Gallie, Gainesville, Orlando, Sarasota, St. Petersburg, Tallahassee, Tampa
- Georgia: Brunswick, Savannah
- Idaho: Boise, Lewiston
- Illinois: Addison, Edwardsville
- Indiana: Indianapolis
- Iowa: Des Moines
- Kansas: Lawrence
- Kentucky: Edgewood, Lexington
- Maine: Camden
- Maryland: Annapolis, Baltimore, Hyattsville, Mount Airy
- Massachusetts: Cambridge
- Michigan: Flint, Royal Oak, Traverse City
- Minnesota: Minneapolis, Richfield, Saint Paul
- Mississippi: Oxford
- Missouri: Columbia, Kansas City, Maryville, Springfield, St. Louis
- Montana: Missoula, Whitefish
- Nebraska: Omaha
- Nevada: Reno
- New Mexico: Albuquerque, Santa Fe
- New York: Ithaca, New York City
- North Carolina: Asheville, Carrboro, Durham, Gastonia, Hendersonville, Hillsborough, Raleigh, Wilmington, Winston-Salem
- Ohio: Akron, Athens, Cincinnati, Columbus, Kettering, Shaker Heights
- Oklahoma: Tulsa
- Oregon: Albany, Bend, Eugene, Hood River, Portland, Salem, Talent
- Pennsylvania: Abington Township, Bethlehem, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh
- Rhode Island: Jamestown, Providence
- South Carolina: Anderson, Clemson
- Tennessee: Franklin, Knoxville, Nashville
- Texas: Bastrop, Houston
- Utah: Moab, Salt Lake City
- Vermont: Burlington
- Virginia: Virginia Beach
- Washington: Arlington, Bainbridge Island, Bellingham, Bothell, Bremerton, Olympia, Redmond, Seattle, Spokane, Vancouver
- West Virginia: Morgantown
- Wisconsin: Appleton, Eau Claire, Madison, River Falls
- Canada: Guelph

~ GREENFRIENDS NORTH AMERICA TEAM

GREEN TOURISM



Pancha Rathas (Five Chariots) Temple in Mahabalipuram

Credit: [Ssriram mt, CC BY-SA 4.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons



MAHABALIPURAM TO BECOME INDIA'S FIRST GREEN TOURISM DESTINATION, SUPPORTED BY MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI MANDIR TRUST AND GREEN DESTINATIONS.

The Mata Amritanandamayi Mandir Trust (MAMAT), inspired by the humanitarian and environmental values of Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, has been at the forefront of initiatives aimed at fostering sustainable development and social welfare. The Trust's efforts span education, healthcare, disaster relief, and environmental preservation. Recently, it has extended its commitment to sustainability to turn Mahabalipuram, one of India's most famous tourist sites, into Asia's first sustainable tourism destination. This effort is being driven by a collaboration with [Green Destinations](#), a Netherlands-based organization known for promoting sustainable tourism worldwide.

Located in the coastal resort town of Mahabalipuram (also known as Mamallapuram) in the state of Tamil Nadu in south India, the Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram is a collection of 7th- and 8th-century CE religious monuments and temples designated as a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#).

There are monumental rock sculptures and reliefs that depict historical scenes from that era, often including animals and nature (See photos below). The site has about forty monuments, in varying degrees of completion, categorized into five groups:

- **Rathas:** Chariot-shaped temples with monolithic processional chariots, each carved from a single separate large piece of stone.
- **Mandapas:** Cave temples with narratives from the *Mahabharata* and inscriptions in a number of Indian languages and scripts.
- **Rock reliefs:** Sculptures created directly on natural rock surfaces including one of the largest open-air rock reliefs in the world: the *Descent of the Ganges* or *Arjuna's Penance*.
- **Structural temples**
- **Excavations**



Descent of the Ganges, also known as Arjuna's Penance

Credit: [Ssiram mt](#), [CC BY-SA 3.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons

The [*Descent of the Ganges*](#) (above), also known as *Arjuna's Penance*, at Mahabalipuram, is one of the largest rock reliefs in Asia and features in several Hindu scriptures.

Mahabalipuram is not just a historical site; it's also a living hub for traditional art forms. [The Government College of Architecture and Sculpture](#) keeps ancient craftsmanship alive by training students in the traditional arts of stone, sudhai (stucco), wood, and metal sculpture. Many of the murtis (devotional statues) in Hindu temples across India and around the world are carved by the shapatis (master craftsmen) of Mahabalipuram. When visiting the area, you can hear the stone sculptors hammering on their chisels as you walk past the many shops on the village streets.



Mr. Mahesh Gopalakrishnan, Director (Projects) MAMAT, reports in this Good Practice Story "[Making of a Waste Free Heritage Town](#)" how, as part of their initial involvement with Mahabalipuram, the problem of solid waste accumulation was addressed in just two years. With an estimated three million visitors each year, the town generates over 7,500 kilograms of solid waste daily and faces significant environmental challenges. To tackle this, the Mahabalipuram Panchayath collaborated with 'Hand in Hand Inclusive Development Services,' an NGO specializing in waste management. Together, they implemented a

comprehensive waste segregation and disposal system, transforming Mahabalipuram into a litter-free heritage town.

To further formalize this initiative, the MAM Trust signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Netherlands-based Green Destinations, a global leader in sustainable tourism practices which has enabled Mahabalipuram to achieve the Green Destinations certification, making it the first in South Asia to do so. Green Destinations empowers destination management organizations to address the most pressing challenges in destination management and sustainability through training, coaching and tools to measure and assess sustainability performance to better inform tourism policies and strategies.

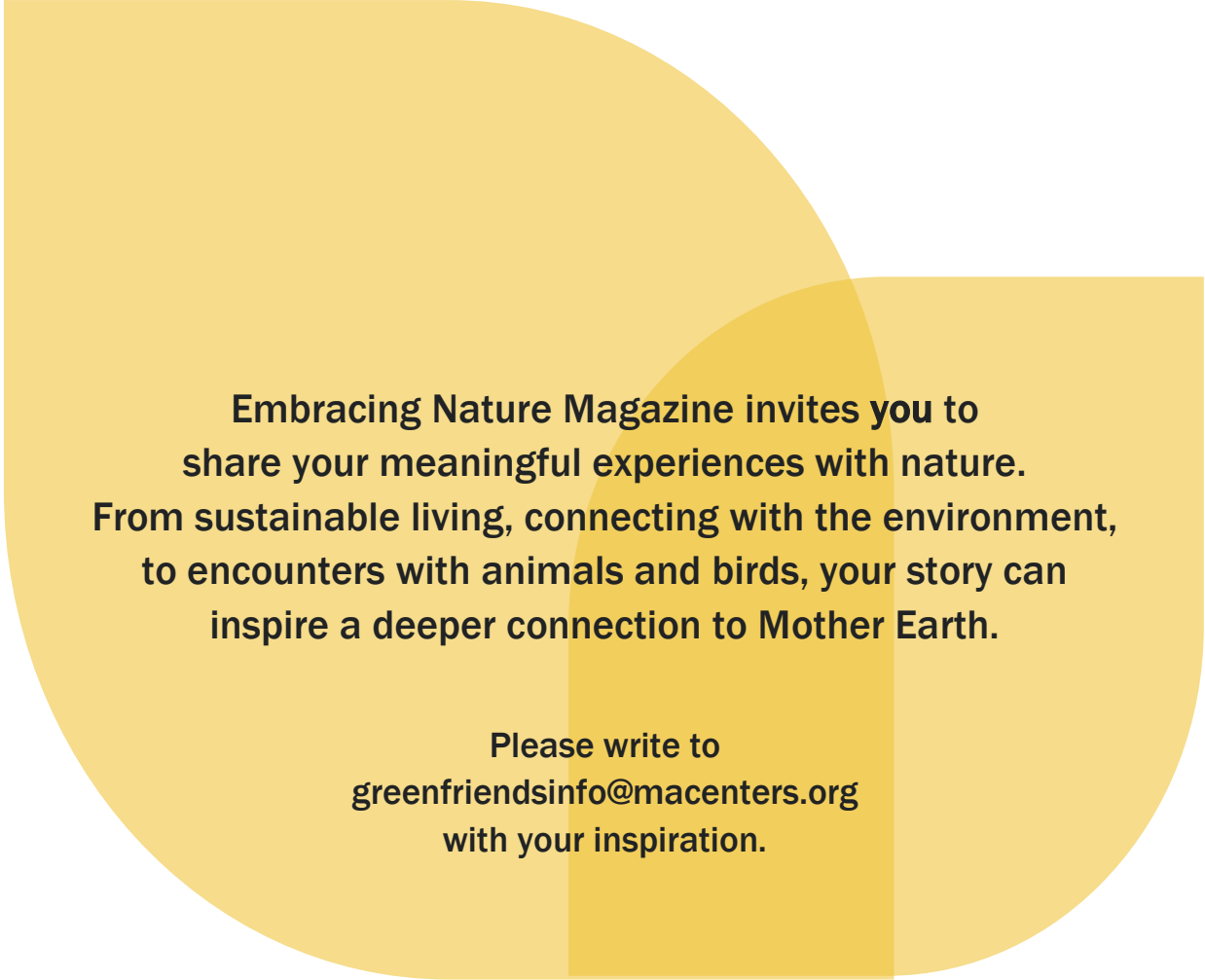
While the exact roadmap for Mahabalipuram is still unfolding, drawing from the expertise of Green Destinations, the initiative aims to lower the carbon footprint through effective destination management, enhanced use of renewable energy, and rigorous waste management practices. These efforts include the establishment of a solar plant at the Shore Temple complex, improved waste segregation systems, and a Green Heritage Project involving battery-operated vehicles and solar-powered water treatment solutions. These initiatives not only enhance sustainability but also set a benchmark for other cultural and heritage sites in the region.

~ GREENFRIENDS NORTH AMERICA TEAM



Shore Temple, a complex of temples and shrines, built of sculpted granite, is one of the oldest structural (versus rock-cut) stone temples of Southern India.

Credit: [Balasubramanian S](#),
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via Wikimedia Commons



Embracing Nature Magazine invites you to share your meaningful experiences with nature. From sustainable living, connecting with the environment, to encounters with animals and birds, your story can inspire a deeper connection to Mother Earth.

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