



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

[Yard Waste- The Joy of Shredding](#)

Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

[Mystery in the Greenbelt](#)

[Green Seattle Partnership -
2018 in Review](#)

Nature

[Coyote Sighting](#)

[Thanks and Kudos](#)

[GeoThermal Activity](#)

[To my great-great grandchildren](#)

PNW Litter Project

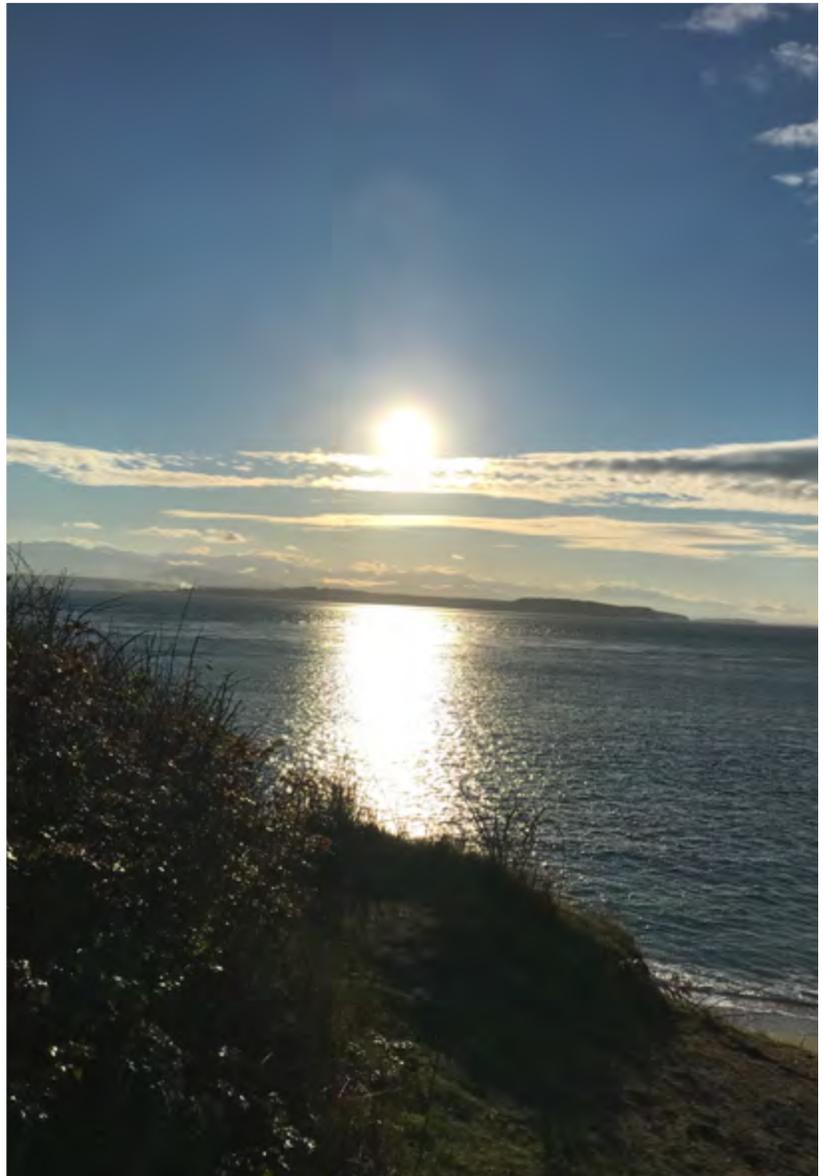
[Litter Project and TerraCycle Stats
Stories and Reflections](#)

Source Reduction

[What Happens Once It Leaves the Curb?](#)

Interesting Information from Our Readers

Amritapuri Nature Scenes



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

Yard Waste - The Joy of Shredding by Lin

In September I ordered a bright yellow yard [waste shredder](#) from Amazon for \$212.47. Like many additions to my yard over the years, I wish I had done it years ago!

When I saw the FedEx driver coming up my walkway with its box on his shoulder, I redirected him to my side patio—at 70 lbs, I knew I wouldn't have been able to move the box myself. The delivery guy looked like he was dealing with a carton of toilet paper when he carried it across the yard and set it down on the patio by the outdoor electrical outlet; I had to give the box a push to confirm he'd delivered the correct product. Yes, it was unbelievably heavy. Luckily, Ramana was working in my yard that day and he heaved it out of the box for me. The instruction booklet was useless, just as all the online reviews said. I had to Google the correct way to set up the miscellaneous washers of different sizes that came with the other parts, but the assembly was otherwise pretty straight forward.

All that weight was one of the reasons I'd chosen an Eco-Shredder. Unlike other low-cost offerings on Amazon, this shredder was mostly metal (instead of plastic), and it came with an extra set of blades. Also, it was the only model with a wide-mouthed hopper—just what I needed to accommodate leaves and ivy clippings, along with light-weight laurel prunings. There is a tubular feed on the back side for small branches. I was pleased to discover the shredder works perfectly. Though feeding goes a bit slowly, it has never jammed, and it blows out finely-minced mulch into the empty Pellegrino carton I place under the spout.

To my surprise, it happily chewed up two big yard-waste paper bags full of clippings, leaves, and fir cones—yielding four full boxes of mulch. The only thing I had to haul out to the curb for yard waste pickup were some branches that were too big for the shredder. So not only has it made my yard cleanup light years easier because I no longer have to haul stuff, it is providing my garden with wonderful mulch to go on top of freshly-applied compost to retain moisture and encourage microbe nutrient production.

[Collapsible yard waste bags](#) @ \$16.45 for a set of three were another great discovery on Amazon.

So soon old, so late schmart, as the saying goes. I'm looking forward to a much easier growing and pruning season next year.



Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

Mystery in the Greenbelt by Karuna

The day after our January 21 work party, I was taking photos of our work and was shocked to see a shovel propped up against the foundation of a house that is in the middle of the site. I was particularly surprised to see the shovel there because the team leaders had been standing close-by that area at the end of the work party. If the shovel was present at that time, one of us would certainly have seen it and put it in the job box where our tools are stored.

The fact that the team leader who had gone through the site looking for tools later hadn't seen it either added to the mystery. Where did it come from? Who had put it there?



On January 23, I was even more surprised to see an un-potted plant sitting on the ledge not far from where the shovel had been. I hadn't seen it the day before. Had it been sitting there when I found the shovel? I didn't think so but I will never know.

I assumed someone had removed a plant from one of the planting areas. The mystery deepened when I couldn't find any holes that had missing plants. Inside that foundation is the area we call The Rack Zone. Until the January 21 work party, it had contained drying racks for most of the invasive vines we had removed or dug out since the project began. During that work party, some of the volunteers had taken apart the drying racks and spread the dried debris. We have planned to plant beautiful shrubs and ground covers in that area at some point in the future.

Had this shrub been in one of the racks that had been taken apart? That seemed unlikely, but I called the team leader who had been working on that project. He said, "No" and that if he had seen it, he would have shown it to me.



Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

It occurred to me that since there was no rational explanation for how the shovel and the plant got there, I should look for a non-rational explanation. The thought that came to my mind was that this was to be the first shrub to be planted in The Rack Zone.

I walked into The Rack Zone and looked for an area where the new “ground” looked higher than the rest of it. Once I found a suitable place, I pulled back the surface debris that hadn’t fully decomposed to see whether there was composted dirt under it. There was, and it was deep enough to plant the shrub. I made the hole bigger and then inserted the shrub. I also made sure that there were no inter-twined ivy vines that would strangle it as it grew.



I needed more dirt to fill in the hole. After thinking about it for a moment, I remembered that I had seen mole mounds nearby. I also remembered a friend once helping me re-frame how I saw the moles in my own yard. She told me that the moles were providing me with free aeration for my soil. I decided to use the dirt from mole mounds for completing the planting process.



Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

Another memory resurfaced when I was thinking about moles. Soon after we started this Greenbelt project, Ananya was sitting on the ledge of the foundation. A mole came out of the ground and looked up at her. While the photo below comes from pixabay.com, seeing it reminds me of that incident.



That shrub is now securely planted in its new home. It remains to be seen whether or not it is alive. There are no buds on it that look alive, but the branches are not brittle. Even though many of the Greenbelt plants are budding, it is only January. Maybe this is a plant that buds later. If it is living, our first shrub has been planted in The Rack Zone!



Tree Planting and Habitat Restoration

Green Seattle Partnership 2018 in Review

Green Seattle Partnership is a collaborative organization that includes all of the volunteer groups, such as Green-Friends, that are working to restore Seattle’s parklands. It also includes organizations like Forterra and the Seattle Parks Department.



Nature

Coyote Sighting by Jagati

It is beautiful to know the wild exists right within our city. This coyote paused and looked right at me, calmly at home as I spoke to him and took his picture. I felt blessed that he allowed me to connect.



Nature



Nature

Thanks and Kudos to the Seattle Department of Transportation by Shakti Priya

Our street on Capitol Hill was blocked at one end for 8 days, after a tree split in half and fell onto the street (as well as onto a parked car). This happened over the night of February 2-3. On Monday, February 11, a 3-man crew from the Seattle Department of Transportation came out and cut up the tree.



According to an app that one of the crew members had on his phone, the tree, a honey locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*), was planted in 1990. The app said that honey locusts are fast-growing and relatively short-lived (~120 years). They're beautiful trees, with delicate leaves that turn golden in the fall.



Nature

Another crew member generously shared some interesting information that highlights how lucky Seattle is to have such an intricate and well-organized infrastructure. The Seattle Department of Transportation is responsible for the 45,000 trees planted in parking strips; Seattle Parks & Recreation is responsible for trees in parks; and Seattle City Light is responsible for trimming trees near power lines, and this is the department which will probably be taking down the remainder of the tree later this year. The Transportation Department crew was only taking care of emergencies like this one. The emergency crews had been working 24/7 for 8 days. The crews have 12-hour shifts, from 6am-6pm, and 6pm-6am.

The crew conjectured that the tree split because water had entered the trunk at a point where it had split into 2 large branches. Water settling into that crotch led to rot, which weakened the tree. Then freezing temperatures caused the water to expand enough to split the trunk.



The crew worked very quickly and cleared the tree from the street in about an hour. But they also worked carefully. After trimming the smaller branches down to the fallen trunk, they stopped several times to discuss how best to proceed without causing any further damage to the car on which the trunk was resting. They used a power saw to cut 2 pieces off the top trunk, about 4.5 feet long, and used those to prop up the larger trunk lying on the car roof, while they continued to cut sections until they reached the car. Then 2 crew members held up the trunk while the third separated the split trunk from the base of the tree, and the 3 men lifted the entire trunk off of the car.

Nature



All the branches and wood were stacked at the side of the road, making for some good firewood! Thanks and kudos to this efficient and friendly team!



Nature

GeoThermal Activity by Kothai



It was a fascinating experience walking through the geothermal area in Rotorua, New Zealand. Geothermal energy is simply power derived from the Earth's internal heat.

The Earth's crust (outermost layer) is broken into pieces called tectonic plates. Magma (hot molten rock) comes close to the earth's surface near the edges of these plates (which is where many volcanoes occur). When magma comes near the earth's surface, it heats groundwater trapped in porous rock or water running along fractured rock surfaces and faults.

Geothermal energy finds its way to the earth's surface in three ways:

- Volcanoes and fumaroles (holes in the earth where volcanic gases are released)
- Hot springs
- Geysers

Nature



The Lady Knox Geyser (pic below) is induced to erupt daily by dropping a surfactant into the opening of the vent. Eruptions produce a jet of water reaching up to 20m and can last for over an hour.



Nature



The terrestrial hot spring, Champagne Pool derived its name from the abundant efflux of carbon dioxide (CO₂), similar to a glass of bubbling champagne. The hot spring was formed 900 years ago by a hydrothermal eruption.

Its crater is around 65 m (213 ft) in diameter with a maximum depth of approximately 62 m (203 ft) and is filled with an estimated volume of 50,000 m³ (1,800,000 cu ft) of geothermal fluid. The deep geothermal water below Champagne Pool is of the order of 260 °C (500 °F) but water temperature within the pool is maintained at 73 °C (163 °F) to 75 °C (167 °F) by losing heat to the atmosphere.



Nature

The Devil's Bathtub

The bright green water gets its colour from deposits of sulphur that rise to the surface and float on top.



Most of these craters have formed as extremely hot water created acidic steam that dissolved the ground above as it rose.

Nature

From Rama Devi Nina:

Please read this inspiring poem my 84-year-old mom, [Joan Marshall](#), wrote for future generations. She is a climate activist and one of the most inspiring people you could ever meet! ❤️

To my great-great grandchildren,

*I don't know your name
or even if you're alive,
but I'm doing all I can
to make sure you survive.*

*I'm your great- great grandmother
who lived a century ago
in a world far different
from the one you must know.*

*For I was given a world
by those who came before me
that was abundant and beautiful...
miraculous to see.*

*But we were arrogant and wasteful,
caring only for today,
with no thought for your tomorrow...
or the price you must pay.*

*Too late, we understood
all the damage we had done
to the earth and all its creatures,
as the web of life unspun.*

*Though my days now are waning,
this I promise to do...
Fight the senseless greed and lies
and try to save this world...for you.*

PNW Litter Project

Litter Stats

In February 2019, 30 Litter Project members and their friends picked up litter for 74 hours. (Average 2.5 hours; Median 1 hour; Range 2 minutes to 13 hours) We have picked up litter for 10,385 hours since the project began in July of 2011.

TerraCycle Stats - We had a big month!

In February 2019, PNW GreenFriends sent TerraCycle 7,400 cigarette butts, 630 cereal bag liners, and 1,150 energy bar wrappers. GreenFriends has sent them 348,624 cigarette butts, 394 drink pouches, 1,362 cereal bag liners, and 4,147 energy bar wrappers since 2013. [TerraCycle is an organization that recycles items which are normally considered unrecyclable.]



TerraCycle

We are starting to collect empty toothpaste tubes and caps, toothpaste cartons, outer tooth brush packaging, empty floss containers and toothbrushes in addition to the energy bar wrappers, drink pouches, cereal bags and cigarette butts we have been sending to TerraCycle for years. Please give these normally non-recyclable items to Visala or Karuna. If you don't live in the Seattle area you can bring them to Amma's 2019 PNW Program.

Litter Pick-Up Questionnaire

Whether or not you pick up litter, please take three minutes to fill out this Litter Pick-up questionnaire. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GTGK3Z8>.

Kick Butts Day

The Seattle Kick Butts work party will be Sunday March 3 from 10-noon. The weather forecast is for full sun! Every butt we pick up will keep toxic substances out of our landfills, waterways and stomachs of birds, fish and other wild-life. For details about where to go and what to bring [click here](#).

Greenbelt Restoration Project Work Party (Seattle)

The next work party is March 10 (Sunday) from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more information or to register go to: <https://seattle.greencitypartnerships.org/event/15840>

PNW Litter Project

Litter Pick-up Stories and Reflections

My wife Theresa and I have enjoyed the "Kick Butts" cigarette butt cleanup initiative these last few years in Seattle's International District, and we're looking forward to the one coming up on March 3. It is wonderful to be out with friends cleaning up such a toxic threat, but it does seem to boggle the minds of the locals! Regularly, we get the look that says, "Why are these suburbanites cleaning up my urban garbage?" We hope that our simple act of picking up these cigarette butts draws needed attention to an overlooked problem and ends up inspiring local action. The other reaction—questions from casual passers-by and the subsequent "Thank You"—tops off a wonderful time. I send thanks to Amma and all of her GreenFriends for creating and supporting such amazing opportunities to serve. Brad Joss, Seattle, WA

I work in a high school and often pick up litter here and there when I come across it. Sometimes it is a piece of fruit or other food. I like to toss this type of litter under a tree in hopes that it will be eaten by insects, birds or deer. Doing this brings to mind these creatures and makes the picking up part more enjoyable.

Amma's tireless example and teachings about taking care of and protecting Mother Nature have raised my awareness and inspired me to become actively involved in doing what I can to help our planet. When I see litter, it goes right to my heart and I deeply feel Mother Nature's plight. I pick it up whenever I can, as much as I can, and try not to get discouraged. May we all remember the next time we go to throw something away, to ask ourselves, "Where is away?" Diya Heal

I seem to find litter to pick up when I am with Amma in New Mexico. I first picked up a thorn that had been stepped on by Swamani just outside the hall. On the off day before retreat, I was walking on some of the trails that go past the golf course at Buffalo Thunder and picked up cans and bottles along the way. For some odd reason people drinking from bottles/cans seem to like to throw them one direction or other off the trail. They are taking so much effort to get "rid" of them, when really it would be appreciated by the person picking them up to just find them along the path-and so much easier for them. Humans do silly things!

I try to pick up litter (mainly cans or plastic) on my way to shop, or when I pass a litter bin where rubbish has been thrown carelessly. But there is so much more to do!

My "route" is at Pit Park in Deming...always plenty of things to pick up during my walking of my dawg Yoshi...Our weather includes lots of wind and so I am never in search of a plastic bag to put the litter in...:-) Bags seem to always get caught in the ever present sage brush...since I walk my dog for about an hour, I just estimate my time...OM Sri Namah Shivaya.....StanleydelGozo/Premanandakumar

I rarely have a story - particularly with polar vortex, 14" of snow, lakes of ice everywhere - slim pickens at present

I feel Divine Mother wanting me to clean Her beautiful face!

Source Reduction

What Happens Once It Leaves the Curb? by Diya



Ever wondered what happens to your recycling once it leaves the curb? Neither did I until last year when my waste management facility informed me I could no longer recycle most plastics because China wasn't taking them anymore. It was a huge wake-up call. I hadn't been aware my recycling was being sent to China, mainly because I never inquired. As long as it magically went "away" each week, I felt satisfied I had done my part. Now I know, there is no "away."

Here's how it (basically) works: In the US, every city or county has a Waste Management Facility with whom they contract with. These are your 'haulers' – the ones that come to the curb, pick up your waste and bring it back to their facility. The garbage is sent to the landfill and the recycling is dumped into a big-rig container. Once that container is full, it is driven to the Materials Recovery Facility or 'MRF'. Pronounced like 'Smurf', but with an 'M'. At the MRF, the recyclables are sorted and the plastics that have a viable market are crushed, baled and most likely shipped overseas.

What about the plastics that aren't viable? No one really knows for sure what they are doing with those. I tried calling MRF's in several cities to ask what their end-markets were. None of them would answer my questions, saying the information was "proprietary." They then asked if I was a journalist writing an article, which made me feel like I was trying to uncover a conspiracy. All I really wanted was the truth, but the truth isn't always convenient.

The truth is, only 9% of all plastics ever created have been recycled. Since 1950, we have created 9.2 billion tons of plastic. Of that, more than 6.9 billion tons have become waste. And of that waste, a staggering 6.3 billion tons never made it to a recycling bin, so we are now drowning in it. The great thing about plastic is it's so durable. The prob

Source Reduction



lem is, it's so durable it doesn't decompose. It only breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces which we call microplastics. These microplastics can now be found on every beach, in every bucket of water scooped from any ocean, in our sea salt, fish, marine animals, water supply, and in us. It has never been more critical that we heed Amma's warnings to reduce our consumption of single-use plastics and care for and protect Mother Nature.

What we know today, is there is a still a viable end-market for plastic bottles and jugs (PET and HDPE resins #1 and #2). They are higher quality and can be more easily recycled. This makes them more profitable and therefore, desirable.

The other types of plastics (#3 - #4) are not easy to recycle or cannot be recycled because they are made from so many different types of low-quality polymers (chemical compounds). Most facilities in the United States are not equipped to process them. They

were relying on China to do it. In addition, the current low cost of oil per barrel makes it cheaper for manufacturers to make new, virgin plastic than to sort, clean, melt and recycle lower-quality, contaminated plastics. So, what happens to these undesirable plastics?

Well, depending on where you live, the majority are either being landfilled or shipped to end-markets in third-world countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and India where they are melted down and made into "nurdles."

Nurdles are tiny plastic pellets, the size of a lentil, that serve as the raw material for most plastic products. Spills and mishandling by industry can mean nurdles end up at sea. Our oceans are now accumulating nurdles in worryingly large numbers. In addition, many of the recycling facilities in those countries are operating illegally and not processing the plastic with any regard for the environment.

Right now, your alarm bells should be going off. Yes - we are continuing to send our garbage plastics to other countries that can't even process their own. We must also realize when we collect and remanufacture plastic, we are only delaying its disposal. The final destination for all plastic is either a landfill, where it doesn't decompose, or an incinerator, where it releases harmful chemicals when burned, or the environment in some form of pollution.



Source Reduction

So, how can you help? Avoid single-use plastics. Instead, choose to:

- **REFUSE** - what you don't need. Manufacturer's will stop making when we stop buying.
- **REDUCE** - single-use and unsustainable items.
- **REUSE or REPURPOSE** - what you already have.
- **REPAIR** - rather than throw away, as there is no "away."
- **RECYCLE** - what you can.

You can also make a huge and positive impact on the planet when you do simple things such as bring your own coffee cup/reusable beverage bottle, use reusable grocery/produce bags, buy food in bulk or at a farmer's market (when possible) instead of in plastic packaging, try making your own (DIY) toothpaste and earth-friendly household cleaners, look for sustainable and zero-waste products like bamboo toothbrushes, use a reusable water bottle and avoid take-out utensils and containers.

At the end of Amma's 2019 New Year's Message, one of the questions she posed to each of us was, "Am I able to contribute and play my part in protecting the environment?" We can all make a positive difference and help heal Mother Nature, just by doing our part.

#1 <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/07/plastic-produced-recycling-waste-ocean-trash-debris-environment>

#2 <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2018/06/plastic-planet-waste-pollution-trash-crisis>

#3 <https://www.nurdlehunt.org.uk/whats-the-problem.html>

#4 http://sites.fitnyc.edu/depts/sustainabilityatfit/Recycling_Plastic_Co.pdf

Interesting Information from Our Readers

From Poornima in Shoreline:

[Welcome to my high-fashion, trash shopping mall](#)

[Holy cabbage! Australian couple grows giant vegetable](#)

From Donna in Kirkland:

[Does Ugly Food Really Go to Waste?](#)

From Kumuda in Seattle:

[Our house is on fire!': Greta Thunberg, 16, urges leaders to act on climate](#)

From Lin in Bellevue:

[Treeline: celebrating the forests on which humans have always depended](#)

From Tina in Seattle:

[Take Care of the Places You Love](#)

From Karuna in Seattle:

[A new app can help you stop buying bottled water](#)



Amritapuri Nature Scenes



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Amritapuri Gardens

