



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

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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

Art of Bonsai: Winter Rebirth by Ken (Vaughn, WA)



Pond Cypress in Winter Silhouette (and weeds...)

Fall and winter are busy times for a bonsai artist. Most of this is studio work. A “warm” place to work out of the elements. It is a quiet time of purposeful work. It allows me to work with my hands and collaborate with each tree for health and beauty for the coming year.

After growing strongly during the previous spring and summer, bonsai enter dormancy like the trees in the forest. Winter bonsai work takes advantage of the trees being dormant. This season brings the task of carefully looking at each tree to see what work needs to be done. For those that are not going to be repotted, the winter maintenance work is completed, and the trees put back on the benches to await spring.

PNW Gardening

Anywhere from one-third to one-half of my trees are repotted each year. This is done on a schedule that fits the type of tree and the age of the tree. Younger trees grow more quickly than older trees. Those that do not need repotting this year typically require some maintenance, so let's start there.

Winter Maintenance:

Winter is the time to clean up the trees. Moss may need to be carefully removed from the trunk. Any wire remaining from the growing season is removed. Branches may need to be cut back to force dormant buds on branches closer to the trunk. Winter is a time for refinement; branches that are becoming too heavy for the tree are carefully cut back to smaller shoots. This helps to keep the tree's branches in scale to the trunk. Depending on the type of pine, old needles are pulled or cut. Shoots coming off the bottom of the branches are removed as these will be weak and block light to the branches below.



Pine before thinning



Pine after thinning and cutback

Effort is made to balance the energy of the tree. Since most trees are apically dominant, foliage is thinned at the top and at the end of the branches where the tree is the strongest. The inner and lower branches are left fuller as they are weaker. This allows sunlight to enter the canopy and balances the effect of photosynthesis – giving healthy and even growth.

The surface of the soil is cleaned of moss and any small weeds down to about ½". New soil is added and leveled. This process helps to assure good drainage during the winter. The final act is to gently clean the pot with water and a soft brush or cloth. Once done, the tree is ready for another year of growth and development.

If the tree is an evergreen, then winter is the time to do any necessary wiring. Deciduous trees are best wired in June when the leaves have hardened off.

PNW Gardening



Yamamoto Shimpaku winter color

Repotting:

Repotting is one of the aspects of bonsai care that is often poorly understood. People say, “OMG, you do WHAT to the roots?????” The process of repotting is very important to the future health of the tree. The result of repotting removes old soil and replaces it with new soil. Trees are not repotted unless they need to be. Poor drainage and the roots beginning to lift the tree in the pot are clear signs that the tree needs root work.

Each tree is carefully removed from the pot. It is laid on its side at a 90-degree angle and the bottom roots are combed out carefully. These are cut using root scissors that must be very sharp to avoid squashing the roots. Roots that are not cut cleanly will have trouble re-growing. Once the bottom roots are cut to the proper length, the tree is set upright. The surface of the soil is cleaned and the sides are carefully combed out. Again with sharp scissors, the roots are cut.

PNW Gardening



Pine roots



pine long roots



Trimmed roots

The pot is cleaned, inside and out. Or a new pot is selected based on aesthetics and/or the health of the tree. New drainage screen and tie down wires are put in place. I add a shallow layer of pumice for drainage and a little new soil (mixture of akadama, pumice and lava) is added. The pot is now ready for the tree.



Prepared pot

This is a time to take a deep breath and pause. I need to position the tree in the pot correctly; neither too far back nor forward, left nor right. If I don't get it right I have to look at it for two to three years, which is how often I re-pot most of my trees. Once positioned correctly the aluminum tie-down wires are gently tied around the roots. While most trees in the forest have heavy deep roots that keep them upright, bonsai do not. The tree is tied in to prevent it from moving in the pot during wind and the elements. If the tree moves in the pot, delicate feeder roots are damaged and the tree will not be healthy.

PNW Gardening



shohin black pine repotted

Once repotted the trees are put in the cold frame for the remainder of the winter. I must keep them above freezing and well-watered. By the time April comes they are bursting with energy, and the cycle begins again.



cold frame January

Nature

Bellevue (WA) Snow Photos by Kathie



Nature



Nature



Nature

No Bird Brain Here! by Lin

A week or two before Christmas it was raining hard as I gazed out the window behind my kitchen sink. I live near Seattle, so this isn't an unusual view. Still, rain always makes me feel sorry for the birds, even though I know the tips of their feathers form a breathable, water-resistant mesh to keep the downy bases dry so they'll trap warm air. Earlier, I'd gone out with fresh nectar for the hummingbirds and put a block of suet in the feeder.



a feather's downy base

When I came inside and began to rinse vegetables at the sink, something dark on the rolled-up exterior window shade caught my eye.



an Oregon junco

Drying my hands with a towel, I looked again. There, below the wide eaves of my house's flat roof, huddled a shivering little bird with feathers fluffed out—an Oregon junco with a black head on a taupe body, like the others pecking at the nearby feeder. But they had tidy feathers slicked into place as they should be.

This junco was soaked. How had that happened? Yes, rain was pouring down with more force and volume than usual, but the other birds weren't wet. And I'd never seen one shaking like this. I wondered whether he'd escaped the grip of something that had gotten his head in its mouth—like a cat. Though I paced and worried, no workable ideas came to mind that would help the little guy warm up and dry out.



the wet Oregon junco

But this was no bird brain. He had ideas of his own. Holding his head as close to the window as possible, he took advantage of the warmth from my kitchen radiating through the glass. My heating bill can confirm the heat loss. He soon scooted to the far end of the blind where the lowest section of sloped roof trapped every available therm.

He stayed there all afternoon until nightfall, and then he disappeared. I had no idea where he could have gone that would be an improvement on the dry haven provided by the rolled-up shade and warm window.

The next morning he was back—still wet, with the feathers of his black helmet sticking out at odd angles. Each time he flitted a few feet to the suet feeder, the other birds would move aside and let him eat his fill before he returned to his perch. This was one resourceful little bird.



the warmest spot

Nature

He spent the day there under the eaves. My comings and goings in the kitchen didn't seem to disturb him. But neither did he show signs of drying out. I could imagine how cold he was, having had my own experience in the woods with a wet down jacket. At least he was keeping up his energy with those frequent suet snacks.

The rain continued. When darkness approached, he disappeared again. I feared hypothermia and hoped Mother Nature would reward his pluckiness and see him safely through the night. I woke early the following morning and hurried to the kitchen window. He wasn't there. Saddened, I continued to hope that the reason he hadn't returned was because he didn't need to.



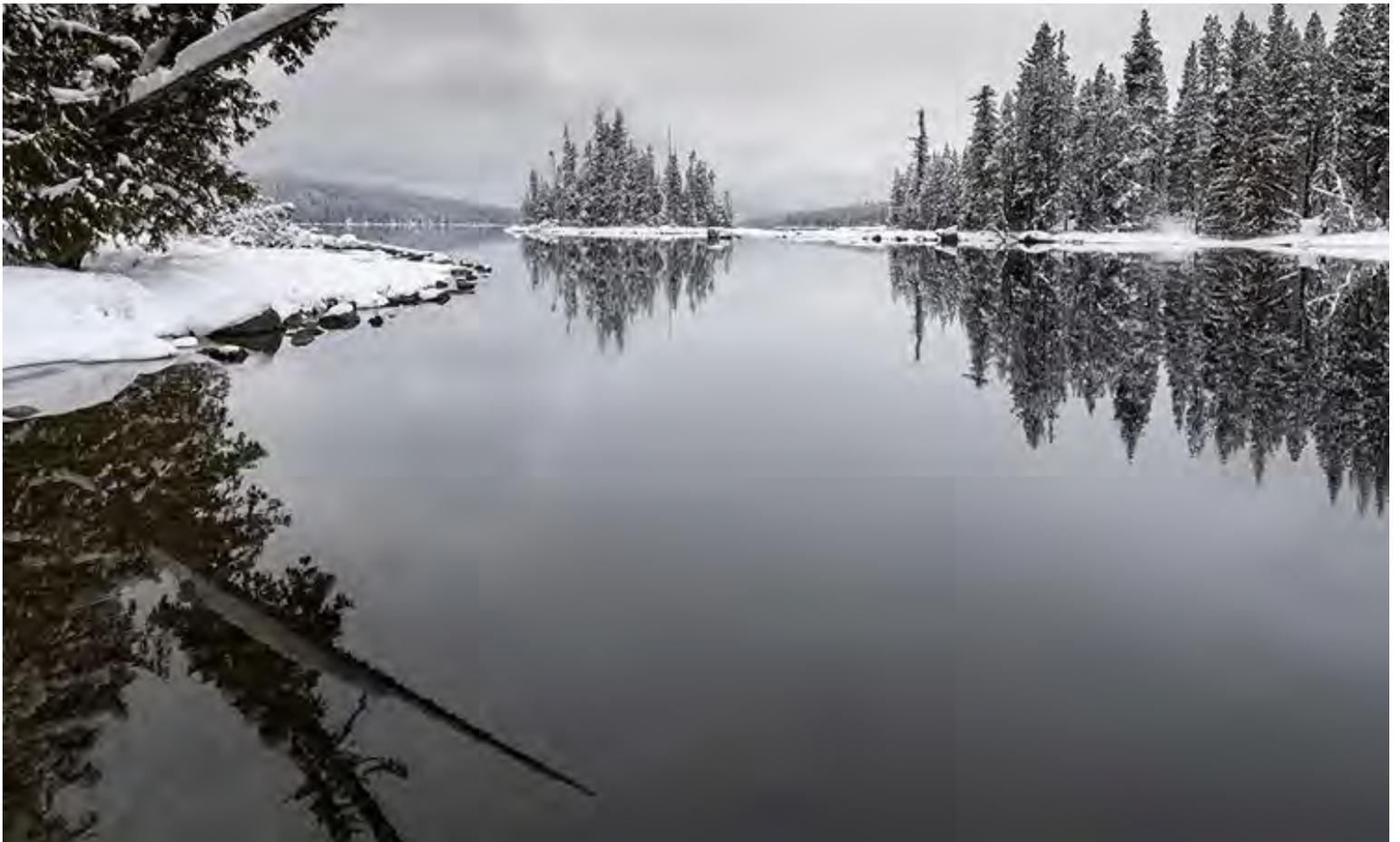
wet junco chowing down

Lake Wenatchee Winter Photos by Eric (Redmond, WA)



ERIC J. F. WING

Nature



Nature

Maltby (WA) Winter Photos by Mechas



Nature



It was fun to watch the Anna's hummingbirds fight for the feeder. Normally one or maybe two if they are a pair feed together. What a surprise to see 4 at the feeder before sunset. I think they just decided to not fight and eat as much as they could to make it through the night.

Do you know that they slow their metabolism to the minimum in the evening so they can make it through the night? It takes them half an hour to get it back up before they can move and fight. I love these little birds!



Nature



Nature

Reaching for the Stars by Kothai



Palm Trees at the Mission Santa Barbara in Santa Barbara, CA

Nature

Two Amazing Flowers by Karuna

Early in January, I read an article on cnn.com that reported that a scientist had found a Rafflesia flower that was nearly four feet in diameter. He had found it in West Sumatra, Indonesia.

The article also said that the Rafflesia plant doesn't have any roots or leaves; it is parasitic, feeding off of another plant, drinking its water and taking its nutrients. It releases a foul odor that resembles the smell of rotting meat. To read the full article and see the photo of the four-foot flower [click here](#).

I found photos of smaller Rafflesia flowers on [Wikimedia Commons](#). The two photos below come from that source.



Photo credit: [Klaus Polak](#)

Nature

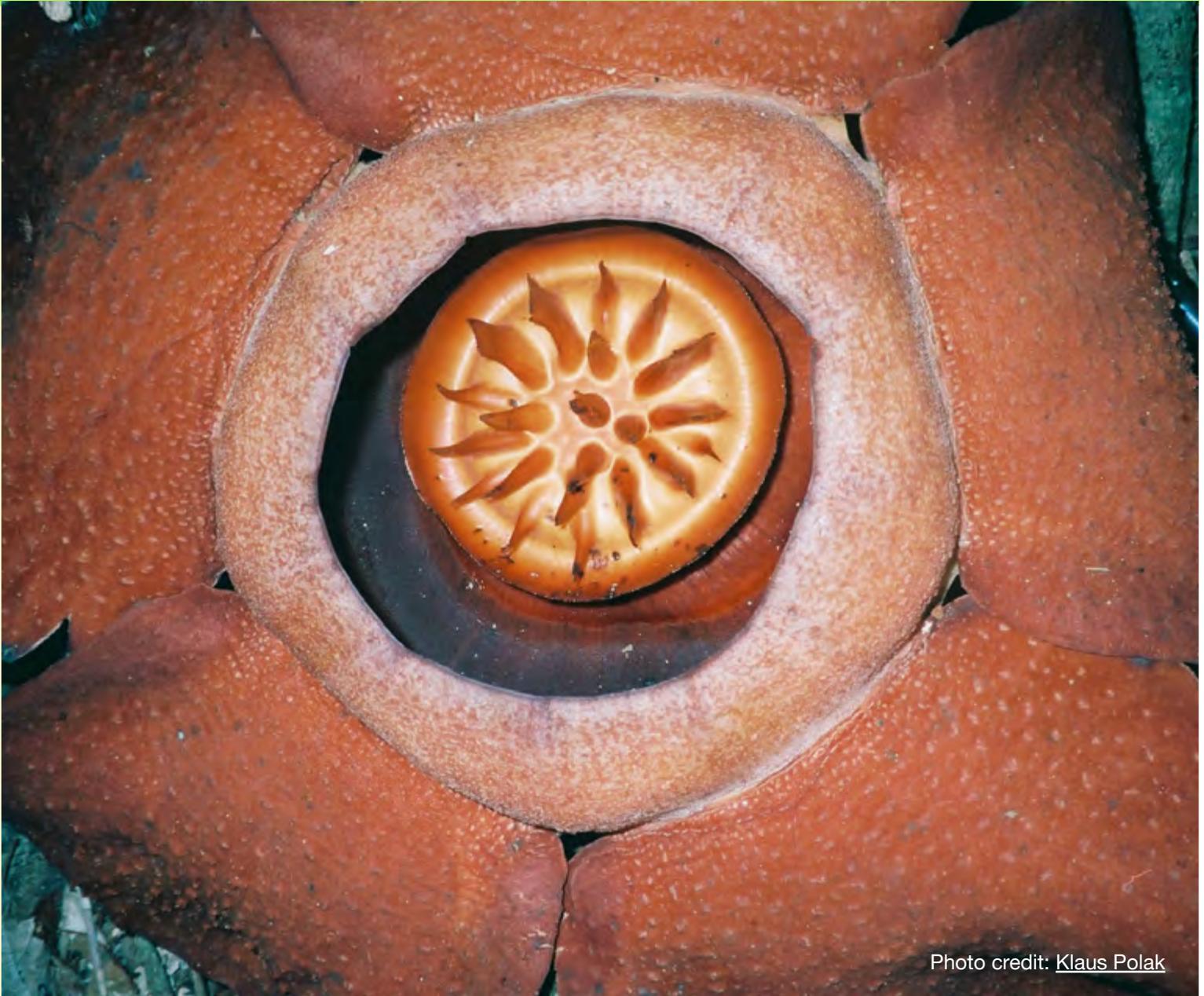


Photo credit: [Klaus Polak](#)

When I posted on my blog about the Rafflesia flower, a reader commented that the flower reminded them of the Titan Arum flower. I looked that one up and found that even though the flowers look very different from each other, they definitely have things in common; e.g., they come from Indonesia, are very big, have an unpleasant odor that smells like rotting flesh and, because of that odor, are both called corpse plants.

I found many Titan Arum photos on [Wikimedia Commons](#). Three photos from that source are shown below. If you click on the Wikimedia Commons link in the sentence above, you can see the rest of the photos..

Nature



Photo credit: [Lorax](#)

Nature



I enjoyed learning about these two plants.

Nature

Australian Fire Photos from [Pixabay.com](https://pixabay.com)



Nature



Tree Planting and Forest Restoration

Greenbelt Restoration Work Parties: January 15 to January 20, 2020

During Winter Quarter, January-March 2020, we have two groups of University of Washington students working with us in the Greenbelt. The first group, three Carlson Center Service-Learning students who are taking an Introduction to Community, Environment and Planning course, come on Wednesdays from 1:30-4:00. The second group consists of Capstone interns who are seniors majoring in Environmental Studies. They join the Service-Learning students at the Wednesday work parties and also work in the site on most Friday afternoons.

The first work party of Winter Quarter was held on January 15. In the days leading up to it, it became clear that weather was a potential problem. The Seattle Parks Department notified us that we were to cancel work parties if the temperature was below 32 degrees, if there was more than two inches of snow on the ground, or if more than half an inch of ground was frozen. We already had a policy of cancelling work parties if there are high winds. The chances of any or all of those criteria occurring was likely.

By the morning of the event, there was 1/2 – 1 inch of snow on the ground and the possibility of winds. We had expected 20-degree temperatures, but it had warmed up considerably. We decided to take it minute by minute. We would do a longer than normal orientation in my house and, if weather permitted, would take a tour of the site and do some restoration work afterwards.

Karuna and Sarva led the orientation and the tour of the site. There wasn't much time left afterwards and it was so cold that we decided not to start the restoration work that day. Still, we were off to a good start!



UW Capstone interns and Service-Learning students

Tree Planting and Forest Restoration

We gave the Capstone students responsibility for restoring a small section of the site and creating a planting plan for that area. The Capstone instructor also requires them to create a “deliverable” for the organization that is hosting them. Our students plan to create pamphlets about forest restoration that will be useful for future volunteers.

On Friday, January 17, the Capstone interns worked on their section of the site for the first time. They took down a drying rack where invasive plants like blackberry and ivy vines had been drying out for a year and moved the contents to a part of the site where dried debris is breaking down further. We will eventually plant in that composted debris.

After finishing moving the dried debris from the rack, the interns started digging out blackberry root balls and ivy from their section. Karuna taught them what they needed to know to do those two jobs and then picked up trash from the site and the adjacent stairs, checking in with the students from time to time.



In future sessions, as the interns finish removing invasive plants from their section of the site, they will spread wood chips over the newly cleared area to prevent soil erosion.

Tree Planting and Forest Restoration

On January 20, we held our second annual Martin Luther King National Day of Service work party. Our team leaders were Maya, who is Forterra's Green Cities Stewardship Coordinator, Sarva and me from GreenFriends, and Dave who is one of our regular team leaders.

Most of the volunteers were alumni from Western Washington University's Huxley School of the Environment and their families. They were celebrating Huxley's 50th anniversary. Others included our two UW Capstone interns, a family from the neighborhood where our site is located, a man who had signed up for event information on our GreenFriends information list during Amma's last Seattle area visit, and several people who found us on [Green Seattle Partnership's event page](#).



After an orientation, we divided into four teams and started to work! Sarva and the neighborhood family picked up branches that had fallen on pathways during the last few months, weeded planting areas in the north part of the site and loosened up or replaced flagging tape on shrubs that had grown so much that it had become tight. (We use flagging tape of various colors to show what year a tree, shrub or ground cover was planted.)

Tree Planting and Forest Restoration



Maya's group pruned a strip of shrubs and removed invasive blackberry and ivy vines along 25th Avenue South. The shrubs had been planted years before we started our restoration project. They had grown big enough that in places they had become a thicket.



Before



After

Tree Planting and Forest Restoration

Dave's team worked in one of the few areas on the site where we hadn't done much clearing in the past. It contained many forms of invasive shrubs and vines, primarily blackberry vines. Before the work party, I saw one blackberry vine that was at least 20 feet long.

At the beginning of the work session, several members of the group moved the contents of an old drying rack so that they would have a place to put their cuttings.



Karuna's team removed the dried vines and weeds from one of the drying racks; looked for tagging tape that had gotten too tight and loosened or replaced it; and weeded several southern planting areas.

Tree Planting and Forest Restoration



After a snack break, all of the groups joined together to move wood chips from a pile on 25th Avenue South into smaller piles on our site. (Moving the wood chips onsite makes them much more accessible to members of future work parties.) We accomplished that task by forming a bucket brigade.



Tree Planting and Forest Restoration



Maya took two time-lapse videos of the bucket brigade. <https://photos.app.goo.gl/W77onh6wwyBfWVN86> (Hover the cursor over the video to make it work. To make either of the videos fill the full page, click on the arrow.)

The three work parties between January 15 and January 20 were very different from each other, but each was productive and gave the participants a significant forest restoration experience. Every volunteer who comes here contributes substantially to creating another healthy forest in Seattle.