



## THE TREE BANK: MORE FOREST, MORE MONEY, A BETTER LIFE

Picture this forest over your morning coffee. Threatened forests like this one are the source of the Earth Sangha's Rising Forests Coffee. Our coffee is produced by our Tree Bank / Hispaniola program, which works along the Dominican Republic – Haiti border to improve small-holder farm incomes and to conserve and restore native forest. The forest shown here is one of our coffee groves. If you look closely, you'll probably be able to see the little coffee trees in the foreground. All that other lush vegetation is native Hispaniolan forest.

Rising Forests Coffee may be our farmers' best chance at a better life. Most of our people are very poor; their farmland has lost much of its fertility, and prices for most of their crops are declining. Rising Forests is helping to break this impasse: in exchange for protecting the forests, we're helping our farmers improve their coffee culture and we're paying top dollar for their best beans. Our latest purchase, in April, paid about a third more than the market price. And all Rising Forests profits are returned to our project area; not one peso of profit remains in the US.

**Photos:** Above, "Rising Forests" coffee groves like this one conserve threatened Hispaniolan forest by providing owners with forest-friendly income. (The little trees in the foreground are coffee trees.) Inset, ripe coffee cherries are intermingled with green ones in the final picking last January. At right, the students of Los Cerezos give the Sangha a hand for fixing the school kitchen. (See the back page.)

Rising Forests makes ecological sense as well. Our coffee is grown entirely under native forest canopy. It's de facto organic (but not officially organic because certification is expensive and we would rather spend the money on the farms). And those forests are home to many rare plants and animals, especially birds. Rising Forests allows poor people to make money off their forests without cutting them down.

If this approach makes sense to you, we could really use your help! Please use the enclosed card to buy some coffee and make a donation to the Tree Bank. (If you don't have a card, go to: [earthsangha.org/tbh/tbh.html](http://earthsangha.org/tbh/tbh.html).) Help us create a future—for both our farmers and their forests.





# IN GRATITUDE TO OUR MAJOR DONORS FOR 2011

We thank everyone who has given to the Sangha, in whatever form. We owe a special debt of gratitude to the following people and organizations, who made major donations to our work last year. The Sangha has drawn great strength from their generosity and vision. May the spirit of their gifts continue to live within our work and practice.

## Over \$5,000

The Shared Earth Foundation (\$15,000)  
The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region (\$14,421)  
Two anonymous donors (\$10,000)  
The Prince Charitable Trusts (\$10,000)  
Cynthia Irmer & Bruce Engelbert (\$8,000)

## \$2,000 – \$5,000

Richard Haeuber & Amy Frey  
Robert & Nora Jordan  
Two anonymous donors  
(Wild Seed Challenge)  
An anonymous foundation

## \$1,000 – \$1,999

The Bank of America Foundation  
Matching Gifts Program  
Dena Burgstrom

## \$100 – \$249

Kit & Christopher Britton  
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ECHO Inc.  
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Susan Gitlin  
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Julia Goss  
Joanne & David Hardison  
Bob Hassett, Amy Gardner, &  
Thomas & Henry Hassett

## \$1,000 – \$1,999, continued

James Clark & Julia Porter  
The Dudley and Gene Orr Fund of the  
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Daniel Murrin  
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An anonymous donor

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Beatriz Meza Valencia  
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(in memory of James & Martha Dill)  
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Mary Ray  
Judith Richter

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(in honor of Berenice Burke)  
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Mary Beth Oelkers-Keegan  
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Brian & Jennifer Yang  
Nancy & Howard Zimmerman  
An anonymous donor

## \$500 – \$999, continued

Stephen & Kate Rickard  
Trevor Self & Jennifer Childress  
Lynn Tveskov  
Robert & Gail Weigl

## \$250 – \$499

Judith Bexfield  
Angie Bryner & the Cornerstone  
Montessori School PTO  
Stanley Burgiel & Jeneen Piccuiro

*We believe this list to be accurate and complete but would greatly appreciate any corrections.*





## A WATER STRATEGY

We are adding water security to our Tree Bank's agenda. As in much of the rural tropics, our area doesn't have a reliable source of safe drinking water. (Actually, it doesn't have a reliable source of *unsafe* drinking water either! More on that below.) All the streams are infested with parasites; not surprisingly, parasite infections are among the most common health complaint in our region, especially among children. And chronic parasite infection does not make for an idyllic childhood.

Water security is a logical extension of our work. Forests and streams are essential to each other. And creating a safe water supply is a very efficient way of improving the quality of life on our farms.

We're starting in Los Cerezos, the little settlement at the heart of our project area. Los Cerezos has a decrepit water-pipe system that supplies the local elementary school, our Tree Bank Nursery, and some houses. But the system's sources are not safe and the pipes break frequently. Outside the system, most people just draw water from the streams, and most households don't have the sand filters that can remove the parasites. In the summer, there is sometimes no water to draw because deforestation has dried out the landscape.

Matt Bright, our water guy, began the project by doing three things. He arranged to clear the gunk out of the retaining pool that is one of the village's two main water sources. (See the photo at right.) He also replaced a broken pipe to improve flow to the village, and he surveyed all 50 Dominican and Haitian families with children at the school, to find out whether they were concerned about the water. (They are.)

Matt's next three things: At the school, he plans to build a sand filter that is big enough to serve all the students and staff. (The current one only supplies enough water for the smallest children.) He will also work with our partner, the Asociación de Productores de Bosque, Los Cerezos, to create a water utility that can solicit local support for improvements. And he will use Tree Bank resources to extend the forests that should be buffering the streams in the first place.

### \$250 – \$499, continued

The Canoe Cruisers Association

George & Theresa Chianese

Zeki Gunay

The International Monetary Fund

Matching Gifts Program

Karen Kenneally & Peter Raymond

Cecile Lethem & Jennifer Groppe

Stephen & Jay Lewis

Charles Mills

Cindy Porter

(in memory of Clyde "Percy" Porter)

The Potomac Hills Womens Club

Larry Reavis

Karen Ringstrand

Kathryn & Peter Scudera



THIRSTY? DIG IN!

## EARTH SANGHA

BUDDHIST VALUES IN ACTION

The Earth Sangha is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) charity based in the Washington, DC, area and devoted to ecological restoration. We work in the spirit of Buddhist practice, but our members and volunteers come from a wide variety of religious and secular backgrounds.

**Want to contact us or make a donation?** You can support our work by becoming a member. Membership starts at \$35 per year. Donations are tax-deductible. You can mail us a check (made out to "Earth Sangha") or donate on our website. We will send you a receipt and include you in our mailings. (If your name and address are correct on your check, there is no need to send us anything else.) **Contact us at:** Earth Sangha, 10123 Commonwealth Blvd., Fairfax, VA 22032-2707 | (703) 764-4830 | [earthsangha.org](http://earthsangha.org). Complete program information is available on our website.

**Want to volunteer or meditate with us?** We work with volunteers at our Wild Plant Nursery and our field sites in northern Virginia. We meditate in the Del Ray section of Alexandria on Tuesday evenings. For more information see our website or call Lisa Bright at (703) 764-4830.

**The Acorn:** Our newsletter is produced with "print on demand" technology, which consumes far less energy and materials than does conventional printing. This paper is 100% post-consumer waste recycled, process chlorine-free, and manufactured entirely with wind-generated electricity. This issue © copyright 2012, Earth Sangha.

**One of the best:** The Earth Sangha is recognized by the *Catalogue for Philanthropy* as "one of the best small charities in the Washington, DC, region."



GREATER WASHINGTON



CARIBBEAN BIODIVERSITY IN PRODUCTION

**Photos:** Above left, this well-structured native canopy shelters one of our coffee groves and provides excellent bird habitat. At left, Gaspar, our Project Director, waters seedlings in our Tree Bank nursery, which now produces some 20,000 tree seedlings a year. Above, Santa Maria (left) and Joselito clear an important drinking-water source in our project area. ("Santa Maria" really is his name!)





## CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE

Our Tree Bank farmers deserve a lot of credit—for the way they’re using our credit! Last August and September, our Forest Credit program made its first loans: we lent a total of \$5,800 to 16 families to help them with their farming. Forest Credit extends small lines of credit to the farmers in exchange for forest easements on parts of their lands. Those initial loans resulted in easements over about 51 acres of very valuable native forest. The photo above was taken in one such easement. This April, all of those initial loans have been repaid in full. Every last peso has been accounted for, and we’re now preparing our second round of loans.

Elsewhere on the farms, our native forest plantings continue to grow upwards—even as they pull down atmospheric carbon, and a little profit for our farmers in the form of Tree Bank support. The top photo at right shows Monica in her family’s Tree Bank planting. She has quite a few species in there, but the part of the planting shown here is of Hispaniolan pine (*Pinus occidentalis*), a species that occurs naturally only on Hispaniola and that is in widespread decline.

The local elementary school is our Tree Bank nursery’s most important partner because the students help out so much with the nursery chores. So we returned the favor last January, by putting a new roof over the school’s open-air kitchen, after a storm tore off the old roof. The re-roofed kitchen is shown at right. The repairs garnered strong approval from both students and staff. (See the front page.) At some point, we’re going to have to fix that floor.

Our poorest farmers can’t use our Forest Credit program effectively because their soils no longer yield profitable harvests. A case in point is the farm of Quiterio Aquino, shown at bottom right. That’s Quiterio walking through a big patch of weeds, which are pretty much the only things that will grow on this part of his farm. But we think we have a solution to this increasingly common scenario: our “Parcela Agro-Ecológica,” an intensively-farmed plot that combines terracing (to trap water and retain nutrients), complex cropping with many different species, and soil management using composted cow manure. Such parcelas should boost yields while freeing up other land for forest restoration. We are creating our first such parcela on Quiterio’s farm, in the area shown here. It will cover about an acre. We plan to “transplant” this system to other farms as well.

