

THE ACORN



Reflecting On 2025 And Looking Forward

2025 has been a year in flux, but also a year for refocusing on the core of our mission at the Earth Sangha. We have had to make some hard decisions, but have also embarked on the most significant expansion of our propagation operation in the history of our organization. I think, overall, there is a lot to be optimistic about for our future.

We continue to face significant challenges – the same challenges that many of our friends, volunteers, and members feel at home right now. We know that many of you have been affected by capricious mass firings, by the extended government shutdown, and by reduced federal funding on all manner of important initiatives. We haven't been immune to these either; you can read about how funding for our Native Plant Conservation Internship program has been affected in this issue of *The Acorn*.

This summer we made the difficult decision to sunset our Tree Bank Hispaniola and Panama projects to refocus on our DC area efforts. Our reasons were in part logistical (Chris, Earth Sangha Co-Founder & Director Emeritus, is approaching retirement, we don't have significant language expertise, and staff travel is increasingly difficult to manage and coordinate), financial (fundraising for the Tree Bank has never fully met its expenses), and in part a reflection of the success of our projects. We arrived at natural, successful stopping points in Panama, and after nearly 20 years in the Dominican Republic, we have made some very significant durable changes and simply do not have the resources available for the much larger lift required to grow the program to the next stage. For those reasons, we decided to phase out the project over the second half of 2025, while keeping all the material assets in the Tree Bank communities (e.g. nursery infrastructure, the truck, the tri-motor), making final investments in community infrastructure, and focusing on ensuring that our partner organizations

– the Asociación de Productores de Bosque Los Cerezos and the Organización de Medicina Tradicional Naso – are prepared to administer projects without our input. And we plan to remain in contact with our former community partners. You can read more about our decision to sunset the Tree Bank on our blog, under the post “*What's Next For The Tree Bank*”. In this issue of *The Acorn*, Chris writes about how our Tree Bank Hispaniola project has made significant and lasting contributions to conservation and the community of Los Cerezos in the Dominican Republic.

Back at home, we broke ground on our Wild Plant Nursery relocation and expansion. We still don't have a firm timeline for the big move – we need to make sure we get water and fencing on site before we can bring plants over! But with some tremendous effort from Baray and Justin, and help from some of our partners and volunteers, we are making good progress already. (You can read more updates on the progress we've made on page 2.) This Winter, please keep an eye out for volunteering opportunities – once we winterize the nursery we'll be all-hands-on-deck at the new site. While we know that the new site on Old Colchester Road in Lorton will be a bit of a longer haul for many folks, the grand vision is to make the site more accessible, a better community experience, and to also extend our hours to make it easier to get the local-ecotype native plants you need.

...continued on the back page

Above: Our Executive Director, Maddie, came across this pair of mating zebra swallowtails (*Eurytides marcellus*) while scouting out seed collection sites this summer! Zebra swallowtails caterpillars rely on *Asimina triloba* (pawpaw) as their only food source, but the butterflies visit a variety of native flowering plants. Photo by Maddie Bright.

THEY'LL MATCH YOUR DONATION!

see the back page

Wild Plant Nursery Expansion Update

After an incredible response to our Summer matching campaign, our mission in August was to get our hands on some new machinery. The largest acquisition was a compact tractor - a little do-it-all machine that can brush hog, scoop soil, dig up irrigation lines for repair and whatever else our new operation may require. The tractor has been absolutely essential in this early phase of development at the new nursery site, allowing us to clear large areas of brush in relatively little time. We imagine that “Frank,” as it has been affectionately named, will continue to be a critical part of our operation, towing trailer-loads of plants and hauling soil around.



This Summer we also hired Baray (bottom left and top) and Justin (bottom right) as our new Site Development Team. Before joining the Sangha, Baray worked in native landscaping and is a Fairfax Master Naturalist. Justin previously interned with the Sangha in the Spring of 2025 while completing a certificate in biotechnology at Northern Virginia Community College. Justin also holds a B.S. in Biology and Environmental/Conservation Science from George Mason University. We would not have been able to achieve so much progress at the new nursery site without their careful attention to detail and strong work ethic!



Baray and Justin quickly started turning our conceptual plan into a reality. Their first order of business was to measure (and re-measure) the site to determine how the plan on paper fits with the topography of the land. They then began brushhogging the main “road” around the nursery and the two badly invaded meadows. Once we had a clear view of the site, they began to determine where our major paths needed to be cut to accommodate

irrigation lines and a central access road. They have been carefully delineating the spaces allocated for conservation and restoration on site. Most of the trees coming down are common, early-successional species like *Liquidambar styraciflua* (sweetgum). Training with an arborist taught us how to remove these trees efficiently and safely. Some of the wood will be chipped and used to cover walking paths, other parts will remain on site as habitat brush piles. We are also delineating regular areas for tree buffers, and will be rolling out extensive restoration on the site as we get settled in.

In October, we hosted our first-ever planting at the new site! The day began with Executive Director Maddie giving volunteers and partners a tour of the property, painting a picture of what it would look like when finished. We then installed a variety of herbaceous species in the main meadow (below) in a section of the site we’ve designated for conservation, including: *Asclepias tuberosa* (butterfly weed), *Liatrix spicata* (dense blazing star), and an assortment of asters in the meadow and *Osmunda regalis* (royal fern), *Osmundastrum cinnamomeum* (cinnamon fern), and *Polystichum acrostichoides* (Christmas fern) along the forest edge. In addition to the expanded propagation capacity at our new nursery site, we’re equally excited for the areas we’re placing in conservation to act as demonstration areas for the public to see different restoration projects in action and to act as seedbanks for once-common native species which are becoming harder and harder for us to find in the wild.



We’re extremely appreciative of everyone who supported our Fall matching campaign as we move on to the next phase of the site development. Next on our agenda is clearing space for our new container yard and installing irrigation followed by clearing space for our greenhouses and future sales yard. See the article on the front and back pages, “Reflecting On 2025 And Looking Forward,” for more information on our nursery expansion and how to get involved! You can also read more about our full plan for our nursery relocation and expansion at the bottom of our Donate page at earthsangha.org/donate under the section “Let’s Grow The Wild Plant Nursery.”



Above: Eliza Hayslett, arborist and tree climber from Pollinative Landscaping & Education, giving a chainsaw demonstration. Photo by Katherine Isaacson

Funding Challenges

Our funding strategy at the Earth Sangha has been to focus on resiliency rather than just growth. That means a diversified strategy: individual donors like you, revenue from our Wild Plant Nursery, and grants from private foundations and government entities all are part of our funding picture. It has served us well through previous periods of economic turmoil and we believe we are well-positioned to weather the current economic climate as well, though there are some significant challenges on the horizon.

We are lucky to have such generous and tenacious donors. The Sangha has weathered several economic downturns, being founded just before the dotcom bubble burst, continuing our work through the 2008 economic crisis, finding ways to continue operations through COVID-19 closures, and now as we get through our current nascent recession. And individual donors have been a huge part of that resilience.

Obviously federal funding is not a reliable source of support recently. In general, because of our local focus, federal grants have not been a large part of our fundraising efforts. Currently, our only exposure to restricted federal funding is our Conservation Internship Program which was supported, partly, by a matching grant from the Virginia Department of Forestry, but the grant program we applied through no longer has federal funding.

Our commitment to our internship program is unwavering. Not only has it become a key component of staffing our Wild Plant Nursery and a talent pipeline for the Sangha itself, but we have seen many of our interns go off to become professionals in conservation. Former interns work at the Fairfax County Park Authority and other land management agencies in Virginia, work as Landscape Architects, design and install native plant gardens, work at architecture firms with a focus on sustainability, or as GIS professionals, among other achievements.

That said, we have to face the realities that maintaining the program is difficult without support. While we will continue to search for new grants to support our internship program, and we remain committed to maintaining the program in perpetuity, for the upcoming year we may have to shrink the number of interns we can accept as we evaluate our broader funding picture.



Above: We started collaborating with Northern Virginia Conservation Trust to clear the Terborgh Terrace Garden conservation easement in Arlington of invasives in January of 2024 and this September, it was finally time to plant! This site is also being used by Arlington Friends of Urban Agriculture to grow food for local food pantries. Volunteers installed a variety of native flowers/grasses between the crop rows to reduce soil erosion and attract pollinators. Photo by Michaelanne Makuch.

Fall Open House & Native Plant Sale



A huge THANK YOU to everyone who joined us for our Fall Open House and Native Plant Sale on September 21st. This was our biggest Fall open house to date, raising over \$24,000 for local parkland restoration! (That includes our pre-COVID semi-annual open houses, which used to be the only times we were open to the public!) It was incredibly heartening to see so many folks (both new and familiar faces) and to pull off such a successful fundraising and community event, especially during these more uncertain times.



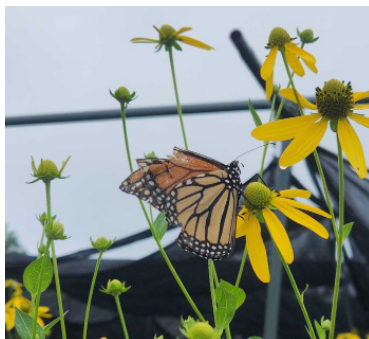
We also want to thank our partner organizations for joining us to advise visitors on native plants best suited to their project areas, how to remove invasives, and how to get involved in local, grassroots conservation work. Thank you to the Virginia Native Plant Society - Potomack Chapter, Plant NOVA Natives, Fairfax Tree Rescuers PRISM, Fairfax County Park Authority's Invasives Management Area, Nature Forward, the Fairfax Invasive Removal Alliance, Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, and Arlington Regional Master Naturalists for helping us pull off such a successful event!

They'll match your donation!

Starting on December 1st, our very generous benefactors will match the first \$150 dollars of all donations up to \$30,000! You give at least \$150, we get at least \$300. See the enclosed reply envelope or donate online at earthsangha.org/donate.

Visitors at the Wild Plant Nursery

This year the Wild Plant Nursery saw an abundance of monarchs! In the Summer, caterpillars chowed down on our milkweeds (pictured below left), and in early Fall they graced us with their butterfly form (below right).

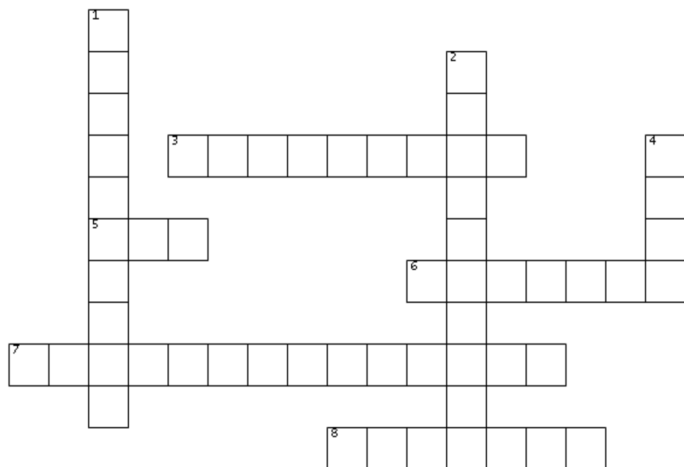


Spicebush swallowtails also made quite the appearance this year. As a defensive mechanism, these caterpillars will wrap themselves up in *Lindera benzoin* (spicebush) leaves like blanket-burritos by using silk strands to hold the leaf together (below left & right).



Crossword Corner:

Who's ready to learn some ecology? We've hidden the answers throughout this issue of The Acorn. Before you start Googling the answer, go back and see if you can find it for yourself!



Across:

3. ecosystem dominated by gram-
inoids (grasses, sedges, rushes)
5. to plant seed in soil for growing
6. primary underground plant part
that grows downward seeking
moisture
7. natural process needed for seeds
to break dormancy
8. population of a species adapted
to local conditions

Down:

1. layer of vegetation between
groundcover and canopy of a
forest
2. category of plants that can
survive in a wide range of
environmental conditions and is
consumed by a variety of wildlife
4. year when a species produces
an unusually large crop of seed

Plant Grants

We were thrilled to welcome our Fall 2025 Plant Grant recipients to the Wild Plant Nursery on October 5th to pick up their plant donations! Through our Plant Grant program, we supplied 11 small-scale restoration sites in the DC area with completely free, native plants to jumpstart their projects this Fall.

This cycle we focused on two plant communities (dry to moist meadow/forest edges and moist to wet meadow/forest edges) and created "kits" with 55 herbaceous plants and 12 trees/shrubs representing high-value generalist species. The "kits" also included a reference PDF with growing conditions, height/width, and wildlife supported for each species to give our grantees a foundation to build from and educate their communities. The Earth Sangha's Plant Grant program is designed to reach grass-roots restoration projects that have no or limited funds and would otherwise not be able to engage in restoration.

We are also incredibly thankful for the support provided by Fairfax County's Tree Preservation and Protection Fund this Fall! With their help, we are supplying 600 free trees and shrubs to sites within Fairfax County through both our Plant Grant program and the Fairfax County Park Authority's Invasive Management Area program. We use tree equity scores and the County's tree canopy goals to choose our partner sites.



Above: Development Coordinator Katie taking inventory of a Plant Grant destined for Fountain Rock Park. Photo by Katherine Isaacson



Above: Representatives from Hope United Church of Christ with three wheelbarrows full of plants ready to load up! Their goal with this Plant Grant is to plant an area of their churchyard that slopes towards Pike Branch in order to slow down the flow of rainwater, increase water absorption, reduce erosion, and prevent pollution runoff. Photo by Katherine Isaacson.

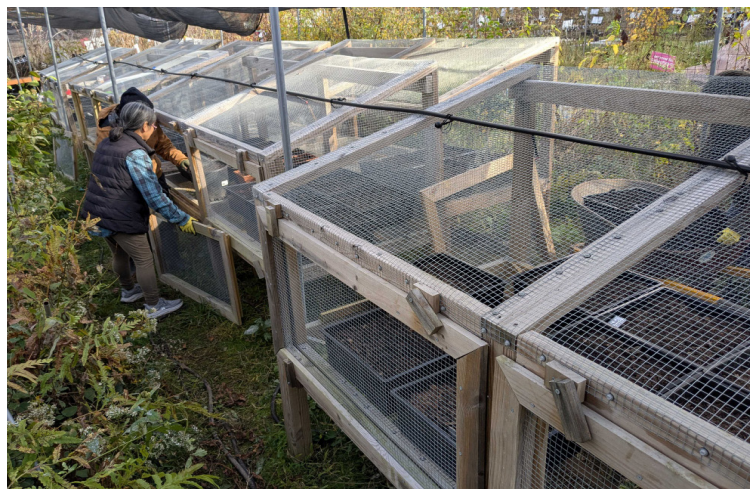
Fall Seed Collection

Fall seed collection makes us go nutty! This Fall, our staff and interns channeled our inner squirrels to collect acorns and hickory nuts especially in earnest as many of these high-value species were in a mast year - and we want to make the most of it. (A mast year is when a species produces an unusual quantity of seeds. Typically those species will produce far less seed in subsequent years.)



Hickories and oaks are not so simple to grow. Before sowing can even begin, there are two crucial steps to process the seeds. First, the nuts are given a “float test,” in which they are dumped into a bucket of water - floating indicates that a nut is rotted inside and needs to be thrown out. The non-floating nuts are then further processed by removing the hard outer husks or acorn caps, reducing detritus and giving them ample room to sprout. Once the final batch is ready, they can be sowed!

Sowing takes place outdoors at the Wild Plant Nursery, where propagation trays are prepared with soil. You’ll notice in the image above that the *Carya cordiformis* (bitternut hickory) and *Carya tomentosa* (mockernut hickory) nuts are sowed rather



densely. Both hickories and oaks have low germination rates, so we expect only some of each batch to actually sprout. Additionally, overcrowding is normally not an issue in the first couple of years as their energy prioritizes developing taproots straight down into the soil, not on roots growing horizontally. Taproot development is especially important for young oaks and hickories as they seek moisture, which is why we sow in deep trays.

Once the nuts are evenly dispersed in the trays, we cover them with a light layer of soil (bottom left photo). These seeds are susceptible to rot, so we have to make sure they aren’t buried too deeply. Sprinkling leaf mulch on top helps to retain moisture and mimic where they would naturally grow - a forest floor! Finally we place the trays in squirrel-proof enclosures (pictured above) and lightly water. These trays are left at the nursery over the Winter to induce cold stratification, a natural process that most woody seeds require to germinate. After a year or so, they are potted into small tree tubes for the taproots to continue developing. And after another year in tree tubes, they can be potted in gallons and sold!



In addition to collecting seeds for our own propagation work at the Wild Plant Nursery, we are continuing to partner with FCPA’s Landscape Legacy and Sustainability program to collect en masse for ongoing meadow restoration projects. Last year, we collected 48 pounds of mixed seed from reference sites to shore up areas in need of native cover. Now that we’ve worked out a few of the kinks of bulk collection and cleaning, we’re excited to work more efficiently to better support the program’s efforts. We targeted high-quality meadow fragments and collected in phases as different species ripened throughout the Fall. Our colleagues at FCPA will disperse/direct sow the seed in order to bolster populations of native meadow species.

Conservation Intern Field Trips

We kept our interns busy, busy, busy this year! Not only were they working hard at the nursery and in the field with Earth Sangha staff, but they also had multiple opportunities to network with other professionals and local leaders in the fields of restoration and horticulture. To help our interns become more familiar with the variety of jobs possible in conservation, we curated six field trips so they could get a glimpse of what other professionals are doing, get their hands dirty, and ask questions.

We visited the Arlington County Parks and Rec Department for a tour of their nursery and a nearby restoration site with their Natural Resources Team. Interns joined Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) ecologists at Ellanor C. Lawrence Park to repair deer fencing. We did an intern swap with FCPA's Invasive Management Area (IMA) – one day, the FCPA IMA interns taught Earth Sangha interns how to assess ecological health of a site, and another day, our interns taught FCPA IMA interns about propagating native species. The full Earth Sangha team made a pilgrimage out to the Clifton Institute for a behind-the-scenes tour of their property to learn about grassland restoration. Lastly, our cadre of interns toured Meadowlark Botanical Gardens and Green Spring Gardens to see how restoration and traditional horticulture practices can converge. Each trip was followed by a discussion amongst our team about that particular career path and how our background with native plants could be applied. These experiences enrich the Earth Sangha's Conservation Internship program by expanding interns' networks, providing exposure to various career paths, and having a fun time while doing so!

The Earth Sangha's Conservation Internship program directly addresses a main issue in urban forest management and conservation in Virginia: the lack of a local pipeline to educate/train people for future work in on-the-ground conservation and restoration work. Training includes hands-on experience in native plant identification, natural plant community identification, seed collection, handling, processing, and propagation, and ecological restoration techniques including invasive species management.



Above: Earth Sangha staff and interns with Clifton Institute staff discussing their research on how grasslands responded to different management techniques including burning, mowing, grazing, and targeted invasive removal. Photo by Michaelanne Makuch.

Sangha Staff Spotlight

Training Coordinator: Shogofa



We are pleased to re-introduce Shogofa! Many of you are already familiar with Shogofa, who joined the Sangha as a Conservation Intern in the Fall of 2024. We've been so impressed by her eagerness to learn, work ethic, and passion for native plants that we couldn't bear losing her as a part of the Earth Sangha team. We also recognized that as the Sangha is growing, we need more help! So Maddie and

Shogofa sat down together to create her new position... Training Coordinator! As Training Coordinator, Shogofa is in charge of shepherding our annual flock of both Full-Season and Seasonal Conservation Interns. Her responsibilities now include everything from training interns in our procedures at the Wild Plant Nursery to teaching the basics of native plant identification and seed collection to manual invasive species removal techniques. She also coordinates their weekly schedule (no small feat!) and organizes additional educational and networking opportunities with some of our conservation partners.

But wait, there's more! As with all of our staff, Shogofa wears many hats. She also assists Kayla (Nursery Manager) at the Wild Plant Nursery with regular propagation activities, has taken over some administrative duties from Katherine (Director of Development) and Katie (Development Coordinator) including pot tag printing and inventory management, and is working with Lisa to develop new ways of documenting our seed collection activities. We are excited to watch Shogofa grow in her new role!

Conservation Intern: Samar



Samar joined our team this Fall as a Conservation Intern thanks to generous funding from a private donor through the NOVA Foundation to support internships for current students at the Northern Virginia Community College. We were thrilled to have her as a part of our team this Fall.

"Hi, I'm Samar, a current student at Northern Virginia Community College pursuing an Associates in Social Science with plans to transfer to George Mason to double major in Sociology and Environmental and Sustainability Studies. I'm so excited to work with Earth Sangha to contribute to local conservation efforts and combine my passion with birdwatching with native plants to create habitats for pollinators!"

What Good Did the Tree Bank Hispaniola Do?

It's impossible to say for sure how durable our work abroad will be in the future, but in this note I'll explain why I think the prospects are actually quite good. Our main Tree Bank project area is in the Dominican Republic near the border with Haiti, in an area called Los Cerezos. It's a hard-scrabble region of sparse pasture, stands of pine on steep ridges and lush fingers of broad-leaf forest along the streams below. The purpose of the program was to create an agroforestry system that would conserve and restore native forest and increase local small-holder incomes. In our project area poverty and deforestation are linked, so it made sense to try to address both problems together. In most years about 55 families participated. In my view, the Tree Bank Hispaniola can lay claim to six major achievements. These achievements may be hard to measure, but that doesn't detract from their importance. Here they are

1: We rehabilitated coffee.

Coffee had been a mainstay of local agriculture for generations. It requires skill and time to produce a good yield, but pound for pound, coffee was by far the region's most valuable crop. When fungal pests destroyed coffee groves in 2014 we saw an opportunity to link coffee with forest conservation. Coffee requires shade so we planted hundreds of thousands of native trees, grown at our Tree Bank nursery to supply that shade, along with new pest-resistant cultivars of coffee. Today the coffee groves are bursting with fruit in good years. How durable will this success prove to be? Very, I think, since local farmers are experts in handling coffee and no one in their right mind would cut back a coffee grove — and the native canopy above it — that is making money.

2: We developed cacao as a major crop.

Cacao is the small tree whose seed is used to make chocolate. Like coffee, cacao is a high-priced, shade-loving tree crop. But before the Tree Bank, cacao wasn't really a thing in Los Cerezos. There were a few aficionados, but that was it. We encouraged the planting of cacao and began producing thousands of cacao seedlings at the Tree Bank nursery. Demand for the seedlings has surged and many farmers now plant cacao as a supplement to their coffee. Dominican cacao is prized for its flavor and quality. And as with coffee, the likelihood of continued success is high.

3: We improved landscape water retention.

Forests hold immense quantities of water in both the soil and the vegetation itself, and they release that water slowly after each rainfall. Centuries of "slash and burn" cultivation and overbrowsing by cattle have left a thin, fragile topsoil that dries rapidly. To improve the situation, we encouraged farmers to allow the planting of "pocket parcelas" with native trees. Most of these areas are small (an acre or less) and of little use for agriculture, but they will gradually transform the area into another landscape sponge. Between this and the agroforestry, Los Cerezos is definitely greener and wetter than it was before the Tree Bank arrived in 2006. On that point, everyone seems to agree.

4: We extended native-tree canopy.

At the urging of our partner organization, the Asociación de Productores de Bosque Los Cerezos, we purchased a 44-acre "Gran Reserva" that includes the headwaters of a major stream.

Some parts were deforested, but it also encompassed significant forest that is now held in conservation by the community. Other areas we restored. The trees that we planted there and at other parcelas all came from the Tree Bank nursery. Over the life of the project, we grew about 15 native canopy species, collecting their seed, germinating them, and growing out the seedlings which the farmers then planted. I don't know exactly how many trees we planted, but the total would be in the hundreds-of-thousands. During our time in Los Cerezos, ours was the only native-tree planting operation in the region. These plantings provided habitat for native birds, reptiles, bats, and insects.

5: We created a small-holder farm credit program.

The Tree Bank's "Forest Credit" lending program is designed to address a kind of credit gap. It's very difficult to farm without access to credit. But very few banks in our project area have programs designed to meet the needs of small-holders. That's where we fit in. We offer modest annual loans, mostly on the order of \$1,000 USD, for farmers to use as they need in exchange for pledges not to cut specific tracts of reasonably high-quality forest they own. Loan size is based on the quality and size of these "credit reserves." A small charge of non-compounding interest is added to the repayment obligation, to help keep the program stable.

In April, the program boosted its loan value by an eye-popping 47 percent. We lent about \$50,900 to 53 families, in exchange for the conservation of about 354 acres of native and mostly riparian forest. The lending included \$6,665 in "new money" — that is, donations to the credit fund from the Sangha — and it overtopped last year's total of \$34,700 by \$16,200.

There is no question that Forest Credit is challenging to administer, but it has two factors going for it. First, all of its funds are already in the system; the money is either out on loan or it's sitting in a bank account in the Dominican Republic, awaiting its next use - all of those funds are staying there with the farmers. And second, there is a high level of transparency; when someone is late repaying, everyone knows about it. In effect, there is a kind of built-in audit function. Chances of continued success I think are good.

6: We assembled a tough, clever, and compassionate team, and we gave that team our full support.

Cosme, Manolo, and Yinabel — our in-country leaders — brought a deep understanding of their community to bear on local issues of vital importance, and to very good effect. Our support took the form of monthly stipends for the leaders and for the nursery crew, and a lot of hardware, including an association building, two pickup trucks (in sequence, not together), a tri-motor for back-country delivery of seedlings, nursery supplies including shade cloth, steel pipe, and water storage tanks, and personal gear such as phones and GPS units. All the hardware belongs to the project, not to the Sangha. We don't want anything back!

Even if things change in one way or another, we believe that the Tree Bank Hispaniola will continue to function as an important community resource.

Chris Bright, Earth Sangha Co-Founder & Director Emeritus
See our blog, *Life The In The Field*, for the full article.

...continued from front page

As we get closer to opening we'll share more details about all of those points. In the meantime, we have a lot of work to do!

As we look to the future, both short-term and long-term for the Earth Sangha, our nursery expansion and relocation is the single most important task we have ahead of us, and this is where we need the most support. We have a number of larger one-time expenses to make this happen.

Our evolution as an organization to focus more strongly on seed collection, plant propagation, and distribution of those plants is in part because the plant conservation landscape in the DC area has changed so dramatically since our founding in 1997. Now we operate with a diverse and energetic set of partner organizations that are doing so much on-the-ground conservation work. These groups range from departments of local jurisdictions, myriad volunteer groups, our local Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISMs), and other non-profits. Increasingly it is clear that the way we can have the biggest impact is to focus on what only we can deliver: a diverse array of local-ecotype native plants grown in a sustainable manner and accessible to a wide audience at affordable prices and through our extensive plant donation efforts. To do this, we need to significantly expand our growing operations.

And to achieve that expansion, we need your support. As we continue to get the new nursery site ready for prime-time we have some significant expenses: irrigation supplies and equipment, heavy equipment rental (we have a lot of irrigation that needs to be buried to be frost-free!), and hiring contracted labor to assist Baray and Justin with the excellent work they have been doing. All of these are essential for both the upfront establishment of our nursery and the ongoing operation of the facility.

As part of the expansion we have some big goals ahead of us. We're not just looking to grow more of the same, but also to grow trees and shrubs to larger sizes to meet different needs on different sites, to make our new nursery a destination for community and education centered on native plant conservation, to train more future conservation professionals, and to expand our efforts to donate native plants to projects with little, or even no, budgets.

Thank you so much to all of our volunteers and donors (and hardworking staff!) for helping to make this shared dream of ours a reality. And looking forward to an exciting 2026.

-Maddie Bright, Executive Director



5101 I Backlick Road Annandale, VA 22003
703-333-3022 info@earthsangha.org

The Earth Sangha is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) charity based in the Washington, DC, area. We are devoted to the restoration and conservation of native plant communities.

Donate: Donations are tax-deductible. You can mail us a check (made out to "Earth Sangha") or donate on our website at earthsangha.org/donate.

Volunteer: We work with volunteers at our Wild Plant Nursery and our field sites in Northern Virginia. Sign up to volunteer at earthsangha.org/volunteer.

Contact Us: info@earthsangha.org | 5101i Backlick Road, Annandale, VA 22003 | (703) 333-3022 | earthsangha.org.

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One of the Best: The Earth Sangha is recognized by Spur Local (formerly the Catalogue for Philanthropy) as "one of the best small charities in the Washington, DC, region."

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They'll match your donation!

Starting on December 1st, our very generous benefactors will match the first \$150 dollars of all donations up to \$30,000! You give at least \$150, we get at least \$300. See the enclosed reply envelope or donate online at earthsangha.org/donate.

Photo left: Our restoration work at Mason District Park continues! We began working to protect native regeneration and stop the spread of invasive species in 2023. Though Mason District Park is home to some nice stands of upland forest, the oak canopy is in decline with a lack of understory regeneration. This March, Earth Sangha staff and volunteers collaborated with FCPA ecologists to install 92 oak seedlings, mostly *Quercus montana* (chestnut oak). In October, we returned to the March planting site to remove invasives from the deer exclosures (which are protecting the plantings) and check on the oak seedlings, now growing big and strong! We are reserving a good portion of our potted *Quercus montana*, *Q. rubra* (Northern red oak), and *Q. alba* (white oak) for a later planting into additional exclosures. Also this Fall, with the help of students from the Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart, more English ivy was removed and 30 more trees and shrubs were planted to restore the declining canopy and redevelop the understory layer. Photo by Michaelanne Makuch.