



THE EARTH SANGHA WILD PLANT NURSERY AFTER SIX YEARS OF GROWING, A MAJOR RENOVATION

The suburban vision of the Great Outdoors may still be mostly a matter of asphalt and turf, but at least in the Washington, DC, region, there's a growing demand for "wild plants," and we're expanding our nursery to help meet it. The Sangha's Wild Plant Nursery is designed mainly to support ecological restoration projects, both our own and those of our partners. We also help with school landscapes and similar projects. We grow only species native to the Washington region, and we propagate exclusively from seed that we ourselves collect from the wild—which is how the nursery got its name.

Our nursery was established in 2001, in the community gardens section of Fairfax County's Franconia Park. It's small by commercial standards, but pretty substantial for a grass-roots effort. With a 5,500 square-foot container yard, 1,900 square feet of raised beds, a small greenhouse offsite, and well over 100 species in propagation, our nursery is by far the most extensive effort in this region to propagate the native flora directly from local forests and meadows.

Because they come from the wild, our plants are both genetically diverse, and genetically representative of local native-plant populations. Planting wild-grown stock helps to safeguard an important natural resource: the genetic character of this region's flora.

Our nursery benefits ecological restoration in another way as well. We are growing an increasing number of species that are hard to find in the standard nursery trade, at least in substantial quantities. We propagate a very broad range of native trees, shrubs, vines, and herbaceous (non-woody) plants to help restoration go both wider and deeper—wider in the types of sites brought into care, deeper into the management of site plant communities.

Photos

In the banner, wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*), one of several dozen native herbs in propagation at our nursery. At top, from left to right, Andrew, Bruce, Roger, Matt, Joe, Michael, and Philip at work on our new container yard shade structure. At right, Roger (blue jacket) and Bill bore a hole for one of the structure poles, while Kris stands around holding a trowel. (Actually Kris bored a lot of holes as well—just not this one!)

We are always tinkering with the nursery installation, but this year's renovation is the biggest advance that we have ever made. Our first order of business was to build an eight-foot tall shade structure over the entire container yard. You can see this labor in progress in the photo above. The new structure will keep our shade cloth high overhead, well out of the way of our work. It will also allow us to grow some plants to much taller sizes than our old, four-foot enclosures did. (Those are the wooden frames in the background.)

We also added three huge raised beds, amounting to over 1,000 square feet of growing space, for producing "dryland herbs," non-woody plants adapted to poor soils in full light. A supply of these species will improve our ability to work on upland sites and areas with badly compacted soils where tree-planting is not feasible. The beds were built by Andrew Frank as an Eagle Scout project for Scout Troop 1532, with the help of some of Andrew's fellow scouts. Andrew and friends did a fantastic job! (See page 5.)

Other upgrades include a new hose system for watering, and two items still in planning: a set of germination beds and a station for processing seed and transplanting.

The renovation, like virtually everything else at the nursery, is the work of our reliable and incredibly hard-working volunteers. The Sangha owes them a great deal—and so do our wild plants! If you would like to volunteer, contact our Conservation Director, Lisa Bright, at (703) 764-4830 or at lbright@earthsangha.org.



Visit our page in the Catalogue for Philanthropy:
www.catalogueforphilanthropy.org/dc



EARTH SANGHA

BUDDHIST VALUES IN ACTION

The Earth Sangha is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charity dedicated to environmental action as an expression of the Buddhist way of life.

Want to donate or join the Sangha?

You can support our work by becoming a member. Membership starts at \$35 per year. Your donation is tax-deductible.

Our mailing address is:

Earth Sangha
10123 Commonwealth Blvd.
Fairfax, VA 22032-2707.

Comprehensive program information is available on our web site: earthsangha.org.

Want to volunteer or meditate with us?

We work with volunteers at our nursery and our field sites in northern Virginia and DC. We hold regular sittings in Old Town, Alexandria, at 211 King Street, Third Floor, Tuesday and Wednesday Evenings, 7:00-9:00. For more information on either volunteering or sitting, call Lisa Bright at (703) 764-4830.

The Acorn

The *Acorn*, an occasional publication of the Earth Sangha, is created 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. Photo credits: Lisa Bright: pp. 1 (lower two) and 5 (R col. middle and bottom); Fairfax County Park Authority: p. 3 (top); other photos by Chris Bright.

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They heave soil and mulch, haul pots, hang shade cloth, build things, tear things down, dig in native plants, dig out alien ones, and water thousands of seedlings, sometimes for hours at a stretch. We call our nursery volunteers "Zen Hosers"—and the hoser part is pretty easy to understand. (See above!) Here's the Zen part: these people don't just volunteer in their spare time—they even donate time that isn't spare. They sacrifice to do this work. Nor is time all that they donate; many of our volunteers contribute

substantial sums of money as well. Buddhism has a more serious name for people so adept in giving. We call them Bodhisattvas, beings who practice a kind of radical generosity as part of their path to enlightenment.

Such generosity has created more than a conventional nursery; it has created a place where thousands of lives converge for renewal—the lives of the forests and fields, the lives of the Bodhisattvas themselves. We are deeply grateful to them all.

SHARED EARTH FOUNDATION RENEWS ITS NURSERY SUPPORT

In February, the Shared Earth Foundation renewed its support of our nursery with a grant of \$10,000. Shared Earth gave us the first grant we ever got, back in 2001, the year our nursery opened at Franconia Park. Since then, Shared Earth has supported us every year.

Shared Earth is an important ally for a small organization like ours. Caroline Gabel, Shared Earth's President, serves on the boards of some of the most influential American conservation organizations, including American Forests and Defenders of Wildlife. She is active in local conservation as well, as a board member of the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy and the Maryland Critical Areas Commission for the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Coastal Bays. She also has a deep commitment to tropical forests—and to the people and animals who inhabit them. Shared Earth supports the Alliance for International Restoration, which is restoring forest in Guatemala and Nicaragua. Caroline also works with the Borneo Land Trust to conserve orangutan habitat, and she is helping two women's groups on Borneo to organize forest restoration projects.

Where does the Sangha fit among all these concerns? Caroline says, "I have worked with reforestation groups for many years, from Borneo to Guatemala; and cannot say enough about our own, local tree-planting organization, Earth Sangha. It is as good as any I've seen, and the need, in the Potomac Basin, is as critical as any need anywhere. I am proud to support Earth Sangha."





HSBC volunteers at Frying Pan Farm Park last October.

HSBC FUNDS OUR NURSERY AND HELPS STABILIZE A LOCAL STREAM

Last October, volunteers from HSBC Finance Corporation helped save a badly degraded stream in western Fairfax County by planting trees along a huge storm water “dry pond” at Frying Pan Farm Park. The pond drains into Horsepen Creek, in the Goose Creek watershed, which straddles the border between Fairfax and Loudon counties. HSBC paired the planting effort with a generous \$7,000 grant to our nursery.

Storm ponds are big, man-made depressions designed to collect runoff from nearby developments and then release it relatively slowly into nearby streams. Dry ponds, as the name suggests, are designed to empty completely between storms. Storm ponds help stabilize streams in heavily developed regions like ours, but local runoff volumes are so great that storm ponds alone cannot contain them. Other types of storm water management are also needed, and replanting forest is one of our most cost-effective options.

To improve the Frying Pan pond, HSBC volunteers planted 130

native trees and shrubs along parts of its banks. (To protect the plants, green “tree tubes,” like the one in the photo above, were installed over most of them.) As the plants mature, they will absorb some runoff and excess nutrients, thereby helping to stabilize Horsepen Creek and reduce the pollution flowing into it. The plants will also create more wildlife habitat and absorb carbon dioxide, the principal greenhouse gas. The planting was part of Fairfax County’s stream buffer restoration program, a joint effort involving county agencies, the Virginia Department of Forestry, and the Earth Sangha.

HSBC organizes regular volunteer days for its employees and its philanthropic arm makes gifts to small charities like us. These volunteers obviously had a lot of fun, but they also did a very careful job, and we expect the planting to do well. Maybe a methodical approach comes easily to bankers! Our thanks to Jamal Pierre, Human Resources Manager for the HSBC’s MidAtlantic Division, who organized the effort. “HSBC actively encourages our employees to participate in volunteer projects in communities where they live and do business,” said Jamal. “Outreach programs like this enrich the lives of our employees by encouraging them to team together and volunteer their time for projects such as conserving areas in the local communities.”

Photo Below: This is what our nursery’s container yard looked like when we started renovation in March. All those low, wooden container frames are being removed to create a more open and flexible growing space underneath the new shade structure. Here, volunteers are setting rows of metal sockets into the ground; the sockets hold the 8-foot-high pipes that you can see in the cover photo.



IN GRATITUDE TO OUR MAJOR DONORS FOR 2006

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.

The Spring Creek Foundation
\$15,000

Anonymous donors
\$15,000

The Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund
\$10,000

\$2,000 – \$2,999
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\$1,000 – \$1,999
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Chris Engnoth
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Catherine Garigan
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Jeanne Halpin

The Curtis and Edith Munson Foundation
\$10,000

The Shared Earth Foundation
\$10,000

HSBC Finance Corporation
\$7,000

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Don Robinson and Elizabeth Ketz-Robinson

The National Arbor Day Foundation
\$6,960

Ashley Mattoon and David Leopold
Dennis O'Connor and Allison M O'Connor
Gail and Bob Weigl

Joshua Wenz

Wendy Mills and Mark Habeeb
Patricia and Lawrence Molumby
Cindy Porter
Larry Reavis

Marlene Sandhu and Mandeep Singh
Linda and Ken Schatz
Carol Shuh
Darrell Smith
Sarah Smucker
The Vienna Moms Club
Russ Watts
Penelope Wilk
Lisa Williams
Maria Williams
Michael Xu
Nan and Howard Zimmerman

Photo: Open water at the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, a Chesapeake Bay wetland in Dorchester County, Maryland.

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

Plant whisperer: That's Lisa in our nursery's "wild herb corral," handling a restive clump of white snakeroot (*Ageratina altissima*, formerly *Eupatorium rugosum*). The big, yellow-flowered plant is woodland sunflower (*Helianthus divaricatus*). These plants are herbs in the botanical sense—meaning that they aren't woody—but mostly not in the culinary sense. They're wild in our usual sense: We propagate them from the wild.

Native herbs are important strands in the fabric of our landscape. Some of these plants, for example, have specific relationships with native animals, especially insects, which depend on them for food or shelter. In return, the critters pollinate them or disperse their seed. But in the greater Washington region, many native herbs are in decline. Some do not tolerate disturbance very well, and some are "weak dispersers"—their seeds do not travel very far, so they cannot readily colonize new habitat. If our local meadows and forests are to retain their full complement of native herbs, these plants need our care.





So good she wants to cry: Eagle scout candidate Andrew Frank (above) did such a great job organizing our nursery's dryland herb project that Lisa says she wants to cry whenever she thinks about it. Andrew and company built three large, raised beds for growing native, drought-tolerant meadow plants.

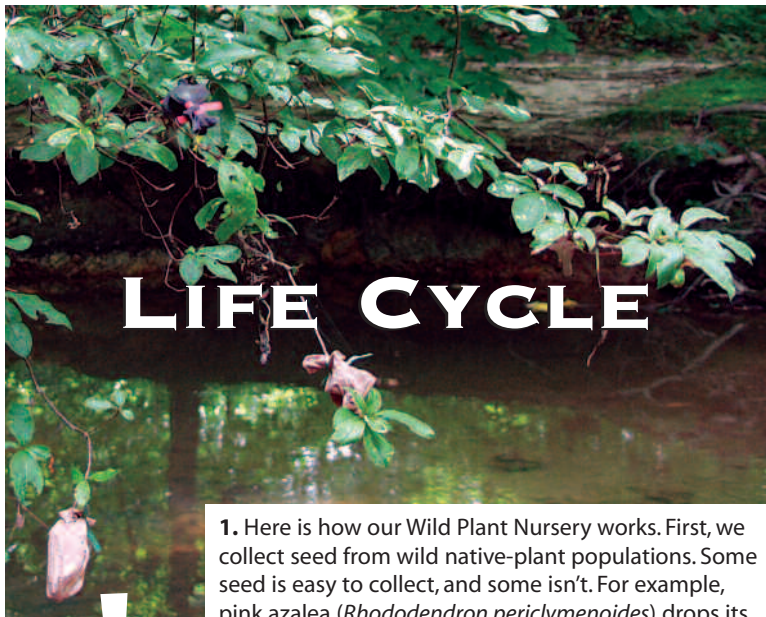
Common in the woods, rare in propagation: Hickories (above, right) hate growing in pots, and few commercial nurseries bother with them. But we do our best for them—and for many other species that no sane nursery-person would touch with a ten-foot dibble. These little mockernut hickories (*Carya tomentosa*) were grown from seed collected on Fairfax County parkland, and that's where most of them will return.

Masters meet the natives: Last July, the Arlington County Master Gardeners came by our nursery for a tour and discussion, led by Chris Bright (right). We'll probably never make the garden tour circuit but fellow plant geeks are always welcome!

Two generations from Powhatan: We collect most of our seed on parkland, but last October, Greg Zell, naturalist extraordinaire for Arlington County, invited us along on his census of big trees at Arlington National Cemetery. (That's Greg in the green shirt, below right.) Some Arlington oaks are thought to have sprouted in the 18th century—which means that the grandparents of our Arlington seedlings may have sheltered contemporaries of Powhatan, his daughter Pocahontas, and Captain John Smith.

More than just hosing: Our nursery volunteers do many things besides watering. Below, Lisa admires a cache of freshly transplanted spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*).





LIFE CYCLE

1. Here is how our Wild Plant Nursery works. First, we collect seed from wild native-plant populations. Some seed is easy to collect, and some isn't. For example, pink azalea (*Rhododendron periclymenoides*) drops its seed shortly after ripening. To collect seed from this one, we've tied bits of panty hose over its seed pods.



2. The bagged seed is inventoried, then stored in our "Forest Fridge" or planted in our greenhouse. (A few species are sown directly at our nursery.) Different species need different treatments to get them to sprout.



4. The final step is planting back into the forest, or the forest-to-be. This little green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*) was planted to help establish buffer forest around the Barcroft Bog in Arlington, Virginia. The bog contains two rare plant communities.



3. Eventually, everything is grown out at our nursery. We grow woody plants for at least two years; herbaceous plants are usually ready after just one year. These white oak (*Quercus alba*) seedlings are starting their second year.

