







# FLUTTER

## & BOB

Many thanks to last year's second-graders at Laurel Ridge Elementary, who sent us a packet of drawings and notes earlier this summer, on the subject of Flutter and Bob, two butterflies that the class raised, then released in a pollinator garden stocked with plants from our Wild Plant Nursery. (Here Flutter and Bob are floating above their new domain.) The Sangha regularly distributes plants to local schools for such projects.

## TERRA INCOGNITA

Every Friday, I drive to the Marie Butler Leven Preserve, in the McLean section of Fairfax County, Virginia, where I spend the morning alone in the woods. For the past six weeks, I have been working in a narrow strip of forest along the park's western boundary, where a dense tangle of greenbriar and fox grape reaches up into the power lines and out over Kirby Road. This patch only covers half an acre — but what it lacks in scale it manages to achieve in density: we have been working at the Preserve since 2004, but thick infestations of invasive alien plants still predominate here.

Alien territory! Hence my Friday mornings. I work slowly in here. I check the vines reaching up into the canopy, to see if they're grape (okay because all the grapes here are native) or porcelainberry (not native, not okay). I chop into thickets to cut the base of a Norway maple stem, or to free the lower branches of a white oak. Along the inside edge of the strip, there's a "curtain" of spiny Pennsylvania blackberry covered by a scrambling tangle of invasive alien vines reaching up into the trees. I chop through the curtain to liberate a line of redcedars that we had planted here a couple of years ago. And I cut dozens of stems of blacklocust, a spiny tree that thrives on disturbance and that would dominate this entire little realm if we let it.

Chop, chop, chop. Why do so many of these plants have to be so spiny? A rhetorical question intended for my ears only. Anyway, there's no one around to reply. I love the heft of my brush knife; I shift it from one hand to the other so I don't have to rest. Near a couple of blacklocust I spot a little blackjack oak. Not many of those around here. How did that acorn get here?

After an hour or so, my hands are bleeding from the thorns, I'm drenched with sweat, and I've given up swatting the mosquitoes. And I'm asking myself: why do I like this so much? And why should a place as familiar as this — I've walked every square yard of it many times — still seem so mysterious? I tell myself that I must be learning important lessons in here. But that's not very convincing because I have no idea what those lessons might be. All I know for sure: little by little, more redcedar, more oak and sassafras. Little by little, less porcelainberry and blacklocust. Simple, right?

— Chris Bright, President

# 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. 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.

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