



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EARTH SANGHA

THE ACORN

JULY 2005



Breaking Ground at the Kimball School in Anacostia

On Friday, June 17, the first graders of Kimball Elementary School began creating a forest understory display, as part of an Earth Sangha project to “green” the grounds. The children helped plant a variety of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants in a large bed at the front of the property. “The kids did a wonderful job and had a great time,” said Margaret Garigan, a Sangha board member and a principal organizer of the project. “It was the first time that many of them had even held a shovel.”

Kimball is a DC public school located on Minnesota Avenue, less than half a mile east of the Anacostia River, and just north of 376-acre Fort Dupont Park. The project will gradually transform the school grounds into a native-plant landscape that reduces stormwater run-off and educates students about the Anacostia watershed.

The landscaping is linked to Kimball’s classrooms by a watershed protection curriculum developed by Jeanette Stewart, President of Lands and Waters, a local nonprofit focused on environmental education. The curriculum began this spring with the first grade and will be extended this fall through the fourth grade. The fifth grade (Kimball’s highest grade) will participate through Earth Force, a youth-oriented environmental group. Jen McDonnell, Executive Director of the Capital Region Earth Force, will take fifth graders on water-quality monitoring expeditions into Fort Dupont Park.

The timber for our first landscape bed was donated by Hands On DC, an organization that creates volunteer projects to improve the District’s schools. Hands On DC also assembled a team of AmeriCorps volunteers to build the 22- by 38-foot frame. The planting itself was guided by Kimball teachers, Sangha volunteers, and several other people important to the project, including Jen, Jeanette, and Larry Molumby, a board member of the Spring Creek Foundation, which funds both the Sangha and Lands and Waters.

The project will likely extend to the building itself. “We’re looking at energy efficiency,” said Margaret. “And we’re exploring the idea of installing a green roof.” Such an agenda might be over-ambitious, were it not for the project’s most important collaborator: Sheil’a Miller, Kimball’s principal. “We are very lucky to be working with her,” said Jeannette. “She is very resourceful, deeply committed to her students, and willing to innovate in order to broaden their education.”



At top: Sangha member Perley Cooper with a contingent of Kimball first graders. Above: Jeanette Stewart, President of Lands and Waters, and two young urban foresters install a hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*). More photos at www.earthsangha.org; click on Sangha News.

EARTH SANGHA SELECTED FOR THE 2005 GREATER WASHINGTON CATALOGUE FOR PHILANTHROPY

We are delighted to announce that the Sangha will appear in this year’s Greater Washington Catalogue for Philanthropy, a showcase for charitable excellence supported by Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and the Harman, Meyer, and Cafritz Foundations. The Sangha was among 74 organizations chosen from a field of nearly 250 candidates. For more information, please visit www.catalogueforphilanthropy.org.

THE MISSION OF THE EARTH SANGHA IS TO PRACTICE BUDDHISM IN WAYS THAT HELP PEOPLE BECOME BETTER STEWARDS OF THE PLANET, AND TO DO THE PRACTICAL ENVIRONMENTAL WORK THAT GOOD STEWARDSHIP DEMANDS.



IN THE WORDS OF OUR MEMBERS

Cynthia Irmer

There's a basic idea about giving that's important to me: it's the idea that generosity allows you to be a channel for positive energy. It's almost as if life itself is just waiting for you to act this way, waiting for you to discover this. And as you learn the practice of charity, you really begin to receive. It's a subtle process—it's not like buying stock—but I think it's real.

In my work, I spend a fair bit of time in other parts of the world, trying to help resolve difficult social conflicts, and working with people whose backgrounds are very different from my own. In circumstances like that, it can be a huge challenge to connect with people in a way that leads to positive change. It takes a lot of careful thought—and a lot of intuitive engagement as well. I see my work as a kind of giving; I try hard to direct some positive energy at the problems that I'm dealing with.

One of the reasons that I value my effort within the Sangha is that it complements my regular work. It lets me tap into some kinds of energy that I don't get to use at the office. For example, I like the physical aspects of my time in the field. I like coming into the office with maybe just a little muscle soreness, or a little sunburn on my face, and with the consciousness of having given in my physical capacity. I like participating in our effort as a physical being.

It's also a release to be part of something that's so creative, and that I didn't personally have to plan. I can just give of myself—and appreciate the results!

PLANT YOURSELF WITHIN THE SANGHA!

BEGINNING NEXT SPRING, DC-AREA MEMBERS CAN COLLECT A FREE PLANT FROM OUR WILD PLANT NURSERY, WHILE PROGRAM SUPPLIES LAST. IF YOU'RE INTERESTED, CONTACT LISA, AT (703) 764-4830, OR AT LBRIGHT@EARTHSANGHA.ORG, AND ASK TO BE PUT ON THE MEMBER PLANT LIST. (FOR SOME SPECIES, PLANTS MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE UNTIL FALL.) THE PROGRAM WILL WORK ON A FIRST-COME, FIRST-SERVED BASIS, SO THE BEST WAY TO MAKE SURE YOU GET THE PLANT YOU WANT IS TO GET IN TOUCH SOON! IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE, YOU HAVE TO BE A MEMBER—AND PAID UP THROUGH THE NEXT GROWING SEASON; THAT'S THROUGH THE END OF 2006. MEMBERSHIP STARTS AT \$35 PER YEAR. MAKE YOUR CHECK OUT TO EARTH SANGHA AND SEND IT TO US AT 10123 COMMONWEALTH BLVD., FAIRFAX, VA 22032. WE'LL SEND YOU A RECEIPT. THE EARTH SANGHA IS A 501(C)(3) NONPROFIT.

OUR MEDITATION SCHEDULE

IN OLD TOWN, ALEXANDRIA:
AT THE MINDFUL HANDS ART GALLERY,
211 KING STREET, THIRD FLOOR
(ONE BLOCK EAST OF CITY HALL):
TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY EVENINGS,
7:00-9:00.

IN FAIRFAX:
AT 10123 COMMONWEALTH BLVD.
(NEAR GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY):
THURSDAY EVENINGS,
7:15-9:00.

MORE INFORMATION & MAPS: EARTHSANGHA.ORG OR CALL LISA BRIGHT AT (703) 764-4830.

EARTH SANGHA

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The Earth Sangha is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

Our mission appears on the front page.

Membership starts at \$35 per year.

Our mailing address is:

Earth Sangha

10123 Commonwealth Blvd.

Fairfax, VA 22032-2707.

The Earth Sangha can be reached by phone

at (703) 764-4830, or by e-mail at

info@earthsangha.org.

Comprehensive program information is

available on our web site:

www.earthsangha.org.

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Highlights from a Very Busy Spring

In February, at our Native Arboretum project, at the Marie Butler Leven Preserve in McLean, members of the Langley High School ECO Club began work on a large **Native Pollinator Bed**. Eventually, the bed will contain a wide selection of native plants important to butterflies, moths, and other native nonpest insects. The project is being directed by Sangha member Susan Abraham—a landscape designer whose work shows a deep commitment to native plants. Our thanks to the ECO Club members for all their efforts!

Since early spring, at Wilburdale Park in Annandale, we've been working on our half-acre **Alluvial Forest Display**, in an area that we're trying to free from the grip of invasive alien plants. We're very grateful to the Fairfax County Park Authority's Bruce Williams and his die-hard field crew for all that brush hogging! For garlic mustard control, we thank the volunteers led by Debbie Wright, Senior Researcher with the Falls Church Recreation and Parks Department, and local Brownie Troop 1091. (Never get between a Brownie and her target garlic mustard.)

In March, the Sangha joined with the Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services, the Fairfax County Park Authority, and the Virginia Department of Forestry in launching a **county-wide stream buffer restoration program**. The program will reforest stream banks to reduce damage from stormwater runoff. Our role is to contribute plants from our Wild Plant Nursery, design sites, facilitate the participation of other nonprofits, and organize volunteers. The spring planting effort included seven sites; we are now evaluating sites for the fall. Our thanks to all those dedicated spring volunteers! The best attended sites: at Carney Park, invasives-clearing and planting events drew a total of 120 people; at Lake Fairfax Park, 135 volunteers came out to plant.

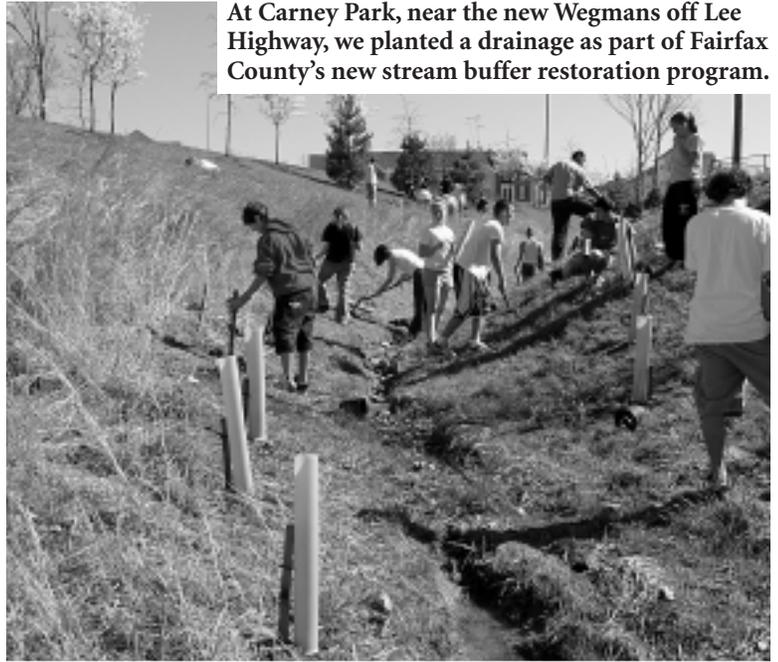
Since April, we have been acting on a Fairfax County Board of Supervisors resolution allowing the Sangha and Lands and Waters (see page 1) to remove plants from county land slated for certain types of development. These **plant rescues** are already a useful supplement to our nursery propagation.

Also in April, Greg Zell, Chief Naturalist at Arlington County's Long Branch Nature Center, dropped by our nursery to pick up a selection of plants for the Center's **Barcroft Park restoration project**. This park includes two very rare plant community types: a kind of seepage swamp and a magnolia bog. Because the site is so sensitive, Greg wants to make sure that all his planting material comes from local ecotypes (local, wild native-plant populations). Greg chose us as his supplier because local ecotypes are all we grow.

One other big development this spring: at our Wild Plant Nursery, the new **forest herb facility** is in production at last! Native herbaceous plants are often very difficult to obtain, especially from local wild populations, so this facility could greatly benefit local restoration efforts. And it's very satisfying just to look at the blocks of swamp milkweed, Jack-in-the-pulpit, woodland sunflower, ironweed, bottle-brush grass, etc. Please let us know if you'd like to come out and see the plants!

OUR FOREST WORK FOR 2005 IS SUPPORTED BY THE MCLEAN CITIZENS FOUNDATION, THE NATIONAL TREE TRUST, PATAGONIA, THE SHARED EARTH FOUNDATION, THE SPRING CREEK FOUNDATION, AND OUR MANY GENEROUS INDIVIDUAL DONORS. WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL TO THEM ALL.

At Carney Park, near the new Wegmans off Lee Highway, we planted a drainage as part of Fairfax County's new stream buffer restoration program.



At the Native Arboretum in McLean, Langley High School ECO Club members are creating a native pollinator garden.



At our Wild Plant Nursery in Springfield, members maintain our new forest herb facility.

RECOGNIZING OUR MAJOR DONORS

All our members are important to the success of our work, but we owe special thanks to the growing number of members who are giving at substantially higher rates than the basic membership level. Our major donors (people who give at least \$100 per year) are now essential participants in our programs. We could not continue to develop our Wild Plant Nursery or do our restoration work without their support. Just to give you an idea of how important they have become, here are the major gift figures from last year:

35 donors gave between \$100 and \$499,
for a total of \$5,695.

8 donors gave between \$500 and \$999,
for a total of \$4,650.

9 donors gave \$1,000 or more,
for a total of \$25,058.

(A “donor” can be a single person, a couple, or a household.)

To celebrate the generosity of our major donors, and as a way of thanking them for their financial leadership, we’ve created three new major donor levels:

At the \$100 level, we’ll recognize donors as Sponsoring Members, and list them in our *Annual Report*.

At the \$500 level, we’ll recognize them as Sustaining Members, list them in our *Annual Report*, and include a brief, one-paragraph note on each donor on our website (with their consent, of course).

At the \$1,000 level, we’ll recognize them as members of a new discussion group, the Sangha Council. We’ll include them in our *Annual Report* and website, and invite them to a private annual dinner and presentation on the Sangha’s plans for the future.

An aside to current major donors: we’ll be in touch with additional details later in the year! If you would like to discuss our major donor program, please don’t hesitate to contact the Sangha at (703) 764-4830. And thanks again to all of our donors! We greatly appreciate your dedication to the Sangha—and to the forests, streams, and people that it serves.

—Clint Walz, Director of Membership



At left, Lisa and Greg organize our first plant contribution to Arlington’s Barcroft Park. Above, a member of Brownie Troop 1091 takes on a garlic mustard infestation in Fairfax County’s Wilburdale Park. Details on page 3.

EARTH SANGHA BUDDHIST VALUES IN ACTION

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