



Embracing Nature Magazine

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Amma's Nature Organization



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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS p. 2

Trees are beings, and the benefits of forest bathing.

WHEN THE RIVER SPEAKS p. 10

The international effort to grant rivers legal standing as persons.

WHAT DOESN'T KILL YOUR PLANTS MAKES YOU STRONGER p. 15

Adventures in the MA Center Chicago community garden.

WHEN LAW MEETS LIFE p. 20

Nature's Rights is the place where the legal system and the sacredness of life meet.

ANN ARBOR APPLES p. 33

The learning and community-building opportunities when Amma assigns an orchard.

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GREENFRIENDS MAGAZINES

POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS



Los Angeles Ascot Hills Micro Forest - Planted in January 2024. Photo by Angelina Lee



Globally, 2026 is on track to be the hottest year on record. Previously, the hottest year was 2024, followed closely by 2023 and 2025. This last decade contains the eleven warmest years ever observed since global records began in the mid-19th century. Is there a pattern here? Global warming is real even though the side effects can include harsher winters in some parts of the planet.

Climate change can lead to depression, but the news is not all bad. Here are some more positive environmental news stories, focused on trees. Maybe they can help us feel better about what we humans are doing to the planet.

TREES ARE BEINGS, AND THE BENEFITS OF FOREST BATHING

When I was growing up, I spent a lot of my childhood time interacting with trees, directly or indirectly. I didn't think much about it. Trees were just "there." I, like many people today and back then, thought of trees as "things," not as living beings.

And I never considered all of the gifts trees selflessly provide, like shade when it's hot, heat from burning wood when it is cold, lumber to build our houses, wood to craft furniture and fine instruments from, fruit and nuts to feed us and places for kids to climb. All of those things are the more obvious, tangible benefits of trees but there are many more subtle benefits from being with trees. (More on this later.)

It wasn't until I was in my twenties, when I attended an outdoor meditation retreat, that I discovered trees were not just 'things', but dynamic, sentient beings. The retreat participants were given an exercise – find a tree, sit in front of it, close their eyes and tune in to the tree. I parked myself in front of a suitable, good-sized tree and began meditating on it. At first, I had the typical, mind-resistant experience.

"This is stupid."

"This is boring".

"This is too woo-woo."

"Are we having a tea break after this? Will there be cookies?"

Eventually I settled down and then suddenly I had the most remarkable experience.

I could feel the essence of the tree. I could feel what the tree was experiencing. There was a subtle stream of energy flowing up the trunk to the leaves and back down again to the roots. And it was a feeling of ecstasy. The tree was in a constant state of bliss! Way more than what I felt most of the time.



"Plants and trees also have emotions and can feel fear.

You can sense that if you have a compassionate heart." - Amma

I also became aware of "tree time." We humans measure time in seconds, minutes, hours and days. Trees are not like that. Their sense of time is much, much slower and more of a continuum. A tree's minute is more akin to a human's year. The consciousness of a tree is so different from a person's consciousness, it is hard to compare, yet it is consciousness, nonetheless. Trees are beings, not things.

And the consciousness of trees is contagious. We can share in some of the bliss they emanate. The effects that trees can have on us are conveyed through “forest bathing” – the ancient Japanese tradition known as *shinrin-yoku*.

In the previous edition of the Embracing Nature magazine, we talked about “eco-anxiety” - the angst we feel about what is happening to the planet. There is another related ailment that can be seen as one of the underlying factors contributing to eco-anxiety: “nature deficit disorder” - the result of not spending enough time outdoors, especially with trees. Nature deficit disorder can be ameliorated through forest bathing, by spending more time not only outdoors, but among trees.

A 2014 article from the United Nations showed that roughly 54 percent of the human population were living in urban areas, a proportion that is projected to increase to 66 percent by 2050. An EPA study found that Americans spend approximately 90 percent of their time indoors where the concentrations of some air pollutants can be 2 to 5 times higher than outdoors. My conclusion is that it’s time to get out and not just smell the roses but take a walk in the woods! Feel the energy there.

Forest bathing reduces stress, anxiety and depression. Numerous studies consistently show a substantial reduction of stress hormones from hanging out with trees. Essential tree oils, such as phytoncides found in forest air (pine trees and cypress tend to be the richest), increase energy levels by more than 30 percent. Aromatherapy enthusiasts know well that such tree oils conjure a general state of well-being, capturing the essence of forest bathing. Forest bathers see an improvement in sleep (an average increase of 15 percent after a two-hour forest walk), a boost of their immune system and cardiovascular health and a better parasympathetic nervous system response.

The health and emotional benefits of trees are plentiful as is outlined in this article from the Cleveland Clinic, [Forest Bathing: What It Is and Its Potential Benefits](#).

The [Global Wellness Institute](#) sites numerous articles on the benefits of forest bathing, such as:

- “Physiological Effects of Forest Bathing: From Lowered Cortisol to Greater Parasympathetic Nerve Activity”
- “Forest Bathing Increases Human Natural Killer Activity & Expression of Anti-Cancer Proteins”
- “Review: Forest Environments/Bathing Lead to Significant Reduction in Blood Pressure”
- “Short Forest Bathing Experience Significantly Lowers Pulse Rate, Blood Pressure, While Reducing Anxiety”

A lovely 3-minute listen, [Forest bathing for Beginners](#) is available on NPR.

*“When humanity serves Nature, Nature serves humanity.
When we serve animals and plants, they, too, serve us in return.” – Amma*

THE EVOLUTION OF TREE HUGGING



Nepalese people hug trees during a mass tree hugging on World Environment Day in Katmandu, Nepal, Sunday, June 5, 2011. - Niranjana Shrestha/AP

Are you a “tree hugger”?

Tree hugging started in 1973 from the Chipko movement in India. Chipko means "to hug" or "to stick to something" in Hindi. At the time, rural villagers in the Himalayas were fighting the commercial exploitation of hornbeam trees. These trees prevented devastating landslides and floods, so locals made sure to cut them down sustainably. But before the first protest, the Indian government owned the rights to the forest and allowed an international company to use the trees to make tennis racquets (!)

Even earlier, in 1730, members of the Bishnoi faith in India actually died to protect the sacred Khejri trees by hugging them to protect them from government loggers.

Eventually, the term tree hugger was used as a derisive term by conservatives to characterize environmentalists. But now tree hugging is having a resurgence. This delightful piece from NPR outlines the evolution of the term tree hugger and how it applies to modern urban kids connecting to nature.

[From the Himalayas to Newt Gingrich, the 'Tree-huggers' Prevail](#)

TORTOISES TRANSFORM THE DESERT INTO AN OASIS



Adult male Centrochelys sulcata from Senegal with diverged gular scutes. Photo by Tomas Diagne

How can the Sahara desert be regenerated into a place where trees can grow? Here's an idea, let's just put a bunch of tortoises there into the sand and maybe they can figure it out.

That is exactly what some forward-looking scientists did in 2021 when they released 500 African spurred tortoises into a stripped-down landscape along the southern edge of the Sahara. Within 5 years, the animals prompted green cover to spread in patches and satellites were able to capture the change.

[They Kept Planting Trees in the Sahara and Kept Failing. Then They Released 500 Tortoises, and the Desert Looked Alive From Space](#)

MANGROVES TO THE RESCUE



A crane flies in front of a mangrove forest. Photo by Ryan Kellman/NPR

Around the world, coastal fishing communities are struggling with declining fish stocks as climate change, environmental degradation and overfishing conspire to decimate marine populations, even as the demand for seafood grows. The majority of the fish consumed by humans are supported by mangroves because the submerged roots act as a nursery for baby fish. Mangroves have other superpowers, some of which extend far beyond the tropical coastlines where they grow.

In the late 1970s, coastal fisher people in Cambodia had nothing. Many people cut the mangroves for charcoal. They had no other way to live. As a result, the fish population was reduced to nearly zero until the people started replanting mangroves.

What started as a local fishery solution in Cambodia is now a crucial part of the worldwide effort to slow global warming.

[These Trees Brought a Fishery Back From the Brink. They Can Help You, Too](#)

WOULD YOU LIKE A MANGO?

Only in India...

Kalimullah Khan from India's town of Malihabad, Uttar Pradesh, has been cultivating mango varieties since the 1950s. He now has a unique mango tree from which each branch grows a different variety of mango - 300 different varieties!



Kalimullah Khan's 125-year-old mango tree – credit, family photo released

[Man Cultivates a Giant Mango Tree with Each Branch Growing a Different Variety of Fruit—and There Are 300](#)

PLANTING URBAN FORESTS



Demian Willette/Loyola Marymount University

This tiny forest in Los Angeles, CA is one of many micro-forests around the world offering green space and contributing to local biodiversity.

What may seem obvious to some is breaking news to others. A new study suggests planting new forests in urban areas may be a low-cost way to combat warming temperatures. This spin on forest bathing for individuals could provide even more benefits to entire cities.

How Trees in Urban Areas are Key to Cooling Down a Warmer World

RAINFORESTS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM?

A temperate rainforest is one of the rarest habitats in the world. Surviving pockets are found in western Scotland, Cornwall, Devon, Wales and parts of Cumbria, but most are in a poor state. Campaigners from Dartmoor Nature Alliance (DNA) are calling for the temperate rainforest across Dartmoor National Park to be doubled in size and the government is cooperating.

'Let These Amazing Forests Come Back to Life'; Push to Expand England's Rainforest



Dartmoor Nature Alliance launch their rainforests campaign at Black-a-Tor copse on Dartmoor National Park. Temperate rainforest is one of the rarest habitats in the world. Photograph: Fern Leigh Albert, The Guardian

~ GOOD NEWS COLLECTED BY VISHWAN, NEW MEXICO

WHEN THE RIVER SPEAKS – LEGAL PERSONHOOD AND THE RIGHTS OF NATURE



“Whanganui River – New Zealand,” Felix Engelhardt, Wikimedia Commons. Licensed under CC BY 2.0.



I RECENTLY SAW A QUOTE FROM AMMA ABOUT HOW PEOPLE ARE MADE UP OF THE FIVE ELEMENTS — THE SAME FIVE ELEMENTS NATURE IS MADE FROM — AND IT GOT ME THINKING ABOUT HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO KEEP FINDING WAYS TO LIVE BY THIS KNOWLEDGE, THE KNOWLEDGE THAT HUMANS AND NATURE ARE FUNDAMENTALLY NOT TWO, BUT ONE.

Her words reminded me of a headline I'd seen several years ago announcing the groundbreaking news that a river in New Zealand, the Whanganui, had been granted legal personhood. At the time I thought this seemed a powerful way to shift our perspective on nature but I didn't understand the implications of what this decision actually meant.

Although many Indigenous cultures have long regarded nature as a living being, the modern legal concept of granting personhood status to nature comes from American law professor Christopher D. Stone who, in the 1970s, wrote an article (that eventually became a book) titled: "Should Trees Have Standing? Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects."

In it, Stone made a case for the importance of giving nature — a tree, a river, a mountain — the legal rights of personhood. To take the example of river pollution, Stone observed that legal systems recognized the rights of polluters and those harmed by pollution, but the river itself had no legal standing. He postulated that by granting the river legal standing as a person, it would be able to make claims in the courts.

So then the question became — even if a river could be a legal 'person', with the ability to advocate for its rights, who would be its voice? In the law, if a person can't advocate for themselves — if they are sick or too young, for example — they don't lose their inherent rights, they just need a guardian to speak on their behalf. Stone suggested this same concept of guardianship could be applied to the river, giving it a voice in a court of law (via its guardians) to speak up for its inherent right to be, to be clean, to flow in a natural way and to not be exploited.

In his article, Stone argued that the legal system should recognize nature as possessing inherent value in its own right rather than as property or a resource existing only for human use. He saw how human patterns of consumption and exploitation were leading to ever more irreparable ecological damage. He hoped that this approach of granting legal personhood to nature would empower the courts to make decisions that would protect nature, yes, but would also, on a deeper collective level, shift away from a common perspective that nature is a commodity.

The seeds of Stone's ideas have grown into what is now known as the Rights of Nature movement — a movement that seeks not only to protect nature from harm but also to recognize that rivers, forests, mountains and ecosystems have an intrinsic right to exist, flourish and regenerate.

Given the deeper values behind the Rights of Nature movement it is unsurprising that it resonates with many global Indigenous communities who have long understood the intrinsic value of nature. This is the main reason why the Whanganui River is singled out as one of the most successful examples of using legal personhood to protect and support an ecosystem.

Long before the Whanganui legislation was passed in 2017, the Indigenous people of New Zealand, the Māori, had been in discussions with the Crown (the state of New Zealand) over land rights since the 1800s. Māori legal traditions arise from a worldview in which rivers, forests and mountains are understood as living ancestors and relatives rather than property.

Stone's ideas were not new to Māori on a philosophical or spiritual level. Rather, the concept of legal personhood provided a framework through which long-held Māori understandings of the river as a living ancestor and relative could be recognized within the language of the courts. The Te Awa Tupua

(Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act, recognizes Te Awa Tupua—the Whanganui River as an indivisible and living whole—as a legal person. It acknowledges the river in both physical and spiritual terms, in ways that acknowledge the relationship of the river to both the Māori and broader communities. The legislation appoints guardians representing both the Crown and the Whanagui tribes in addition to establishing collaborative structures that bring together Māori, local communities and government to support the river’s wellbeing.

A strong and comprehensive legislative design seems to be a key factor in the success of the Rights of Nature movement as can be seen in the case of India’s Ganges and Yamuna rivers.



“The Bhagirathi – ଭାଗିରଥୀ ନଦୀ,” Atarax42, Wikimedia Commons. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0

In 2017, the High Court of the state of Uttarakhand responded to a case made by a concerned citizen about the staggering levels of pollution in both rivers and the apparent inability of the state to establish a management board to protect them. The High Court acknowledged these concerns and responded by declaring both rivers as legal persons with government officials appointed as their guardians.

Like the Whanganui legislation, the High Court’s law made a point to describe both the rivers’ ecological importance and the deep spiritual significance the Ganges and Yamuna have to the Indian people.

In response to the High Court’s decision, the Uttarakhand government — a separate body from the Courts — went to the Supreme Court of India to have the decision overturned. They argued that the

decision created practical and constitutional problems that had not been addressed. For example, if someone drowned in the river would the family then be able to sue the Yamuna for damages? And since the rivers span thousands and thousands of miles across multiple states — how would the legalities work once the rivers crossed state lines? Who would the guardians be and at what point would they step in? How would different groups communicate with each other?

Ultimately, the Supreme Court stayed the legal claim of personhood recognizing that much more work needed to be done to develop the legislature needed to support and build on what legal personhood status would mean for these rivers.

The Magpie River in Canada is another example of legal personhood creating new ways of living with nature. In this case, the Magpie River's recognition came through resolutions passed by the Innu First Nations Council of Ekuanitshit and the Minganie Regional County Municipality in Quebec rather than through federal legislation. Guardians from each community are working together to co-manage care for the river.

Amma says, "The Creator and the creation are one. We are not separate from nature, and our historical denial of this truth has contributed to the environmental crises we face today."

One of the things that has struck me most in learning about the Rights of Nature movement is how it is bringing people and communities together to foster new and reciprocal relationships with the ecology around them and with each other. Nature has always had an inherent right to be itself, but with legal personhood, perhaps we will finally begin to understand this truth in a deeper way that will lead us to act with compassion and care towards nature — one person to another.



SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

The following sources informed the research and preparation of this article. Readers interested in learning more about the Rights of Nature movement may wish to explore them further.

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~ STEPHANIE, TORONTO, CANADA



WHAT DOESN'T KILL YOUR PLANTS MAKES YOU STRONGER



Squash bug eggs found on a zucchini plant.



AMMA FEELS STRONGLY THAT EVERYONE SHOULD BE ABLE TO EAT VEGETABLES GROWN ORGANICALLY AT LEAST ONCE IN A WEEK, AND THAT THE ACT OF GROWING THESE VEGETABLES ON ONE'S OWN IS A PRACTICAL STEP WE CAN ALL TAKE TO HELP RESTORE THE LOST HARMONY BETWEEN HUMANITY AND NATURE.

At the start of summer 2025, after moving to the Chicago ashram, I decided to join the community garden and get a plot to grow vegetables. Amma has emphasized over and over again how important it is to grow our own food. In one of the videos made during COVID, she showed her balcony garden where she was growing various types of vegetables.

While the plots were being set up and fencing built around them, I started zucchini and butternut squash seeds. I used coconut coir (found in bricks at most garden centers) which is the perfect medium to get seedlings started. Due to other commitments, I was only able to start my seeds in June and given the warm temperatures, the seedlings grew quickly and were strong.

I planted them a little too close together even though some of the more experienced gardeners warned me that the plants would grow very big. I thought through natural selection only half of the seedlings would survive but to my amazement they all made it.

They began growing beautifully and I got a few zucchini and baby squash. But that was the end of my joy of gardening. Soon after, I started finding oddly shaped brown bugs crawling all over my squash plants. They turned out to be squash bugs. If you are a gardener and have never heard of them, consider yourself to be lucky. Squash bugs lay shiny copper-colored eggs. Adult squash bugs have a hard shell so most organic insecticides will not kill them. It is best to destroy them at the egg stage or kill them as nymphs when they have soft bodies. I found a product called *Bacillus thuringiensis* (BT) that destroys the nymphs but does not harm beneficial insects or pollinators and is safe for humans and pets. Every evening, I would inspect the underside of the leaves of both the zucchini and squash plants, find and pick off eggs then drown them in a tub of soapy water. I'd suction off the adults with a product called BugZooka, a spring-loaded suction device. (I read that a handheld vacuum could also work.)



Tiny butternut squash.

It was emotionally challenging to have to kill so many of God's creatures and the process of suctioning so many bugs off the plants grossed me out. My general philosophy is to live and let live but if I had done that I would have had no produce. The squash bugs destroy the plant



Vine borer damage to zucchini plant.

by sucking the sap out of the leaves before eventually chewing on the vegetables, so I had no choice but to kill them.

Just as I thought I was getting a handle on these bugs, I came to the garden one evening to find a whole zucchini plant completely flopped over. If you guessed vine borer, you are correct. Vine borers are small flying insects that lay their eggs at the base of the zucchini plant. The eggs hatch and the larva cuts into the stem and slowly sucks all the sap in the plant until it dies. There are ways to find the larva embedded in the stem and carve them out but I was not able to find them. Had I known about these bugs, I would have taken preventative measures early. One of them is to wrap the base of the stem with tin foil or tape. By the end of the summer, I had lost 60 percent of the zucchini plants to vine borer destruction.

Spending so much time obsessed with bugs made me contemplate the similarity between negative thoughts and these bugs. If I did not act quickly when I found a few bugs, very quickly the situation would get out of control — similar to the downward spiral that comes with not checking my negative tendencies. There has to be constant vigilance in both cases and, like beneficial predatory insects that feed on plant pests, I need to constantly combat these harmful tendencies by doing sadhana (spiritual practices) and build a strong arsenal of tools I can use when I catch myself indulging in them.

By Amma's grace, in spite of the damage done by all the bugs, all the seedlings I planted survived and thrived. So much so that I was able to grow and donate approximately 50 pounds of zucchini as



Vine borer insect.

well as give some to my neighbors and still have plenty left for myself. The donations went to the ashram kitchen for satsang meals and to a low-income senior community. My tomato plants all survived but many of the low-lying tomatoes had big chunks eaten out of them. I was still able to donate 18 pounds of tomatoes to the ashram kitchen.

I also grew spinach, kale, cilantro and collard greens well into the late fall. It was wonderful to be able to make a dish for Thanksgiving from the butternut squash from my garden. I stored my bounty on a wire rack so it would get good air circulation. I grated and froze excess zucchini in the fall and was able to enjoy it all winter into the spring. I put the grated zucchini in a freezer bag and broke it into chunks once it was semi-frozen. Now, I can snap off a section and use it in soups or stir-fry.



Butternut squash bounty.

At the start of the summer of 2026, I noticed several tomato seedlings coming up in the community garden where my tomato plants had been last year. I had left tomatoes that had been gouged by ground critters or had worms in them on the vines. It seems their seeds survived and sprouted as the community garden now had ready tomato seedlings.

This summer, I planted vegetable seedlings in raised beds closer to my home. I started sprouting the seeds early but we had several weeks of cold nights below 50 degrees and I did not think to repot the veggies into soil pots. Instead, the seedlings struggled in the coir mix in which they were left too long. While coir is a great medium to start seeds, it has no nutritional value to strengthen the seedlings.

In my raised beds, I started acorn squash, butternut squash, climbing zucchini, okra, tomatoes, bok choy, mustard, spinach and kale. In between the seedlings, I planted marigolds, nasturtium and dill as I have read that these act as deterrents for some of the pests I had the previous year.

To my consternation, I had already found a cabbage worm on the bok choy leaves, aphids all over the okra leaves and a new bug called thrips on the underside of my zucchini plants. I used

BT on those leaves followed by an application of neem oil plus a few drops of Dr. Bonner's soap. I also covered the base of my squash and zucchini plants with foil to keep away the vine borer eggs. But the squash bugs found their way to the new beds. Unfortunately, only male flowers bloomed on the squash and zucchini. But I was able to harvest some tomatoes, bokchoy, kale and okra. After researching the soil I had filled the beds with, I realized it was deficient in many nutrients. So I will amend the soil and plant more cool weather vegetables for the fall.

With all the lessons learnt this summer, I hope for a more bountiful harvest next year. In spite of all the trials and tribulations, the joy of watching the first baby vegetables show up is unparalleled. And the deliciousness of a simple tomato basil salad topped with vegan feta, a stir-fry with freshly picked greens or a homemade zucchini bread — they are worth all the emotional ups and downs of being a home gardener. Hope this article inspires you to start your own home garden journey.

~ MA CENTER CHICAGO RESIDENT

Zucchini plants in the MA Center Chicago community garden.



WHERE LAW MEETS LIFE: MY JOURNEY TO THE UK NATURE'S RIGHTS BILL



HOW A JOURNEY THROUGH FINANCE LAW, INDIA, MOTHERHOOD AND ECOLOGICAL AWAKENING LED TO A WORLD-FIRST BILL TO BRING NATURE, PEOPLE AND ECONOMY BACK INTO RIGHT RELATIONSHIP.

BY MUMTA ITO: UK LAWYER, AMMA DEVOTEE, AND FOUNDER OF NATURE'S RIGHTS.

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY GREENFRIENDS UK IN "[MEDIUM](#)," JUNE 1, 2026.

I was trained in the legal architecture of finance.

India and motherhood reconnected me with the sacredness of life.

Nature's Rights is the place where those two worlds met — law and healing, structure and reverence, rights and relationship.

On 1 June 2026, the UK Nature's Rights Bill entered Parliament. A historic moment. For many people, that may sound like a legal or political milestone. For me, it is also the visible edge of a much longer journey — one that began in the world of high finance, took me through India, childbirth, ecological awakening, burnout, and more than a decade of work trying to translate reverence for life into legal form.

The law still treats Nature largely as property. My life's work is to change that.



Watch on YouTube: [Historic UK Nature's Rights Bill Enters Parliament](#)

THE LAW OF POWER

I began my professional life as a lawyer in the world of high finance, working in structured finance at Clifford Chance.

It was a world of complex transactions, capital flows, risk allocation and legal architecture. I learned how law structures power. I learned how it determines what society protects, what it rewards, what it permits, what it values, and what it treats as expendable.

That training never left me.

Even though I later moved far from the world of finance, I carried with me a deep understanding that law is not just words on paper. Law is one of the hidden operating systems of society. It shapes behaviour. It governs relationships. It creates rights, duties, protections and permissions. It tells us who counts, who is heard, who has standing, and what can be sacrificed.

At a certain point, I knew I could not stay inside a system that felt increasingly disconnected from life.

So, I left.

A RADICAL LEAP INTO THE UNKNOWN

I left a successful and lucrative legal career and went to India to immerse myself in the ancient yogic tradition of my ancestry. I trained intensively with a living master.

That period changed me forever.

It did not give me a campaign. It gave me a different way of seeing.

I began to understand that the laws of Nature are not separate from us. They govern us too, because we are part of Nature. Human beings are not outside the web of life. We are one expression within a vastly interconnected whole.

That may sound obvious. But our legal and economic systems do not behave as if it is true.

They behave as if humans stand above Nature. As if the economy floats outside the living world. As if rivers, forests, soils, animals, oceans and ecosystems exist primarily as resources, assets, properties or externalities.

Yet the laws of life do not bend to human illusion.

No Nature, no people.
No people, no economy.

At that stage, this was still an inner realisation. I had not yet understood how it would become practical work in the world.

Then life gave me a test.

MY FIRST LESSON IN LAW AND LIFE

The first real form came unexpectedly, in the British Virgin Islands (BVI).

By then, I had stepped away from commercial law and entered a deeper inquiry into how my skills could be used in service of life. I no longer wanted to practise law as an instrument of finance and extraction. But I wondered whether the legal training I had received could somehow be turned towards protecting Mother Earth, communities and the living world.

Life answered by presenting me with a first opportunity.

An ecosystem of global ecological importance was facing imminent destruction. A local community felt disempowered. Many people believed the development was inevitable. The Chief Conservation Officer approached me to bring a legal case because local lawyers were afraid to act against the government.

I saw it as an opportunity to serve. So I stepped in.

We brought the first environmental case in the territory. We did not ultimately win through the route we expected. But the case changed the field.

The first thing that happened was that the community remembered its power.

People came together. We formed an NGO. Environmental groups that had been working separately became a coalition. Support grew. Influential people began to engage. Allies emerged inside government.

In the end, the legal case itself was not the final victory. The deeper victory was that consciousness shifted. The political field changed. The government eventually protected the area as a National Park with a blanket prohibition on development — a far stronger outcome than the one we had originally imagined.

That experience gave me some of the most important learnings of my life.

I saw that law can be a catalyst. It can focus attention, empower communities, reveal what is at stake and open political space for change.

I also saw that transformation does not happen only through argument. It happens through consciousness, courage, commitment, presence, relationship and the willingness to act when others are afraid or believe change is impossible.

But the case also showed me the limits of environmental law.

Environmental law was not designed to recognise Nature as a living subject with intrinsic rights. It was designed largely to manage human use of Nature.

It acted downstream, after harm had already been proposed or authorised.

It treated ecological destruction as a planning issue, a permitting issue, a procedural issue, a compensation issue. Even when legal arguments were available, the system did not ask the deepest question: what does this living ecosystem need in order to exist, thrive and regenerate?

The law could argue about whether the correct procedure had been followed.

It could sometimes delay harm.

It could sometimes mitigate harm.

It could sometimes compensate for harm.

But it did not begin from a sense of duty of care to the living world.

It did not recognise the relationship between us and the rest of Nature.

No relationship means no real duty of care. No duty of care means Nature is protected only in fragments: only when a specific rule applies, only when the right human interest is affected, and often only after people have organised enough power to defend her.

Planning law could send a decision back to be reconsidered, only for the proposal to return slightly modified. Litigation after ecological harm could produce compensation for financial loss, but not necessarily restoration of the damaged ecosystem. Species protection could not keep pace with extinction. Enforcement was weak. Corporate structures could shield responsibility. And adversarial litigation did little to uncover root causes or co-create solutions.

I began to see that the problem was not only weak enforcement, bad planning or poor policy.

It was the legal architecture itself.

Our legal system was mechanistic: it viewed living systems in fragments. It was adversarial: it pitted parties against each other.

It was anthropocentric: it dealt mainly with human interests.

Nature was outside the system.

In law, ecosystems and other species were still treated as objects: property, resource or fair game.

Economic interests were prioritised above all else and Nature could always be traded away.

That was the beginning of my deeper legal diagnosis.

If systemic problems need systemic solutions, then Nature needed to be brought into the legal and governance system itself — not as scenery, not as resource, not as an afterthought, but as a living subject with rights that people could defend, and with governance systems aligned with how life actually works.

But even then, something in me knew this was not only a legal question. It was also a question of relationship.

And that understanding deepened through the most embodied experience of my life.

MOTHERHOOD AND THE SACREDNESS OF LIFE

A further deepening of my commitment to serve life came through giving birth to my daughter at home.

After the most extraordinary natural childbirth experience, I remember standing at the window and looking out at the trees. I was flooded with an overwhelming reverence for mothers — every being who was a mother, every being born of a mother, the Earth herself, and all living beings.

It felt as though natural childbirth had connected me viscerally to the Earth and to the sacredness of life in a way I could never undo.

The BVI case had shown me, in practical terms, that the foundations of life were negotiable because law did not recognize relationship.

Motherhood made that relationship impossible to deny.

In that moment, I knew I was here to serve and protect the web of life.

I still did not yet know what final form that would take.

WHERE LAW AND HEALING MET

That form began to reveal itself later, after moving with my family to the Findhorn Ecovillage in the Scottish Highlands.

By then, the pieces were beginning to come together. India had changed how I saw reality. The BVI had shown me the structural failure of environmental law.

Motherhood had connected me viscerally to the sacredness of life.

At Findhorn, those threads began to weave themselves into a single calling.

Through a process of healing and inquiry, I came to understand that my work was to bring law and healing together, to help change the paradigm beneath the existing system, and to work for the rights of all beings.

At first, I did not fully understand what that meant.

During that period, I had an image that has stayed with me ever since.

I saw the world covered in a dark web. I understood that web as law — not only law as statutes and courts, but law as the invisible architecture that shapes human consciousness. What we believe is normal. What we are allowed to do. What is protected. What is punished. What is ignored. What is treated as sacred or expendable.

I felt that this web was holding human consciousness in a pattern of separation from life. It was adversarial, mechanistic and extractive. It did not know how to recognize the living world as kin, as source, as subject, as sacred.

The insight was not that law should be abandoned.

It was that law itself had to be healed.

The web had to be infused with light.

Over time, I came to understand that image in very practical terms.

Law governs relationships. It defines who has rights, who owes duties, what is protected, what is ignored, and what society is allowed to treat as expendable.

If law treats Nature as an object, society learns to treat Nature as an object. If law gives stronger power to economic activity than to the living systems that make life possible, destruction becomes normal.

For me, Nature's Rights began at that intersection — law and healing, legal architecture and reverence for life.

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THE MOMENT NATURE'S RIGHTS WAS BORN

The legal form emerged through a process of inquiry.

I convened a training for lawyers using systemic constellation work to explore the field of holistic law and where a change agent would be most effective.

What emerged was startlingly clear; holistic law had no true place in the existing system until the law recognized all beings. The current legal order was not equipped to hold the living world as part of the legal community.

Then the insight came in a flash.

We have human rights. Corporations have rights. But Nature, the source of life, has no rights.

We needed the Rights of Nature in law.

At the time, we were in Europe, before Brexit. The obvious pathway was a European Citizens' Initiative for the Rights of Nature. I began speaking about it, and the response was immediate.

Within six months, I was travelling across Europe speaking at conferences. We had around 180 volunteers in 13 EU countries and a draft EU Directive process underway.

In the beginning, I was calling for straightforward recognition of Nature's rights.

But the work itself began to teach me.

WHY RECOGNITION ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH

Through extensive stakeholder dialogues across Europe and internationally, I began to see the limits of simply giving Nature rights.

Recognising Nature as a legal subject is essential. It moves Nature from being treated only as an object, property or resource, into the legal community.

But if Nature's rights are simply added into the old legal order, without changing the deeper hierarchy of rights, Nature can still be forced to compete case by case against stronger corporate, property and economic rights.

A river may have rights, but if those rights are forced to fight the same old battles inside a system still organised around economic dominance, Nature remains structurally outgunned.

By the time we took the draft Directive to the European Parliament in 2017, I was already speaking about the need for a hierarchy of rights.

After that event, the European Economic and Social Committee approached us to work with them on exploring an EU approach to Rights of Nature. That process led to stakeholder workshops and eventually to the EESC study Towards an EU Charter of the Fundamental Rights of Nature, which I co-authored.

That work helped crystallise what later became the Integrated Rights Framework.

FROM RIGHTS TO RIGHT RELATIONSHIP

The Integrated Rights Framework shifts law from balancing Nature, people and economy as competing interests to recognising Nature as the foundation of both society and economic life. In simple terms:

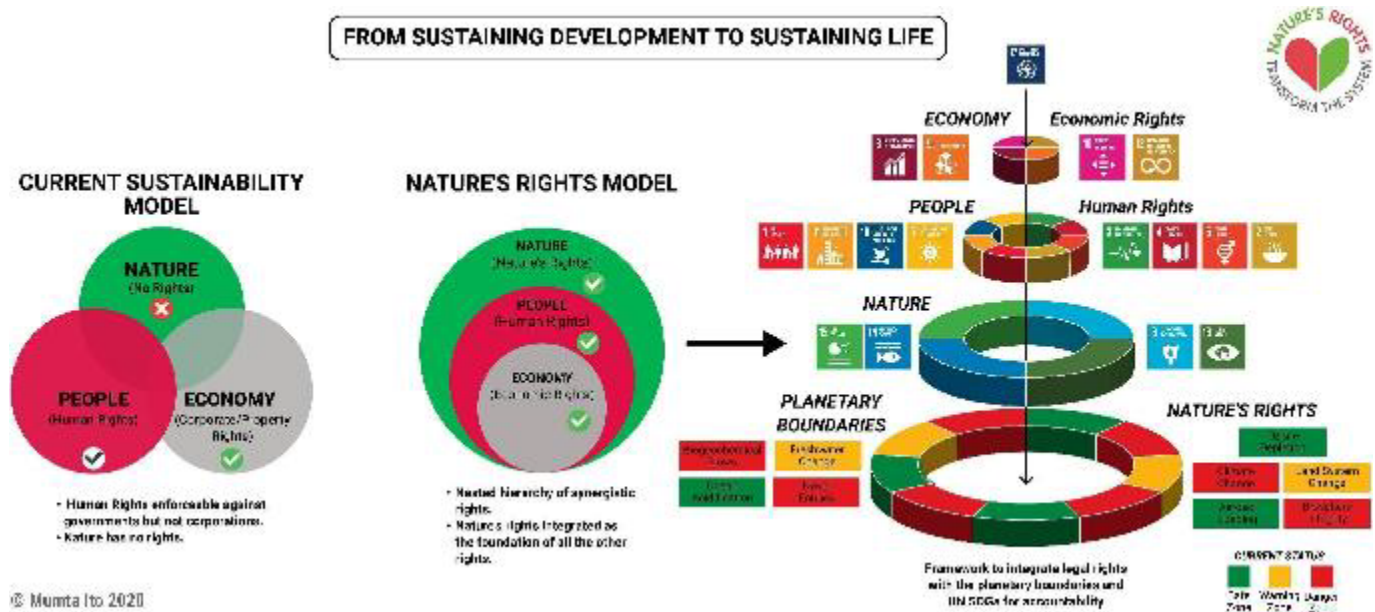
Nature as foundation.

People within Nature.

Economy in service to both.

This is not anti-human. It is not anti-economy.

It is the legal foundation for a society and economy that can endure because they no longer destroy the living systems they depend on.



The Integrated Rights Framework, created by Mumta Ito.

The ecological crisis is not only happening “out there” in Nature. It is already affecting people’s lives: polluted rivers, unsafe water, flooding, soil loss, biodiversity collapse, food insecurity, health pressures, climate instability, insurance risk and economic insecurity.

These crises are connected. They are symptoms of a deeper design flaw.

We have built laws and economies around the assumption that Nature can be owned, extracted, traded off, mitigated or compensated for. We have treated the living world as a stock of resources rather than the source of life.

The Integrated Rights Framework changes the legal foundation so that law reflects reality.

Nature is not one stakeholder among many.

Nature is the source of life.

Human rights depend on clean air, clean water, healthy soil, pollinators, stable climate, living oceans and functioning ecosystems. Economic activity depends on society. Society depends on Nature.

No Nature, no people.

No people, no economy.

The Framework brings Nature, people and economy into right relationship by recognising Nature as a rights-bearing subject and the foundation of human and economic rights. Human rights are protected within the ecological conditions that sustain life. Corporate, property and economic rights are exercised within, and in service to, both Nature and people.

This is not just better regulation.

It is a whole-of-society framework for changing the underlying rules that currently make ecological destruction lawful, profitable and normal.



THE UK NATURE'S RIGHTS BILL

The UK Nature's Rights Bill is the first flagship legislative expression of the Integrated Rights Framework.

It seeks to recognise Nature as a rights-bearing subject, establish Nature's rights as foundational, create duties of care towards Nature, and embed Nature's rights into decision-making across law, policy, public authorities, institutions and economic activity.

The Bill is now entering the UK parliamentary process. It is being introduced in the House of Lords by Baroness Natalie Bennett, with Adrian Ramsay MP as sponsor in the House of Commons.

A new cross-party APPG is also being formed as the parliamentary forum for building support around the Bill and Framework, with Nature's Rights appointed Secretariat.

This is a major milestone.

But for me, it is not only about one Bill.

It is about beginning a legal and cultural reorientation that has been needed for a very long time.

THE OPPORTUNITY THAT PAUSED, BUT DID NOT DIE

Years ago, after we took the draft Rights of Nature Directive to the European Parliament, everyone around me was elated.

It felt like a breakthrough. We had opened a serious institutional door. People were full of ideas about what needed to happen next.

But I remember bursting into tears.

No one could understand why. From the outside, it looked like success. But I had barely slept for weeks. I had been holding the legal drafting, strategy, relationships, public speaking, emotional weight, urgency and administration almost entirely on my own.

The “we” was mostly me.

I would move from high-level legal and institutional conversations straight into fixing websites, sending newsletters, answering inboxes, recruiting volunteers, organising meetings and making the organisation look operationally credible from the outside.

In one sense, that helped us gain traction. We looked more resourced than we were.

But in another sense, I was hiding the very lack of capacity that made the work unsustainable.

Eventually, I had to stop to protect my health and sanity.

I have always carried the knowledge that we stopped just as the work was beginning to gain the institutional support it needed.

The institution ready to partner with us was the European Economic and Social Committee.

That opportunity is not entirely lost.

Supportive relationships remain, and the EU conversation is becoming timely again. Cillian Lohan is now President of the EESC Civil Society Organisations’ Group, and a new European Citizens’ Initiative on Rights of Nature is expected in October 2026.

With capacity, Nature’s Rights could help reconnect the UK Bill, the EU Charter pathway and wider European civil-society momentum.

But only if we are resourced to do so.

THIS TIME MUST BE DIFFERENT

Today, the UK Nature's Rights Bill has entered a live parliamentary pathway. The Integrated Rights Framework exists. The Bill exists. Parliamentary sponsors are in place. The APPG route is opening. The public conversation is moving.

Once again, the work has reached a breakthrough moment before the organisation has secured the capacity to carry it.

This time, I am naming the risk clearly.

The risk is not lack of vision, architecture or commitment.

The risk is that a world-first legal intervention once again collapses back onto one unpaid founder at the very moment it needs to become an institutionally supported campaign.

The work is no longer just an idea. It is a Bill. It is a framework. It is a parliamentary opportunity. It is a European opportunity. It is a call to bring law back into relationship with life.

For me, the Integrated Rights Framework is my attempt to translate reverence for life into legal architecture.

It is an attempt to bring human law back into alignment with the laws of life.

It is a framework for humanity to become a beneficial presence in the wider web of life.

That is what has kept me going when many people would have stopped.

I am not carrying this because it is easy, strategic or fashionable. I am carrying it because I believe it is part of the deeper healing our world now needs: for our children, for future generations, and for the future generations of all life.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

If this speaks to you, please help this work reach the people who can carry it forward.

You can support by:

- Reading and sharing the UK Nature's Rights Bill campaign; joining the Nature's Rights community;
- Donating to help resource the campaign;
- Introducing us to funders, philanthropists, partners or public figures who understand that this is a moment for legal, ecological and spiritual courage;

- Inviting Nature's Rights to speak or host a conversation.

The Bill has reached Parliament before the organisation has reached capacity.

Now we need the support to carry it.

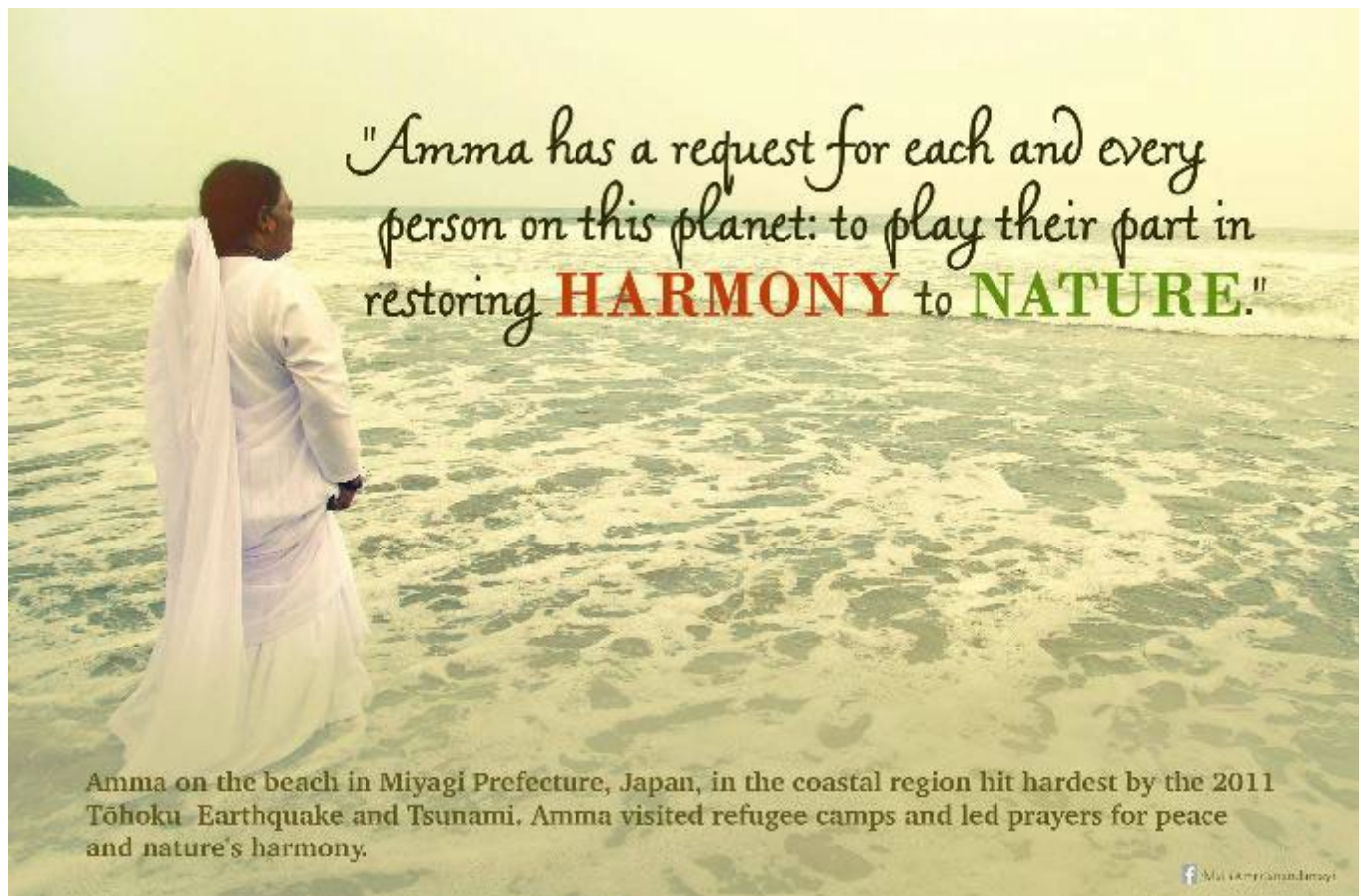
Nature as foundation.

People within Nature.

Economy in service to both.

This is where law meets life.

~ MUMTA ITO, UNITED KINGDOM



ANN ARBOR APPLES



Volunteers at Amrita Farms, MA Center Ann Arbor Michigan



THE SPRING OF 2026 MARKED A SEASON OF REJUVENATION AT AMRITA FARMS, PART OF THE MA CENTER ANN ARBOR.

With 1,000 dwarf and semi-dwarf apple trees planted more than a decade ago, the orchard is entering a new phase of growth. To sustain productivity and ensure long-term vitality, Amrita Farms hosted two cornerstone events: Apple Tree Pruning in March and Apple Tree Planting in April.

APPLE TREE PRUNING EVENT

Event Date: March 28-29, 2026

52 Volunteers

208 Volunteer Hours

950 Trees Pruned

APPLE TREE PLANTING EVENT

Event Date: April 19, 2026

43 Volunteers

129 Volunteer Hours

108 Trees Planted



Volunteers from SEWA, KPIT, and MA Center

Pruning during dormancy is essential for orchard health. By removing diseased or damaged branches, volunteers promoted stronger growth, increased fruit production, and reduced the risk of disease transmission. Despite challenging weather, the event fostered teamwork, resilience, and community bonding among 52 dedicated volunteers from SEWA, KPIT, and MA Center.

Planting new trees each year ensures the orchard's future. Volunteers gained hands-on experience in tree planting techniques, teamwork, and problem-solving. Beyond the orchard, apple trees contribute to food security, environmental protection, and community beautification. The 43 volunteers gave 129 hours of dedicated service to plant 108 new trees that will bear fruit for generations to come.



Matt Fillion

VOLUNTEER VOICE

"I always feel Amma with me when I am at the orchard. As a Seva, I enjoy the manual labor and also the connection to nature. It can be challenging work at times, but that's part of the fun. Each time I visit the orchard, I feel like I get to know the trees a little better. It's been great watching them go from their dormant winter state, into being lush, healthy trees that are full of apples!"

"I've also had the privilege of coordinating group Seva days, training volunteers on pruning and planting practices, and providing assistance to volunteers when needed. It's been a great opportunity to meet all of these people, and I'm hoping that community outreach will continue to be part of our mission at Amrita Farms."

—Matt Fillion, Volunteer & Seva Coordinator



Volunteers planting trees.

PARTNERS IN ACTION

The above events were made possible through the collaboration with the following:

Sewa Detroit (Sewa International – Detroit Chapter) – Part of Sewa International USA, a Hindu faith-based humanitarian nonprofit serving communities across the country. Sewa is a Sanskrit word meaning to help or serve others selflessly. The Detroit chapter embodies the spirit of selfless service, supporting local initiatives, disaster relief, and community development while fostering compassion and harmony across diverse groups.

KPIT Technologies – A global leader in automotive software and engineering services, KPIT partners with major mobility companies worldwide to drive innovation in electrification, autonomous driving, and connected vehicles. With 14,000+ professionals across multiple continents, KPIT is committed to building a cleaner, smarter, and safer world. Their involvement at Amrita Farms reflects not only technical excellence but also a dedication to sustainability and community service.

MA Center Ann Arbor – Providing the vision and stewardship for sustainable agriculture, the MA Center ensures that Amrita Farms remains a living example of service, sustainability, and community collaboration.

CONCLUSION

During the two planting and pruning events, nearly 1,100 trees were pruned and 108 new trees planted, securing the orchard's health and productivity for years to come. More importantly, these gatherings united diverse community groups, families, professionals, and

volunteers of all ages — proving that when we serve nature together, we also strengthen the bonds of community.



This is the second year Amrita Farms has collaborated with SEWA, KPIT, and MA Center volunteers. Thank you to every volunteer, partner, and supporter who made this spring's events possible.

HISTORY

“The orchard began in 2011 and 2012 with the planting of 1,200 apple trees across 18 different varieties. The inspiration came from Amma, Mata Amritanandamayi, whose teachings on service, reverence for nature, and care for the earth gave the orchard its deeper purpose. What began as spiritual inspiration soon became a major learning journey in orchard design, apple growing, soil health, and organic farming.

At the time, we had no experience planting or designing an orchard. We quickly discovered that growing apples requires more than simply buying trees from a nursery and putting them in the ground. One of the most important decisions was choosing the right rootstock and deciding whether to plant standard, semi-dwarf, or dwarf trees. After research and reflection, we chose dwarf apple trees because they are more manageable, come into production earlier, and allow for denser planting.

The MA Center in San Ramon played a big role in shaping our orchard’s direction. During a visit there, I absorbed a lot of knowledge from observing the way they’ve grown their orchard and how they tend it. Additionally, I took a class there from Dr. Elaine Ingham on how to make compost tea and learned about permaculture—both of which influenced our approach to building healthy soil and working with nature. Permaculture is a way of working with nature instead of going against naturally occurring factors like weeds or pests. Following the example of San Ramon’s methods, we employed various permaculture strategies like compost tea, mulching, and use of natural predators, all of which helps support a self-sustaining and natural balance.

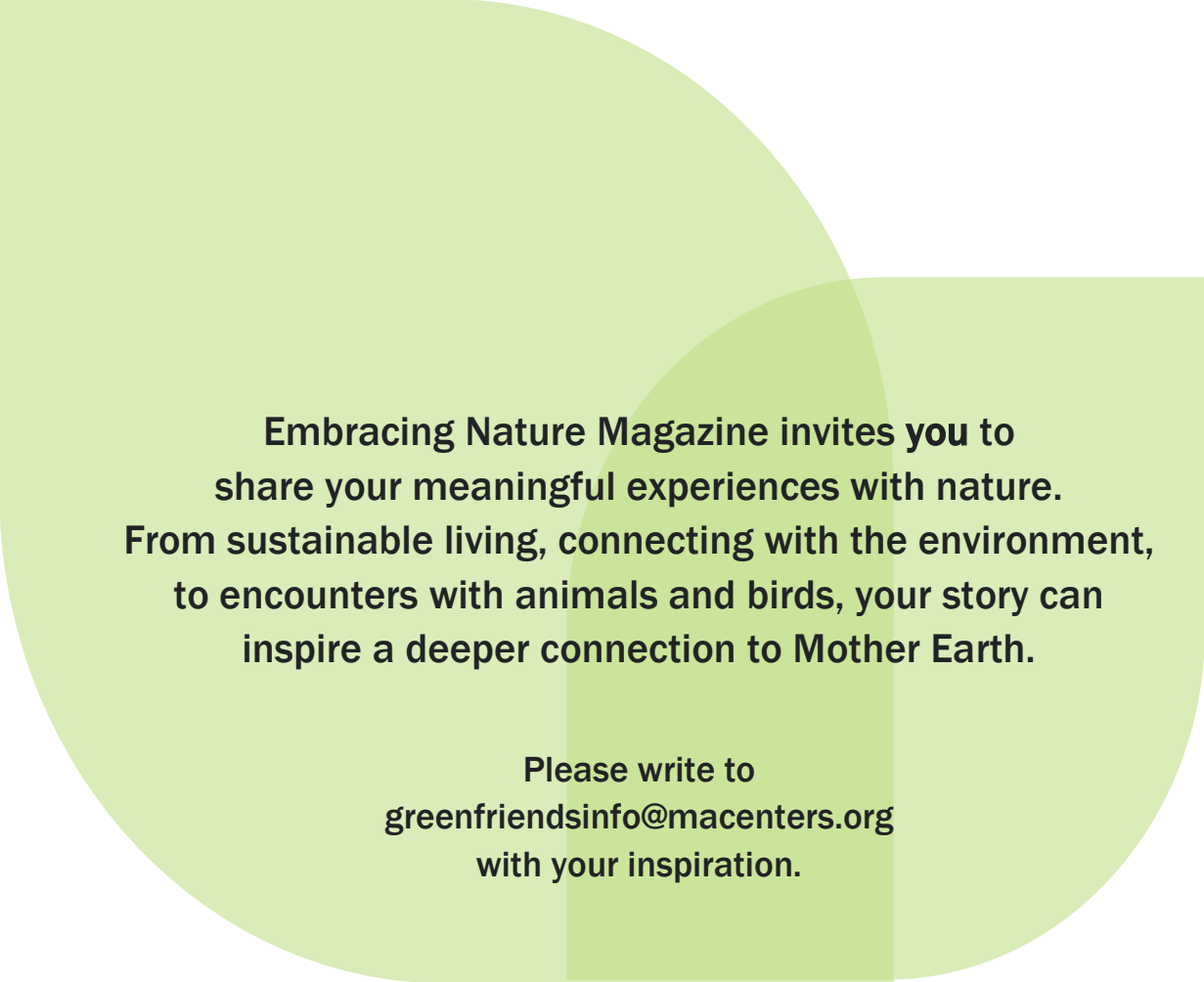
Michael Phillips’ book, *The Apple Grower: Guide for the Organic Orchardist*, was another key influence. Our decision for what trees to plant was confirmed when Phillips later wrote that if he had to do it over again, he would plant dwarf apple trees.

Because our project was large and we were learning as we went, I checked every major step with Amma, including our experiments with high-density planting in parts of the orchard. The orchard has offered us a continual learning curve, especially in managing pests and producing good apples organically. Today our apple farm stands as more than a collection of trees—it is a living classroom for patience, observation, maintaining healthy soil, and cultivating respect for nature.”

~ CHAD KYMAL
AMRITA FARMS
MA CENTER ANN ARBOR

Amrita Farms - minfo@amritafarms.com





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