SPRING | 2020

ELLA

Environmental Leaders Learning Alliance

Learning to Live Virtually

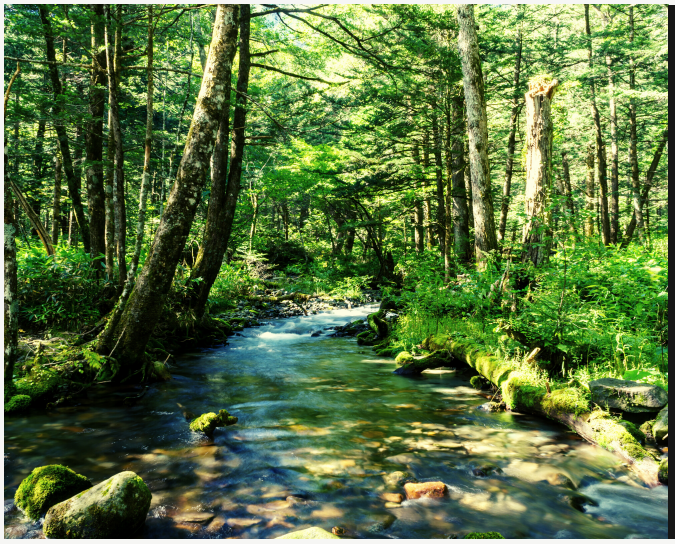
Nadya Hall

It feels impossible to send anything out these days without mentioning COVID-19 and how it's changed our lives. For the Environmental Leaders Learning Alliance, the shutdown has forced us to cancel or postpone many of the events we had planned for the year, but it's also given us an opportunity to be creative with our solutions and work toward an even stronger future.

We know it will be a while until we can all be in the same room together, but that doesn't mean we're slowing down. We're putting together a great series of virtual programs so you can learn from home, and we'll be posting the recordings on ellalhv.org for members who aren't able to attend so you never miss out.

Thank you for your continued committment to environmental protection.

IN THIS NEWSLETTER:



"DEGRADATION ISN'T ALWAYS ACCOMPLISHED IN LARGE-SCALE DESTRUCTION. ECOSYSTEMS ARE OFTEN NICKEL-AND-DIMED TO DEATH."

Communicating the Value of Trees

Christina Falk

In 1977 Wangari Maathai founded a movement so central to the evolution of the worldwide environmental cause that its name, the Greenbelt Movement, has become a colloquialism for a multitude of large and small-scale projects associated with tree planting projects.

In 2004, Dr. Maathai was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize for her work in "sustainable development, democracy and peace", three aspects of her work the Nobel Committee recognized as inseparable. As she stressed in her acceptance speech, there is no movement without the direct participation of individuals and communities not normally considered, and who often consider themselves outside of the world of environmental activism.

Dr. Maathai's success was rooted in education and empowerment of all people in the community. Very few of us are the Wangari Maathais of the world, but we can be part of the same kind of network she envisioned. That network doesn't start top down or bottom up. It starts everywhere we are, here and now.

Appreciation of trees is intrinsically human, regardless of class or where we live. We don't need to refer to a text on low impact development or a stormwater design manual to know a neighborhood with trees is more pleasant than one without. But because of real and perceived individual and economic considerations, it's not always easy to conserve wooded areas or even individual trees. As it turns out, data show that when we disregard our intuitive affinity for trees, we may lose the economic advantages we sought.

Degradation isn't always accomplished in large-scale destruction. Ecosystems are often nickel-and-dimed to death. So casual and modest efforts to positively influence the everyday decisions of our neighbors can be as valuable as attending formal meetings.

Reports and academic papers to support environmental conservation efforts are widely available to those who know where to find them, but even informed parties may have a hard time boiling the information down to a few points that inspire and capture the interest of a broader audience in the limited time frame that might be available during a conversation, community celebration or other event.

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Communicating the Value of Trees

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Here are a few condensed ideas that may provide a place to start a conversation in your network about the value of preserving or planting trees:

- Studies done by the USDA Forest Service found that 54% of an area covered by trees reduced stormwater runoff that may erode soil and carry pollutants to surface water by as much as 11%.

- Trees use water to produce the energy they need to grow. The water is taken up from the ground and released as vapor through its leaves. The amount of water used by trees, especially groups of trees, is measurable and can help reduce the amount of stormwater runoff. Any reduction in runoff helps preserve water quality and lowers flood potential.

- Leaves also reduce runoff by providing more surface area to hold rainwater and allow time for raindrops to evaporate rather than falling on the ground.

- Tree canopies reduce erosion of soil by protecting the ground from impact from raindrops. (Large raindrops can fall at about 20 miles per hour or more!)

- Tree roots protect streams by protecting their banks from the force of the surface water flowing by and from the force of stormwater runoff from the land.

- **Talking to a developer or homeowner?** Numerous studies have found that property values decrease with increased distance from green spaces.

- According to United States Environmental Protection Agency, shaded surfaces may be 20-45 degrees Fahrenheit cooler than unshaded areas. This makes neighborhoods more walkable and reduces home cooling costs. It also reduces the temperature of runoff that reaches surface water either directly, or indirectly via storm sewers.

- **Talking to fishermen/women?** Fish can't live in hot streams where oxygen levels are lower. Preserving and/or planting trees along shorelines and stream banks helps keep temperatures in a healthy zone.

- **Talking to a gardener or farmer?** Trees provide protection against soil erosion from wind. This is important for enjoyment of outdoors and for preservation of soils in farmland.

- United States Geological Survey's Water Science School is a great resource for learners of all ages https://www.usgs.gov/special-topic/water-science-school

Christina Falk Is the principal of Water Action Compliance Assistance & Planning LLC, an environmental consulting company partnering with industry and environmental advocacy groups to protect water resources.

Visit their website: www.wacaap.com

Critical Environmental Areas

Laura Heady, Conservation and Land Use Program Coordinator, Hudson River Estuary Program/Cornell University

The value of natural areas is being celebrated more than ever – beyond the many benefits such as clean water, wildlife habitat, flood control, and temperature moderation, COVID-19 has been a stark reminder of the relationship between habitat disturbance and disease, and the public's need to access and enjoy nature.

With more than 250 municipalities in the estuary watershed, all making decisions about lands and waters, each community has an important role in sustaining the larger ecosystem and the many benefits it delivers. The Town of Wawarsing is an excellent case study in how a municipality can tap into funding and technical assistance to support conservation planning with outcomes that benefit the local community as well as the greater ecological landscape. It was a privilege and inspiration to work with the town's wise and committed volunteers and I'm happy to share their story.

The video highlights how conservation planning can help communities build a more resilient future. The beautiful Town of Wawarsing in Ulster County, NY completed a natural resources inventory and open space plan to identify conservation priorities and recommend actions. In 2019, the town implemented one of the key policy recommendations by adopting Critical Environmental Area designation for two ecologically-important resources in the community. Thanks to this work, any potential impacts to the quality of these critical areas must be considered during environmental review.

To learn more:

- See if you're a Climate Smart Community http://climatesmart.ny.gov/
- Read about Critical Environmental Areas and view maps of existing CEAs in New York https://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/6184.html
- Check out the Town of Wawarsing's Open Space Plan (PDF) https://www.townofwawarsing.net/assets/documents/environmental-conservation-commission/open-space-plan-2018.pdf
- Learn about creating a Natural Resources Inventory for your community https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/100925.html
- Find more detailed information on CEAs in the SEQR Handbook https://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/6188.html

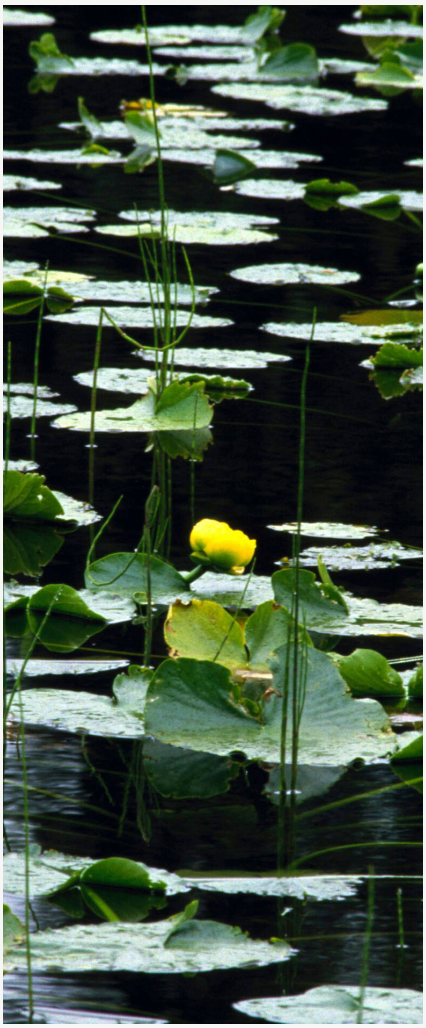
UPCOMING ELLA WORKSHOPS:

VIRTUAL TREE ID

TUESDAY, JUNE 16 / 12 - 1 PM

We moved online! Join ELLA partner Dr. Michael Rubbo of Pace University for a virtual tree identification workshop that will introduce you to the trees lining our streets, backyards, parks, and schools. Attendees must purchase Tree Finder: A Manual for Identification of Trees by their Leaves to participate.

Register Here:
https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIqdOGgqDIoGdMmBkWPwTKdnk-H71H5j39K



FROM TEATOWN:

LAKE MANAGEMENT: AQUATIC VEGETATION

WEDNESDAY, MAY 20 / 5:30 - 6:30 PM

Ah, aquatic plants. Love them or hate them, our lakes need vegetation to sequester nutrients, lock sediments in place, provide food and nursery habitat for wildlife, and shelter from predators. In some cases, there can be too much of a good thing. From nuisance natives to invasive species, join Teatown for Part 2 of our Introduction to Lake Management Lecture Series to discover a new appreciation for aquatic plants, what happens when there are too many, and how to manage them.

Register Here: https://www.teatown.org/events/lake-management-lecture-series-aquatic-vegetation/

"THESE SPECIES ARE NOT INHERENTLY BAD. THEY'RE JUST IN THE WRONG PLACE."

– DAVID LODGE

Garlic Mustard Pesto

Garlic mustard *(Alliaria petiolata)*, is an invasive biennial flowering plant native to Europe and Asia. Growing early and fast, this herb dominates the understory and crowds out native species, reducing overall biodiversity.

Thankfully, hand pulling is quite easy, and the entire plant is edible. The stems can be sautéed, the roots taste a bit like horseradish, and the young leaves make a naturally garlicky pesto. As with any foraged food, be careful of where and when you pull it to avoid contamination or misidentification.

While you remove garlic mustard, try this simple pesto recipe.

Ingredients:

- 2 cups garlic mustard leaves
- 1/4 cup pine nuts or walnuts
- 1 cloves of garlic
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/2 cup pecorino
- a squeeze of lemon
- salt to taste

Directions

1. Add leaves, nuts, garlic, and lemon to a food processor and mix.
2. Slowly add in the olive oil until smooth.
3. Add pecorino and pulse until just mixed
4. Add salt to taste

ELLA is a Partnership Between

TEATOWN

FCWC
Federated Conservationists of Westchester County

PACE UNIVERSITY
Dyson College of Arts and Sciences
INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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