



Eco Newsletter, May 2024, Issue 11

Trees Matter

Editorial



The focus in this edition of the BKEI Eco-newsletter is on appreciation; appreciation of the contribution that trees can, and do, make to our lives.

However, appreciation for something can be a bit slippery. It is perhaps a little like a rainbow. When you first see it, you stop to wonder at its beauty, you perhaps bring it to other people's attention, too. Then, gradually, as the rain passes, the intensity begins to fade until there is just the slightest hue remaining before it's gone. So too, with appreciation. When something is present in your life on a regular basis our appreciation for it can fade into the background. That is until something or someone comes along and prompts us to look through fresh eyes once again.

The intention here is to consciously raise our level of appreciation for trees by reminding us of the contribution that trees make in our daily lives, of the huge part that they play in

maintaining our atmosphere, of the hidden threats to our woodlands and so the need to replant, and our personal relationship with woods from a health and healing perspective.

The first article, **Caring For The Trees at Global Retreat Centre** draws to our attention the multitude of roles that trees play in our lives, from being the 'lungs of the world' to the providers of medicinal remedies, from the sustainers of biodiversity to a creative resource – just look around you at the number of items that are made of wood for our benefit, our convenience and our comfort.

However, not all is well in our woodlands and forests. With globalisation, pathogens and insects have been given a passport into new environments where they can begin to thrive at the expense of our long-term arboreal residents. The effects and some resolutions are explored in the second article; **Woodlands for the Future**.

Next, **Lifelines: Planting a Network of Hedgerows to Connect People and Nature** references the need to create corridors across the country for wildlife populations to thrive and maintain a rich genetic mix. The video marries spirit to nature beautifully by way of the following connections:

Spending time in nature, doing something for nature, breathes love in us.

This love then builds compassion in us.

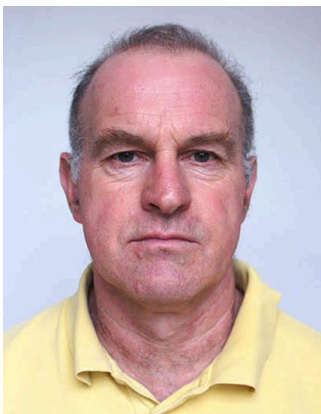
Compassion can guide us in making our choices.

Our choices make our world.

Let's choose, every day, only love, compassion, peace and care.

Too often, the mind has the propensity to focus on the negative – to race towards a set of, sometimes misplaced, conclusions. In the final article, **Forest bathing**, we focus on one ancient method that allows nature into the body, through the 5 senses, to bring about a variety of health benefits both mental and physical, both emotional and spiritual. This can be maximised by developing a child's mind, a mind filled with awe and wonder.

Enjoy your journey of appreciation for the new and perhaps for what is not so new, but which is today being encouraged to again inhabit the forefront of your mind.



Doug Stephenson is a resident of the Global Retreat Centre and has been involved in maintaining the grounds for the last three decades. With a degree in Plant Science, he worked in agricultural research prior to coming to Oxford.

Caring For The Trees at Global Retreat Centre, UK



The Amazon forest is termed the 'lungs of the world' for its exchange of CO₂ and O₂. And yet, in 2022, deforestation was taking place at an estimated 4 hectares per minute, that's 21 trees per second! Despairingly one asks, what contribution can a small estate like that of the Global Retreat Centre, which is only 20 hectares, make?

In Indian mythology, Rama, to save his wife Sita from Ravana, was required to build a causeway from Bharat (India) to (Sri) Lanka. For this, an army of monkeys carried rocks and dropped them into the sea. Also, desirous to help, was the diminutive chipmunk. Its contribution was to cover itself in sand, run to the causeway and shake the sand off. Such a small amount yet, nevertheless, making a contribution to the greater task. This must be how each estate, each farm, each garden should see its contribution to reducing CO₂ levels with the trees for which they are responsible. Read [more](#).

Forest Bathing



Image by [Josealbafotos](#)

In summer 2023, we started Forest Bathing sessions in the beautiful Heritage gardens of the Global Retreat Centre. Between 30 and 60 come to soak in the healing vibrations of nature.

Forest Bathing or 'Shinrin-yoku' is Japanese for absorbing nature. This is a relaxation practice that involves taking a walk or sitting in nature and being calm and quiet amongst the trees as you breathe deeply and observe nature around you. The process helps us take time out to decompress from our busy lives. Read [more](#).

Woodlands for the Future



Image by [Pexels](#)

The makeup of England's woodlands is the result of human activity over centuries. During this time woodlands have been managed under the assumption that the environment they are growing in will be relatively stable, however, this key assumption is no longer valid. The projected rate of climate change we are currently facing is unprecedented.

These centuries of management have resulted in many types of woodland having a limited species diversity - many species are grown in monoculture - and limited age structure, being dominated by relatively few tree species (five conifer species account for 88% of the softwood forests and five broadleaf species make up over 72% of the hardwood woodlands). Changes in the needs of society have resulted in many woodlands becoming neglected and no longer managed. Simultaneously, the abundance of grazing and browsing fauna has increased which has had negative impacts on the regeneration opportunities for trees and diversity and abundance of ground flora. Read [more](#)

Lifelines: Planting a Network of Hedgerows to Connect People and Nature



Lifelines weekend team of participants along with the Drala Long resident Buddhists

What is a lifeline? Clearly it's something that provides an opportunity for life. The Lifelines Project of the [St Ethelburga's Centre](#) for Reconciliation and Peace is true to its name. This project connects community and faith groups with farmers, helping to plant a network of hedgerows and wildlife corridors across the countryside in the UK. Last year over 250 volunteers planted 3,190 metres of hedgerows and 17,290 trees. The project invites people from diverse backgrounds to take part in a weekend not just to do the actual planting but also to learn all about the native varieties and how to nurture the saplings. After the planting is done, the resident farmer or landowner is responsible for taking care of the saplings. The Woodland Trust is one of the key partners for the project to provide the saplings. Read [more](#).

Meditation



Image by [준성 강](#)

Relax and enjoy this [meditation](#) about using your inner energy to be in harmony with nature.