



THANKS TO YOU, THE UPGRADE BEGINS!

Thanks to our very generous donors, our “Two Nurseries, One Sangha,” campaign is off to a strong start, and we feel confident enough to begin to act on our campaign objectives. (That is, beyond raising money. Not that we’ve stopped doing that—banish the thought! Anyway, read on.)

The campaign is intended to fund upgrades to our two nurseries, our DC-area Wild Plant Nursery, and our Tree Bank Hispaniola “vivero,” located along the Dominican Republic / Haiti border. (Quick background: Our Tree Bank program works on the Dominican side of the border to restore native forest and improve the incomes of local small-holder farmers. See the previous issue of the *Acorn* for more on the campaign; just click “newsletter” on the bottom menu of our website, at earthsangha.org.)

As you might imagine, our two nurseries are very different, but both of them are crucial to our work. Without large, reliable supplies of wild-propagated native plants, we wouldn’t be able to get much of anything done, either in the DC area or along the DR / Haiti border. We badly need to upgrade these facilities—just to keep pace with ourselves!

So at the end of November, we began to upgrade the DC-area nursery. The work is mostly structural, and there is a lot of it. We started by clearing 4,000 square feet of what had been a raised-bed section, to convert it to containerized production, an arrangement that will allow us to produce stock more efficiently. We tore out all the old structure and stuffed it into an enormous dumpster, then our colleagues at the Fairfax County Park Authority regraded the area. We’ll rebuild by installing growing troughs, overhead irrigation, and a steel shade structure. In another section of the nursery, we’ll put in a new storage area and big bins for soil and sand. And gradually, we’ll upgrade irrigation throughout the nursery.

The Tree Bank vivero needs structural attention too, but before getting to that, we had a more fundamental problem to solve: we

Photo: In November, volunteers began our Wild Plant Nursery upgrade, by tearing out some of our old raised beds. This space will become part of the nursery container yard.

needed to propagate more staff! By just about every measure—number of farms served, amount of credit extended to our farmers, amount of forest in care, number of trees produced—the Tree Bank has roughly doubled in size over the past two or three years. But until last month, we only had two in-country staff members to oversee all that activity: Gaspar, our Project Director, and Frankie, our Nursery Assistant. A staff of two is no longer adequate to run the show down there, so we have created a third position: that of Assistant Director. By training someone to work with Gaspar, we will build local capacity and help stabilize the Tree Bank for further growth. You can meet our new Assistant Director on the back page.

Now that we’re staffed up, we’ll turn our attention to the vivero. The biggest single item on the agenda is building a “secadero,” a kind of hoop-house seed-drying facility. We need this for our Rising Forests Coffee effort, which is increasing farm income and creating a powerful incentive for forest conservation. (For more on Rising Forests, click “coffee” on the top menu of our website.) The vivero is the logical place to put the secadero, since that’s where we have the space. And the vivero itself is crucial to Rising Forests: it produces the program’s coffee seedlings, and the native tree seedlings used to shade the coffee. The secadero will cost us at least \$10,000 to build.

Both of our nurseries are driving ecological restoration efforts involving hundreds of acres and scores of landholders—efforts that would not occur without that propagation capability. That’s why supporting our “Two Nurseries, One Sangha” campaign is a very efficient way of investing in conservation. We hope you’ll think of the forests when you plan your year-end giving! And don’t forget our match offer—see below.

INVEST IN RESTORATION!

Your gift will be matched! Two very generous anonymous donors have agreed to match, dollar-for-dollar, up to \$100, every gift to our nursery-upgrade campaign through the year-end!

HELP UPGRADE OUR COMMUNITY NURSERIES!

THE MARIE BUTLER LEVEN PRESERVE

Located in the McLean section of Fairfax County, Virginia, the Marie Butler Leven Preserve is the site of our “Native Arboretum” project, a long-term effort to create a display collection of native forest and meadow plants in this 20-acre park. The park is owned by the Fairfax County Park Authority; we have been collaborating with the Park Authority on this project since 2004.

About 17 acres of the park is forested. As is typical of most small

and medium-sized forest parks in this region, the Preserve’s forest is badly infested by invasive alien plants. Our work has consisted mostly of invasives control, followed by the planting of appropriate native species, propagated from the wild at our Wild Plant Nursery.

Invasive alien plants are one of the most serious threats to natural areas in this region. The Park Authority and other land-management agencies cannot possibly deal with this threat on their own: in a

A: Meadow Restoration

In November, Eagle Scout candidate Sid Madhavan and friends planted hundreds of native grasses and forbs in this spot. (See the photo below.) The plants were grown from wild-collected seed at our Wild Plant Nursery in Springfield. This is our first meadow project at the Preserve. In the coming years, we hope to restore the entirety of this field.



B: Propagation Beds

In raised beds at “B,” we are growing native grasses and forbs for the Preserve’s meadow project. We plan to build additional beds here next year. The beds should take some of the strain off meadow plant production at our nursery.

C: Invasive Vine Removal

We have cut most of the invasive woody tree-climbing vines out of the park, but some survive, mainly in the spots marked “C.” Such vines can injure or even kill trees. We are removing the remaining vine “curtains” in these places, and looking for any invasive vines that we have missed elsewhere.

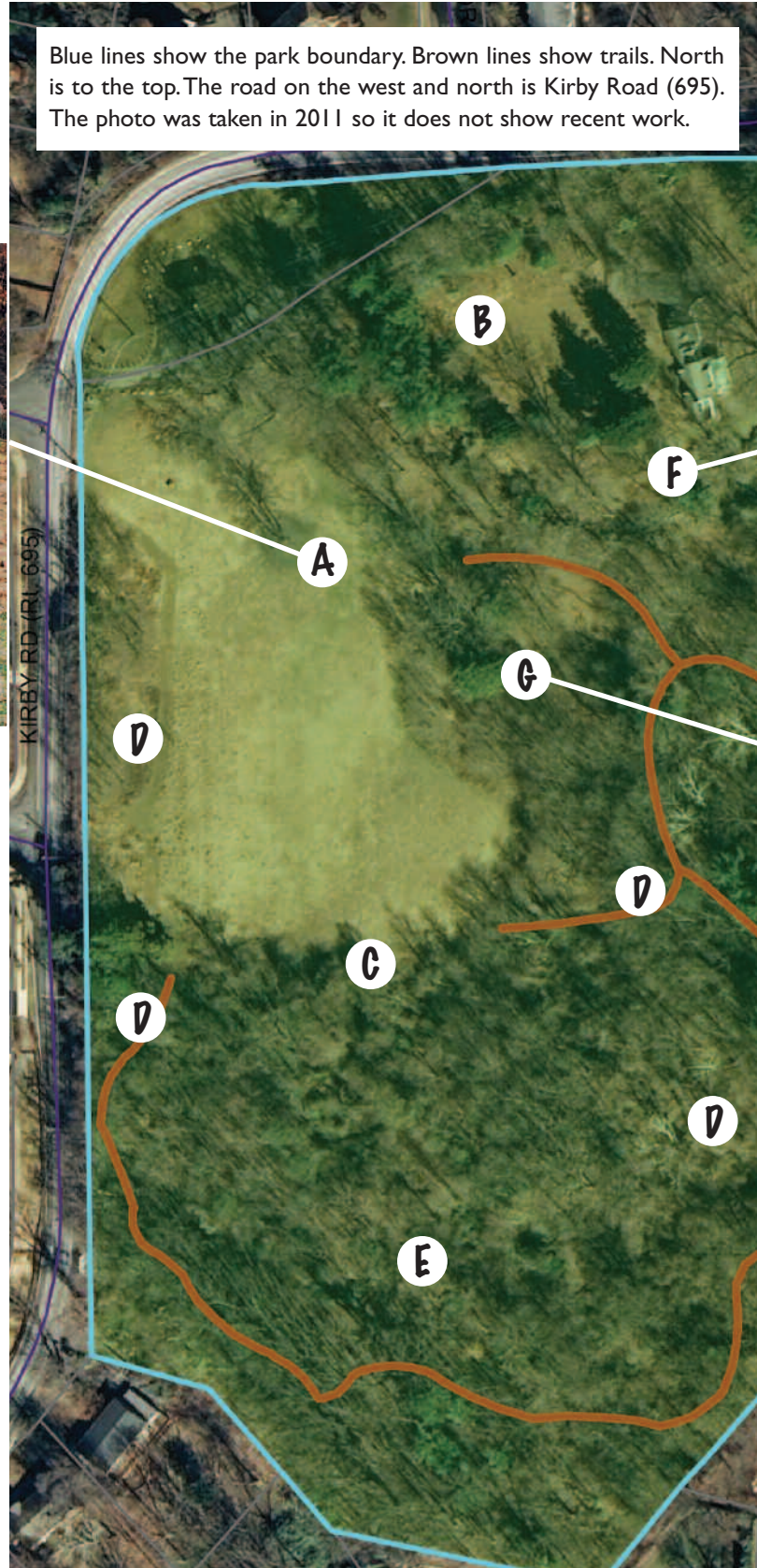
D: Woody Invasives

Areas marked “D” have dense colonies of invasive shrubs and small trees. In the spring, we’ll focus on some of these areas, to cut or extract as much of the invasive understory as we can.

E: Groundlayer Invasions

There are groundlayer invasions throughout the park, but this southern section of forest probably has the largest ones that remain. Fortunately, the canopy is in reasonably good shape but on the ground, it’s rough going in here. We have been hand-pulling the groundlayer in fairly small patches for the past couple of years. To get more coherent results, we’re going to divide this part of the park into three sections and deal with them one at a time.

Blue lines show the park boundary. Brown lines show trails. North is to the top. The road on the west and north is Kirby Road (695). The photo was taken in 2011 so it does not show recent work.



contest between weeds and staff hours, the weeds will always win. That's why volunteers are crucial to invasives control. Our parks need volunteer muscle!

We are developing a new strategy for the Preserve, which, we hope, will use that muscle as efficiently as possible. We are working, not just to restore forest and meadow, but to answer a question that is fundamental to local conservation: how can we best use large numbers of volunteers to control invasive alien plants and reestablish native-plant communities?

All of this may sound rather grim—and in a sense, it is—but the Preserve itself is fascinating, and a lot of fun to work in, as we hope you can see from the aerial photo and caption keys below. The keys mention the most important features of our new strategy. If you live in the Washington area, we hope you'll join us at the Preserve sometime soon! We work there year-round. Information on our field events is available on the field schedule page of our website, at earthsangha.org.



F: In Memoriam

In November, we planted a memorial grove of two rare native tree species, American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) and butternut (*Juglans cinerea*), in honor of Larry Molumby, who died earlier this year. Larry was a major benefactor of the Sangha for many years. We don't know how the grove will fare against the exotic pathogens that threaten these trees. We're taking a risk for the greater good—the kind of thing that Larry did as a matter of routine.

G: A Showcase Forest

We cleaned and replanted this patch of forest several years ago. Our volunteer “Weeding Divas” are working to keep the area invasives-free. Other volunteers are working along the edge, to extend the “invasives-free zone” farther into the forest, as in the photo below.



H & I: Spring, Pool, & Stormpond

A seasonal pool, fed by a seepage farther up slope, occurs just off the main trail at “H.” The pool is the remnant of a small marsh that was lost with the installation of the stormpond (marked “I”). The seep and pool are very valuable wildlife habitat; we are working to restore appropriate native vegetation in and around them.



De Ustedes por ofreserme esta gran oportunidad de trabajos donde voy a aprender tecnica importante principal mente sobre medio ambiente y sobre plantas nativas y fauna nativas y otras tecnica importante que aprendere durante el transcurso de desarrollos de lo proyectos ejecutando y por ejecuta. No siento comprometido ajunto a gaspar a trabajar unidos y asee los que hay que hacer para desarrollar los proyectos y luchar por fortalecimiento de nuestra asociacion. tambien con esta oportunidad meba a ayudar a fortalecer el estudio de nuestros hijos que tengo estudiando con muchas limitaciones economicas y las asociaciones para tomaron para la que me desempeñan para para el fin de...

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.

DIRECTOR ADJUNTO

Thanks to our very generous donors, we have managed to hire another staff member for our Tree Bank Hispaniola program. The Tree Bank works along the Dominican Republic / Haiti border to restore native forest and improve the incomes of small-holder farmers. The program has expanded enormously over the past two years or so — we now have over 180 acres of forest in care, and about 40 farms in our system. But our staffing has not kept pace: until last month, we had only two in-country staffers: Gaspar, our Project Director, and Frankie, our Nursery Assistant.

Gaspar needed more help, so we created the position of Director Adjunto, or Assistant Director. Last month our Dominican partner association endorsed a candidate for that position, whom we then hired: Alfonso Sanchez. Alfonso is a local farmer, a founding member of the association, and a very nice guy. (Matt and Chris know him already.) That's Alfonso above, after one of our community meetings.

Alfonso wants everyone to know how grateful he is for this opportunity. He has written a thank-you letter, which we've posted in the Tree Bank section of our website. An excerpt appears above. Alfonso says the job will help him finance his children's education, which, as you would probably think, is rudimentary because of "economic limitations." The excerpt above begins, approximately:

"[I'm grateful] to all of you for offering me this great opportunity to work in a way where I will learn important techniques, primarily concerning the environment, and native plants and animals, and other techniques that I will learn in the process of developing our projects. I feel committed to helping Gaspar to work together ..."

Back at you, Alfonso! We feel committed to working with you and the other farmers.

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.

The Acorn: Our newsletter is produced with "print on demand" technology, which consumes far less energy and materials than does conventional printing. This paper is 100% post-consumer waste recycled, process chlorine-free, and manufactured entirely with wind-generated electricity. This issue © copyright 2013, Earth Sangha.

One of the best: The Earth Sangha is recognized by the *Catalogue for Philanthropy* as "one of the best small charities in the Washington, DC, region."



From the Tree Bank's farmers To you:
Rising Forests Coffee.
Revive yourself.
Restore the forests.
earthsangha.org/coffee.html
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