

# Conservation Watch

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## ***Responsible Cut Flower Farming Veriflora Helps You Buy Your Flowers with Care***



Only recently have North American consumers begun to shown interest in how the commodities they buy are sourced. From Fair Trade coffee to organic cotton, consumers in the United States are sending a strong message. We want reassurance that the products we buy are grown in ways that care for the environment and the workers.

Flowers are no exception. Most of the flowers available to super market shoppers are there because they are easy for growers to produce year round. Out-of-season flowers became available with the discovery of photoperiodicity in the 1920's. [Photoperiodicity is the physiological reaction of organisms to the length of day or night. It occurs in plants and animals.] This phenomenon allowed growers to alter the light in greenhouses and produce carnations and chrysanthemums all year. More recently hydroponic growing systems have been developed to support tulips that bloom in three weeks, lilies that bloom in nine weeks and gerberas that produce two flowerings a month. Americans demand flowers that are "perfect - no spots, no bruised leaves, no bugs - and most of all, we care about price."

In order to pass inspection in the U.S., growers drench their flowers in fungicide and insecticide just before shipment. Customs inspectors demand that they be pest free, but not chemical free. (The Food and Drug Administration in our country regulates pesticide residue on food but not on flowers.)

The World Resources Institute discovered that in 2001, Central American flower growers regularly used an average of six fungicides, four insecticides and seven herbicides to grow their stock. Many of the chemicals used also polluted streams and groundwater, affecting workers and locations in Columbia, Ecuador, and elsewhere. When we learn that ten to twelve air freight flights a day land at the Miami airport filled with flowers, we can begin to understand the extent of the environmental impact made by our flower purchasing habits. Furthermore, unaware of the chemicals involved, we bring flowers home, dump them on the kitchen counter to arrange and then place them on our dining tables, near the food we are serving.

Fortunately, Veriflora™ provides North America its first comprehensive social and environmental certification standard for the floral industry. This organization started in 2001 when a group of producers and handlers sought out Scientific Certification Systems (SCS). SCS is an agency that had previously certified lumber through the Forest Stewardship Council and fish through the Marine Stewardship Council.

To warrant Veriflora™ certification by SCS, growers must immediately eliminate World Health Organization (WHO) Class IA/IB extremely hazardous and highly hazardous pesticides and develop a plan for transitioning to organic production. Growers and producers must also comply with agricultural practices that promote soil fertility, water conservation, management of waste products and eco-habitat protection. In addition, there are rigorous criteria for fair labor practices and quality control throughout the supply chain.

Currently 60 growers are certified in the U.S., Ecuador and Colombia. Seven large U.S. wholesalers are certified and encourage their growers to adopt the VeriFlora™ standards by agreeing to buy their flowers year-round at a fixed price. As a result, over 765 million stems of flowers as well as 250 million potted and nursery plants carry the VeriFlora™ Certified Sustainably Grown label in the U.S. Freshblooms, a division of Delaware Valley Floral Group in New Jersey, is one wholesaler on the East Coast that only sells certified flowers. One of the largest California certified growers, Sun Valley, markets to Trader Joe's and Whole Foods. National retail chains, including Safeway, Kroger, Bristol Farms, Ralph's, Top Food, ShopRite, Wegman's and King Kullen, also carry VeriFlora™ flowers. Online, OrganicBouquet.com and OrganicStyle.com are reliable sources for VeriFlora™ certified flowers. OrganicBouquet.com also packages their products in minimal, recyclable boxes.

The Society of American Florists has not taken a position on VeriFlora™ or other certification programs, since most consumers don't ask about them and most florists do not have sustainably

grown flowers to sell. However, this is beginning to change. Last winter an event in New York City called “Garden In Transit” involved 20,000 children who painted 80,000 flowers to be applied to the roofs of taxis. VeriFlora™ donated 80,000 live flowers to the effort and was rewarded with a great deal of interest from New Yorkers who saw the beautiful flowers being distributed and asked where to purchase sustainably grown blooms for their own use.

Supply chains throughout the flower business are not integrated and VeriFlora™ labeling is still inconsistent, so it can still be difficult for the average consumer to purchase flowers at a retail outlet with any confidence that they were grown sustainably. Our purchasing power could really make a difference. We, as consumers, should be asking our florists where their flowers come from, if they are aware of VeriFlora™, and telling them we would like to see flowers for sale that were sustainably or organically grown.

*Susie Wilmerding, G.C. of Philadelphia (PA) - Zone V  
GCA Conservation Committee – Vice-Chair, Agriculture*

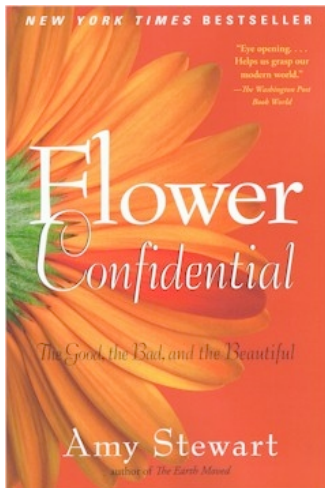
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*Author's Note:*

I became interested in this topic after reading a fascinating book, *Flower Confidential*, by Amy Stewart. [Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2007.] In this book Ms. Stewart documents an eye opening account of cut flower production in South and Central America. Along with the history of commercial flower growing, she sheds light on the conditions that workers face throughout an industry that exposes them to many chemicals outlawed in the U.S. as well as unfair labor practices and serious environmental degradation. The book is a wake up call for all of us who buy flowers. As the author of this article, I recommend the book highly.

*Susie Wilmerding*

**From Dairy Farm to Biodiesel Farm**

Vermont, which is known as the dairy state in New England, may someday add “biodiesel” to that title, according to delegates to the Zone I Meeting in Bennington. They were introduced to John Williamson, owner of State Line Farm in North Bennington, who has been a leader in successfully planting oil seed crops in New England. Production of biodiesel fuel from seed oil is one application that could put farmers like Williamson in the forefront of efforts to find alternatives to high fuel prices, as well as saving small farms whose profits are declining.

Delegates were given a glimpse of this operation when they toured his dairy farm, which recently switched from more traditional crops to growing crops such as canola (rapeseed) and sunflowers, whose seeds have 30 to 40% oil content.

GCA members met in the small new barn he constructed for pressing the oil out of these seeds. Its grain storage bin is loaded from atop the adjacent hillside so that gravity, not electric power, feeds it into the Tabby model 70 seed press. They watched it press the canola seeds into oil. No waste is left behind because the seed meal that remains is compressed into pellets that are fed to the cows.

Next, alcohol and hydroxide are added, which turns the oil into diesel fuel. Williamson powers all his farm equipment and even his old Mercedes with this biodiesel fuel. He no longer buys commercial fuel.

The farm is virtually self-sustaining. Williamson commented that he knew he would always be able to grow food because he could produce his own fuel and the feed for his cows from these oil seed crops. He also uses his barn's south-facing windows to provide passive solar heat in the winter.



Williamson acknowledged the support he received from Vern Grubinger, Coordinator of the University of Vermont Extension/Center for Sustainable Agriculture, who was also the Conservation Speaker at the Zone I Meeting. He, along with the U.S. Dept. of Energy and others, supported this pilot program in which Williamson participated, testing the feasibility of biodiesel farming in Vermont. They've concluded that there appears to be potential for growing oil seed crops on small farms in northern New England.

Despite temperatures in the 90's, Zone I delegates peppered Williamson with questions and were fascinated by this new type of farming that may help the cause of sustainability while stemming the decline of dairy farms in Vermont.

*Elise Wellington, Worcester (MA) G.C.  
Zone I Conservation/NAL Representative*

## **Good Gardening Equals Good Conservation!** **Rebuild your soil using fewer chemicals.**

In looking over my summer reading, I found three old friends on my bookshelf that offer timelessly good advice to the backyard gardener. One is *How To Have A Green Thumb Without An Aching Back* by Ruth Stout, a delightful treatise by a gardener on some very poor soil in the coldest corner of Connecticut. Here, she discovered the benefits of mulch as a work saver and plant improver. A second is *Making Vegetables Grow* by Thalassa Cruso, a pioneer in the seventies with her own TV gardening show, who grew vegetables on soil without rebuilding it. Her good soil lost its health in just two years through depletion of organic matter and mineral content. My third friend is Louis Bromfield who wrote *Malabar Farm*. He restored a worn-out hill farm in Ohio to productivity. All three learned to depend on organic matter for success.

Plants take both nutrients and organic matter from the soil. Unless both are added yearly, plants will show signs of deficiencies: off-color leaves, stunted growth, and vulnerability to disease. Many gardeners try to correct these conditions by using chemicals - fertilizer and pesticides.

Nature, however, has a better way - organic mulches, spread no more than two and a half inches deep. Mulch may be supplied by items such as compost made from the tops of old plants (undiseased, please) and lawn cuttings, if they are mixed with dried vegetative matter such as ground-up fall leaves. Leaves alone make excellent mulch. Use them, don't bag them! My friend Ruth Stout hides orange peels and banana skins under her mulch because they provide valuable nutrients. This can be done with most kitchen vegetable refuse, such as carrot skins and tops. Of course, there is also the old standby, manure, preferably dried! Don't use peat moss as mulch; mix it into the soil instead. I've found that any mulch I apply in my garden is gone by early August, used up by the plants. Time to renew it!

The success of your plantings will also depend on the quality of the basic subsoil on your property. My third summer reading friend, Louis Bromfield, wrote *Malabar Farm* to explain how he restored his Ohio farm where the mineral-rich soil had been badly depleted by a generation of farmers that had "farmed it out", without replenishing the soil in any way. His intensive rebuilding program involved lots of plant material, minerals supplied where needed, and contour plowing to halt erosion on hillsides. In three to five years, he brought land that had been abandoned by farmers back to a high level of productivity.

All three writers will also tell you, using many specific examples, that an additional benefit of organic matter is that the use of green stuff and mulch will grow plants that can withstand insects. They all found that pests prefer to attack sickly plants. No sprays may be needed if your soil is healthy enough.

All this information comes from knowledgeable gardeners who watched their gardens closely. Their books are based on good common sense plus seeing what works from first hand experience. I am glad they shared their discoveries with all of us!

*Ann Coburn, Village G.C. of Sewickley (PA) – Zone V  
GCA NAL Committee – Vice-Chair, Endangered Species*

## The Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge

Thirty years ago, no one would have believed that 8,000 acres of corn and soy beans would one day be returned to 8,000 acres of native grasses and flowering plants, home to bison, elk, and native critters that had slowly disappeared since the prairie greeted early settlers in the 1800's. The following story provides a snapshot of how it happened.

In the 1970's, Iowa Power and Light Company began buying connecting farms about 20 miles east of Des Moines. It was soon discovered that the huge purchase would be used to develop a nuclear power plant that would provide alternative power to mid-Iowa. Local citizens grumbled, picketed, and voiced great opposition to such a proposal.

Eighty percent of Iowa's power comes from coal and few people at that time thought that we needed an alternative source of energy. Further, the land was among the most fertile and productive acreage in this country. For many reasons, Iowa Power changed its mind about such an expensive project. For almost 10 years, following the Three Mile Island nuclear plant incident in 1979, the land continued to be leased as farmland, plowed and tilled, while Iowa Power considered what to do with it.

U.S. Congressman Neal Smith (D-IA), also a local farmer, came up with an idea. Why not convert the vast contiguous acreage back to native prairie? It just might be the largest reconstruction of the tallgrass prairie ecosystem in the country! Congressman Smith was a powerful and persuasive member of the House, and the times lent themselves to grand pork barrel spending. In 1990, by an Act of Congress, the Walnut Creek National Wildlife Refuge was born. Eventually, 8,000 acres were designated to become part of the U.S. Department of the Interior, operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



In 1993, the Central Iowa Group of the Sierra Club and prairie experts recommended the formation of a "friends" group to increase public awareness and participation in Refuge activities and to provide revenue for projects that federal funds would not cover. One of the first projects of the Friends of the Prairie was to recommend to Congress that the Refuge be renamed in honor of Congressman Smith. The group also created the Prairie Point Bookstore, edits the Prairie Winds newsletter four times a year, and conducts many special environmental education activities for the public. In 1997, the Prairie Learning Center was constructed on the site. It is a prairie-style educational facility that houses a theatre, a 13,000 square foot wildlife exhibit hall, classrooms, research area, and the bookstore.

As you drive through the 800 acre bison and elk enclave on the Refuge, or walk one of the many trails, you may be lucky enough to see almost 200 types of native prairie flowers and grasses that have returned. The GCA Partners for Plants is collecting seed for propagation in an effort to help restore more of the Refuge land. One future educational concept for the Refuge is to begin developing an outdoor prairie science classroom in partnership with the Iowa Department of Education. It would focus on using the environment as an integrating context for learning.

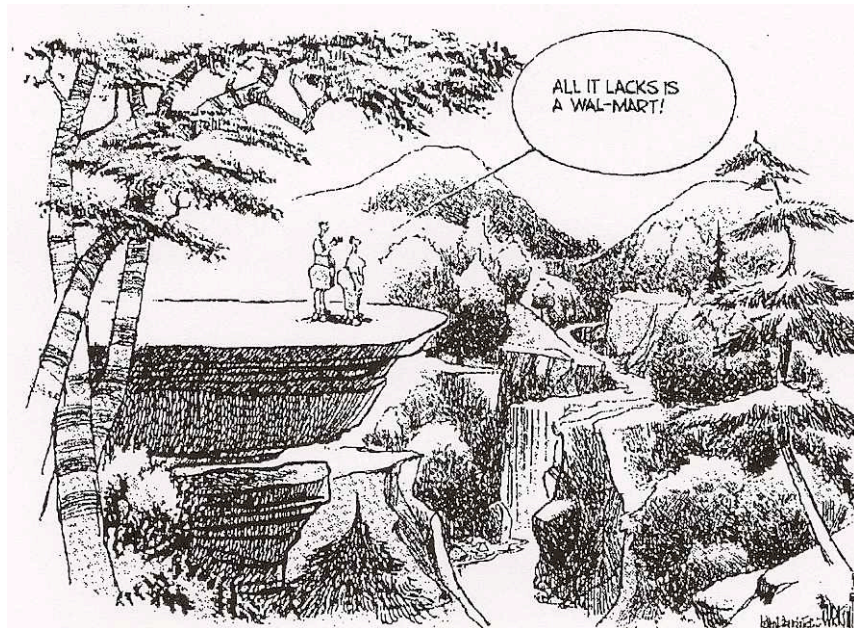
In other places, the tallgrass prairie is almost extinct. One hundred and fifty years ago it covered 85% of Iowa's 36 million acres. Only one-tenth of one percent remains in its natural state. The Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge offers a rare peek at the incredible collection of life we call the tallgrass prairie. As individuals we may not have Neal Smith's influence, but we can do what we are able to protect our dear earth. Aldo Leopold, the great conservationist, said, "We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."

*Nancy McKlveen, Des Moines (IA) Founders Garden Club – Zone XI  
GCA NAL Committee - Vice Chair, Agriculture*

## **A Visual Scourge**

As we strive everywhere to protect and preserve our land, shouldn't visual landscapes be protected too? The rise of digital billboards has grown so exponentially that they are often the brightest things in the landscape. Digital billboards are becoming the visual equivalent of land degradation.

The Highway Beautification Act (HBA) of 1965 was passed under the leadership of Lady Bird Johnson, whose determination to preserve endangered landscapes stemmed from her belief that highway landscapes, as well as other scenic vistas, should be a source of joy. As time has passed, however, the powerful billboard industry has weakened the federal enforcement of the HBA. Many states have continued to act independently, passing legislation that protects scenic landscapes. As is often the case, volunteer assistance and activities help in this protection.



Volunteers and law enforcement professionals alike find that the fight against digital billboards has grown. The present challenge, the opposition to the proliferation of digital billboards, is added to the continuing goal of supporting scenic preservation. Where they are allowed, flashing, intermittent, moving lights often become the dominant feature in the landscape. Does your state's agreement with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) already prohibit them? Some do. Others have not yet addressed the issue.

As concerned citizens begin to focus on this problem, they increasingly worry about the intervention of the billboard industry's representatives, who are trying to convince local governments that banning billboards violates the First Amendment right to free speech. In actuality, the only thing the law cannot restrict is what billboards say. Some states already ban billboards outright, while many more restrict the size and type they allow.

As communities and state organizations work to enhance scenic conservation, the arrival of digital billboards with both their intrusive nature and highway safety issues has indeed become a new scourge. By 2010 it is estimated that 15% of all billboards will be digital displays. Is this something we want?

Scenic America, an organization, begun by some very alert GCA members back in 1982, continues to update public information related to billboard issues. Visit it at: [www.scenic.org/billboards/digital](http://www.scenic.org/billboards/digital).

*Judy Boggess, Lake Forest (IL) G.C. - Zone XI*

## **Mountain Pine Beetle Threatens the West**

The mountain pine beetle, which began to infest Colorado's ponderosa and lodgepole pine forests in 1996, is causing an alarming amount of damage to forests in Colorado and throughout the West. Mountain pine beetles (MPB's) have historically been the most damaging of the bark beetles. According to the U.S. Forest Service, in 1990 they were responsible for the death of 289,000 trees in the State of Washington. Outbreaks of mountain pine beetle attacks have been recorded in the West in many places since 1894. Outbreaks can last for more than ten years. These epidemic attacks have been recorded throughout the West.

Federal and state forestry officials say that if current rates of infestation continue the mountain pine beetle will kill the majority of Colorado's large diameter lodgepole pine forests within the next three to five years. A 2007 aerial survey of Colorado's forests showed that the bark beetle had affected about a half million new acres, bringing the total number of infested acres to 1.5 million in Colorado alone.

Mountain pine beetle, *Dendroctonus ponderosae*, is native to the forests of western North America. Periodic outbreaks of the insect, previously called the Black Hills beetle or Rocky Mountain pine beetle, can result in losses of millions of trees. Once MPB infests a tree, nothing practical can be done to save it. Under epidemic or outbreak conditions, enough beetles can emerge from an infested tree to kill at least two trees the following year.

Natural controls of mountain pine beetle include woodpeckers and insects such as clerid beetles that feed on adults and larvae under the bark. However, during outbreaks these natural controls often fail to prevent additional attacks.

Extreme cold temperatures also can reduce MPB populations. For winter mortality to be a significant factor, however, a severe freeze is necessary while the insect is in its most vulnerable stage. Although bark beetles are a natural part of lodgepole pine eco-systems, warmer winters and recent droughts have intensified their numbers by providing a perfect breeding ground for the beetles to multiply and spread.





Dying trees. Discolored foliage is a sign that these lodgepole pines have been attacked by the mountain pine beetle.

Large stands of unhealthy trees produce secondary effects as well. The dead trees increase fire risk for affected areas. “Trees that are healthy and nourished and have moisture in them are far less susceptible to fire than those that are diseased or in the process of dying,” explains Forest Service spokeswoman Janelle Smith. The risk for fire will increase over the next 10 to 15 years, as new trees start to grow alongside the fallen timber. “If you get a fire running through those young trees, it’s going to be a very hot, slow-burning fire that’s more destructive than the fast-moving crown fires that Colorado has experienced in the past,” forestry specialist Bob Sturtevant says. U.S. Representative Mark Udall (D-CO) called the 2007 aerial survey of MPB damage “very alarming,” adding that it emphasized the need for additional resources for the Forest Service and local communities to combat the epidemic in order to reduce the risk of wildfires.

*Quick Facts:*

- Mountain pine beetles (MPB’s) are the most significant insect pests in Colorado’s pine forests. MPB’s kill large numbers of trees annually during outbreaks all over the West.
- Trees that are not growing vigorously due to old age, crowding, poor growing conditions, drought, fire or mechanical damage, root disease and other causes are most likely to be attacked.
- A long-term remedy involves thinning susceptible stands, leaving well-spaced, healthy trees.
- Another treatment is with verbenone, a natural organic compound. Verbenone pouches are hung on nearby susceptible healthy trees to repel and confuse the beetles.

*Jennifer Fain, Hancock Park (CA) G.C.  
Zone XII Conservation/NAL Representative 2006-08*

## **The Law of the Sea Treaty: Lost or in Limbo?**

**What’s the problem?** Oceans cover over two-thirds of the world’s surface, and events and actions that take place in one part of the world can profoundly affect habitat and species around the globe. The combined stress of pollution, seabed exploration, offshore oil drilling, over

fishing, wildlife trade, and territorial autonomy have placed the world's oceans and the plant and animal species they sustain in peril. Half of the world's coral reefs are threatened by pollution and human activity; two-thirds of fish stocks in the global market are depleted; and chemical pollution has destroyed parts of the Arctic Ice Cap and its glaciers as well as creating dead zones in bays, estuaries, and coastal waters worldwide. In addition, our oceans are the major distributor of the planet's heat through deep sea circulation toward the poles from the equator.

**What's at stake?** The United States has over 95,000 miles of coastline and over 3.4 million square miles of ocean within its territorial waters. Over 53% of the U.S. population lives on 17% of coastal land and is home to 45 million people. The Garden Club of America has 197 Clubs with 17,700 members. Almost half of these members live in the 23 coastal states of the U.S. "Hurricane Alley," is also known as GCA Zone VIII (FL, GA, SC, AL). This zone shares 2,500 miles of coastal shoreline, and experiences key crises that affects these states: shoreline erosion, threats to estuarine health, coastal wetland survival, dying coral reefs, rising sea levels, critical pollution, and stress on marine fisheries.

**What's the Law of the Sea?** The Law of the Sea Treaty (LOS or LOST), conceived in 1982 by the United Nations, was intended to be a method for governing activities on, over, and beneath the ocean surface. Focusing primarily on navigational and transit issues, the treaty also contains provisions regulating deep sea mining, ocean and seabed mineral and oil exploration, marine trade, pollution, research, and dispute resolution. LOS grants governance rights of "exclusive economic zones," (EEZ's), within 200 nautical miles of shore, with a 12 mile territorial sea limit.

**Where does the U.S. stand on LOS?** The U.S., with sovereignty over islands throughout the Pacific, has strong claims on large swaths of oceans, giving this country the legal right to the largest oceanic claims in the world. LOS is important for U.S. security because it protects our naval activities all over the world; and for our sovereignty, because it affirms U.S. rights over the Continental Shelf and the EEZ. Supporters of LOS include the State Department; the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Department of the Navy and the other armed services; many leaders in industry; stewards of the environment and scientists; fishery managers; and the GCA Conservation and NAL Committees.

LOS has been ratified by 153 nations, but not by the United States. On October 31, 2007, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted in favor of ratification of the United Nations Convention on the LOS (UNCLOS), governed by the U.N. However, only the Senate as a whole can ratify a treaty and a 2/3 vote is necessary to pass LOS. LOS is stalled.

**What's next?** The U.N., under LOS, has expansive powers to regulate international oceans that cover 70% of the earth. It has jurisdiction over all mineral rights, environmental protection, fishing rights, and dispute resolution. This point seems to keep LOS in limbo. The argument in the Senate centers on whether the U.S. is willing to give up its authority and sovereignty on dispute resolutions. The U.N., in 1994, established the International Seabed Authority (ISA) based in Kingston, Jamaica to organize and control all mineral related activities in the international seabed area, beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. The purpose of the ISA, defined by the 1982 U.N. Convention on LOS, is to "explore and exploit" specified areas of the deep seabed for mineral resources. ISA is the authority, under the U.N. charter, that governs all disputes in the oceans, the ocean floor, and the deep seabed area. ISA was established to guard, govern, regulate and protect all ocean mineral resources - solid, liquid, or gaseous.

Oceans are "the common heritage of mankind," as defined by the U.N. over 26 years ago. The oceans and everything in them, including the ocean floor with all its riches are being irreparably

polluted and in danger of being destroyed in our lifetime. The search for oil and off shore drilling in the next ten years will be an international race. Last fall Tom Casey, Deputy Spokesman for the U.S. Department of State, stated that “joining the Convention is the only viable means of protecting and maximizing our ocean-related interests and the Senate should approve U.S. accession without delay.”

The GCA Legislative Status Chart of July 30, 2008 states that it is doubtful that the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress will schedule a vote this year. The Conservation and NAL Committees of GCA feel this is an important issue and urge those interested to follow the issue and contact their Senators.

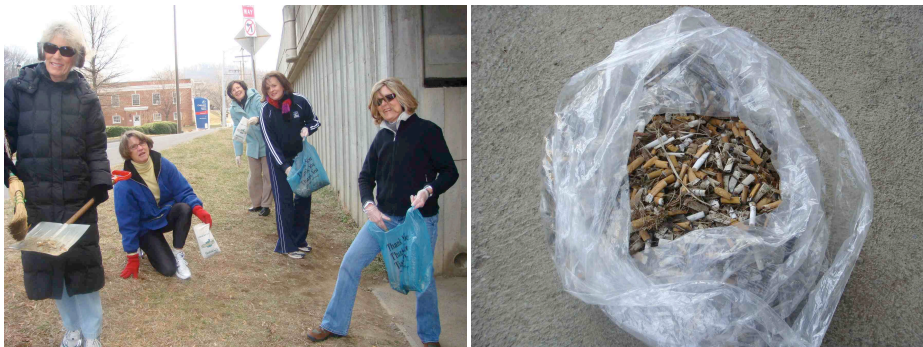
*Sharon Stewart, G.C. of Palm Beach (FL)  
Zone VIII NAL/Conservation Representative 2006-08*

## **Showcasing Conservation Around the Country**

From coast to coast our GCA clubs span the twelve growing zones. Each one finds members planting gardens, arranging flowers for pleasure and competition, sharing collective experience and information, and enjoying the camaraderie of like-minded women. Over time, these women have added a new focus to their activities – a focus that fits naturally with the original mission statements of the clubs. They are becoming aware of the environment as it affects our beloved gardens as well as our overall health. Club conservation chairs, armed with information siphoning down from dedicated leaders on the national conservation committee, are educating members about environmental issues and an array of projects have been adopted on a scale appropriate to each particular club.

In order to provide a much-deserved pat on the back and to share ideas with other clubs, the GCA Conservation Committee has been showcasing these efforts at the annual meeting and zone meetings for many years. An amazing array of speakers and projects has been represented in this display. Some clubs join together for a major undertaking while others create a small, local focus. All are important and valuable. All tell the story of our dedicated and hard-working membership.

The photos feature Mill Mountain Garden Club, a club that is always actively involved in conservation projects. This one, removing cigarette butts so they wouldn't wash into the Roanoke River, took little advance planning and almost no time to execute, yet it impacts the community and watershed in important ways. Such efforts can serve as inspiration for those clubs that do not enjoy large projects, have a small membership, or are looking for a small project before gearing up for the next major undertaking.



Mill Mountain GC of Roanoke, Virginia - This is one of the **“Done in a Day”** projects of the conservation committee that follow the lead of Roanoke’s *Clean and Green* promotion. The members rallied on a cold January morning to pick up cigarette butts at the bus stop/smoking area in front of Carillion Hospital. The project, aptly named **“No Ifs, Ands or Butts,”** was done to keep the thousands of cigarette butts thrown on the ground out of the waterways and the Roanoke River, located just across the street from this area.

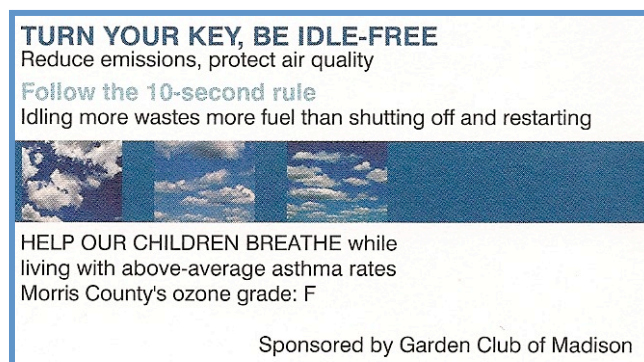
*Ellen Soyars, Warrenton (VA) G.C. - Zone VII  
GCA Conservation Committee – Conservation Showcase Coordinator*

## **Club News**

### **Turn Your Key, Be Idle-Free**

The Conservation Committee of the Garden Club of Madison, New Jersey focused on an anti-idling campaign this year, building awareness of why idling a car for ten seconds or more is detrimental. The campaign stemmed from a desire to bring global warming issues, discussed in Zone IV’s 2007 conference on global warming (“Hotter Times Ahead”), home to Madison with simple daily practices. It was aided by work done by The Garden Club of Darien (CT) and local environmental commissions. Idling produces unnecessary global-warming emissions. In addition, Madison, like much of New Jersey, has poor air quality and a high asthma rate. We felt that idling at schools especially affected our children. We did not feel local drivers understood that idling degrades the air quality outside the car, inside the car, and in the car behind the idler. After raising awareness within our membership, we asked our members to be ambassadors, passing out anti-idling “business cards” and knowledge at “hot spots” - schools, the YMCA, the train station, the post office and at ATM’s. The Garden Club of Morristown, under the leadership of their conservation chair Pat Moody, also joined in the effort. We placed cards at gas stations as well as with individuals. Next year we will support an Eagle Scout project of school presentations on anti-idling and submit articles to local publications.

*Betsy Uhlman, Conservation Committee Chair  
Madison (NJ) G.C. - Zone IV*



Anti-idling business card

### **Coming Attractions – Extreme Stream Make-Over**

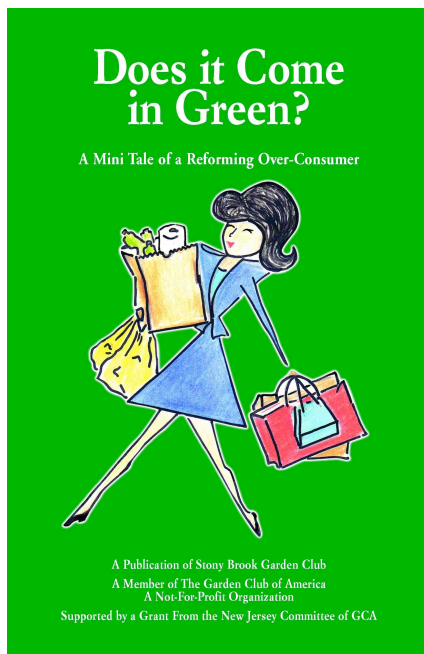
Four Richmond, Virginia area clubs are joining forces with the James River Association to present “Extreme Stream Make-Over” on October 20-25 2008. All these clubs are members of The Garden Club of Virginia. The Tuckahoe (a GCA club), James River (also a GCA club),

Three Chopt and Boxwood Garden Clubs have been preparing for this event for the past two years. This event, patterned after “Extreme Makeover Home Edition” will involve hundreds of volunteers as they focus on significant threats to the Horsepen Branch of the James River. Trash removal, invasive species control, tree planting, stabilizing banks, installing rain barrels, and building rain gardens to treat storm water and reducing runoff are all tasks which will be addressed. The project is intended to draw attention to the plight of the James River, its dependence on streams that feed it, and to demonstrate the simple steps required to reverse the deterioration of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. For more information about this meeting, contact Michelle Kokolis at the James River Association at [mkokolis@jamesriverassociation.org](mailto:mkokolis@jamesriverassociation.org) or (804) 788-8811, ext. 204.

Lynda Strickler, Virginia Beach (VA) G.C.  
Zone VII Conservation/NAL Representative

### Does It Come in Green?

Stony Brook Garden Club (NJ) of Zone IV is proud to introduce its two newest and most newsworthy members, Penelope and the Green Goddess, the heroines of its “hot off the presses” convenient little conservation handbook entitled *Does It Come In Green?*



In keeping with the educational goals of GCA, this fun and easy handbook is being offered to the public. It is a project of the Stony Brook Conservation Committee and is supported by a grant from the New Jersey Committee of GCA. Work began nearly two years ago and all members were encouraged to participate in one way or another with the research, writing, graphics, and editing. The club even hosted a working lunch when all members were given a pre-assigned topic to research and then contribute to a chapter. Stony Brook is especially grateful to its Chairs, Susan Finlay and Lori Citrone, the club’s own Green Goddesses!

Taking a more colorful approach to the recent bombardment of green tips flooding the marketplace, this *Mini Tale of a Reforming Over-Consumer* chronicles what happens when Penelope, the happily unaware over-consumer driving her monster SUV loaded down with packages, meets up with the under-consuming Green Goddess riding her one-speed bicycle wearing green gauze and

Birkenstocks. The Green Goddess follows Penelope through a week of her life as she tackles her daily chores. The week’s activities include cleaning, shopping, paper usage, kids and pets, energy and water conservation, lawn and garden as well as composting.

Although the book is entertaining and user-friendly, it does not betray its serious purpose. It is packed with facts, statistics, tips and information aimed at the reduction of toxins in our everyday surroundings and the sustainability of the planet. It can be kept next to the telephone and the last page provides space for recording local recycling data and pertinent local telephone numbers regarding the environment.

With a price tag of only \$5.00 plus \$1.75 for shipping per book (just enough to cover costs),

*Does It Come In Green?* may be the biggest bargain around. Copies can be ordered online at [swf1958@verizon.net](mailto:swf1958@verizon.net).

*Laura Hanson, President  
Stony Brook G.C. (NJ) - Zone IV*

### **Wine Cork Recycling**

Many of us enjoy a nice bottle of wine on occasion. Have you ever thought of where the cork comes from or where the cork ends up? Cork stoppers are a natural, recyclable, renewable and biodegradable product. Even though corks are biodegradable, it is wise to recycle them. Recycled cork is not reused for cork stoppers but there are other possible applications. Yemm & Hart, a Missouri based green materials company, accepts corks and turns them into a useful, self sustaining product - cork flooring. They thus extend the useful life of a natural resource, and raise awareness of the cork oak tree and its eco-system.

Cork usually comes from Southwest Europe and Northwest Africa. About half our cork comes from the “Montados” (Corklands) region of Portugal. This region is home to the wild boar, endangered Liberian lynx, the rare Black Stork and the Imperial Eagle. The cork forests act as a hedge against desertification as the Sahara creeps into Europe.



Bark forms at the rate of 0.05 inches per year to a thickness of about 2.3 inches. Trees are 25-40 years old before cork can be harvested. These trees live to be 150 to 250 years old and can be harvested about 12 times in their lives. Stripping the cork doesn't harm the tree and a new layer regrows. Therefore, it is RENEWABLE!

Many countries, including Australia and Canada, actively recycle cork. In the western U.S., there is a pilot program with Amorim Cork America. The company obtains used and surplus corks from tasting rooms, bottling lines, retailers and restaurants.

The Chestnut Hill Garden Club of Massachusetts has been participating in an experimental program with Yemm and Hart. Between 2004 and 2007, the company collected one and half tons of pure wine cork stoppers. With this, they can make 6750 sq. ft. of ¼” thick cork tile. The plan is to pay for the corks they receive in the future, as cork tile is sold. The Chestnut Hill G.C. has been collecting corks for about six months. Club members plan to increase their collection locations, have the corks recycled, and eventually make a profit in their endeavor. In the meantime, members are contributing to the sustainability of the planet.

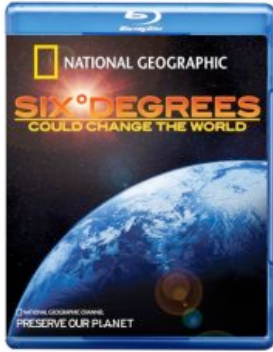
*Marygrace Barber, Conservation Chair  
Chestnut Hill (MA) G.C. - Zone I*

## **Media Reviews**

### **DVD – Six Degrees Could Change the World**

Mark Lynas for National Geographic

By the year 2100, many scientists believe that the Earth's average temperature could rise by as much as six degrees Celsius. In a compelling investigation, National Geographic leads a degree-by-degree journey to explore what each rising—and critical—degree could mean for the future



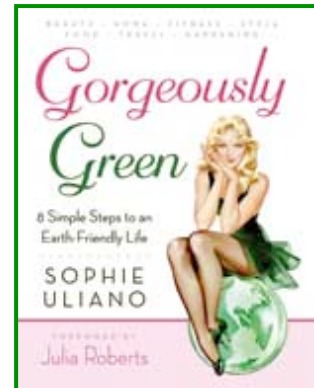
of our people and planet. Through powerful filmmaking and intimate profiles, this special illustrates how global warming has already affected the reefs of Australia, the ice fields of Greenland, and the Amazonian rain forest. With a sobering look at the effects of our world's insatiable appetite for energy, *Six Degrees Could Change the World* explains what's real, what's still controversial, and how existing technologies and remedies could help dial back the global thermometer. (Also available in book form, *Six Degrees: Our Future on a Hotter Planet*.)

Lynda Strickler, Virginia Beach (VA) G.C.  
GCA Zone VII Conservation/NAL Representative

**Book - Gorgeously Green** by Sophie Uliano

Looking for the ideal book to engage your daughter in being eco-friendly in her everyday life? Consider *Gorgeously Green*, a new publication that will get her excited about doing her part to save the planet in simple and interesting ways. Today's fashionable young woman may be more interested in her compact than in compost. This book includes simple steps to create an eco-friendly home with hints on organic makeup, nail care, fake tanning products and the review of simple "green" things she can do. It's available in paperback, too.

Claire Caudill, G.C. of Houston (TX) - Zone IX  
Chairman, GCA Conservation Committee



**Magazine – E: The Environmental Magazine**

Now in its sixteenth year, *E/The Environmental Magazine* offers a kaleidoscope of interesting articles on environmental issues, covering: current research, new technologies, legislation, health and more. The July/August cover story, "The Meat of the Matter," compares the greenhouse gas effect of this nation's meat production with emissions from our transport systems. Guess which is more? Articles are interesting and varied, not dull and dry. Check out their website: [www.emagazine.com](http://www.emagazine.com) where you can subscribe to both the hard copy magazine (\$25 per year) as well as the FREE weekly newsletter: *Our Planet*.



Colles Larkin, St. Paul (MN) G.C.  
GCA Zone XI Conservation/NAL Representative

**Children's Book – Pale Male: Citizen Hawk of NYC**

by Janet Schulman

This is another story of Pale Male, a young red-tailed hawk who lives at a tony address on Fifth Avenue in New York City with his mate, Lola. The book is illustrated with watercolor drawings from an aerial perspective, just as the hawks must have. This book would make a wonderful gift for young people in your life who will learn that even in the heart of the big city, wild nature is never far away.

Editor





## **Book – Inventing Niagara: Beauty, Power & Lies**

by Ginger Strand

Niagara Falls, the author tells us, is a dramatic version of America's *everywhere*. This is a history of how the falls were “tamed”. Ms. Strand contends that the invention of Niagara Falls is similar to what has happened to our natural resources nationally. We took a wild river, tamed it, in a sense, and turned it into a combination tourist trap and faucet. Today, Niagara Falls can be turned on and off at the will of Canadian and America power companies. The book includes a review of the infamous Love Canal debacle.

*Editor*

## **GCA Conservation Summer Reading List**

For more titles, look for a summer conservation list on the GCA Website. In the “Member’s Only” section, click on “Committees” and then “Conservation”. Under this heading, look for “Conservation Summer Reading List” for a helpful list of suggested readings from the members of the GCA Conservation and NAL Committees. Check it out!

## **Water Wise Facts – Use Less, Save More**



*Did you know?* About 95% of the water entering our homes goes down the drain.

Overall, only 3% of the water entering the average home is actually used as “drinking” water.

Americans now use 127% more water than we did in 1950.

[Source: *Water: Use Less, Save More* by Jon Clift and Amanda Cuthbert, Chelsea Green Guides.]

*Editor*

## **Conservation Quote for Summer**

“Nobody makes a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could only do a little.”

*Edmund Burke*

[Edmund Burke (1729-1797) was an English statesman, author, orator and philosopher who served in the British House of Commons. He is mainly remembered for his support of the English colonies.]



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*Elva Busch, Editor*