



# CRC's GREEN SCENE

*A bimonthly newsletter of the Sustainability Committee at Cosumnes River College*

## Sharing Nature with Kids on Earth Day

Ruth Oxman reports...

It seems to me that any Earth Day celebration is really all about the children, the Earth, and the future. My own interest in nature began as a child, spending fair-weather days in the vacant lots near my childhood home in Milwaukee. We collected bugs in baby food jars, opened up milkweed pods, tasted purple clover, and spotted Monarch butterflies flitting around us. We explored the river and woods in the parks near our house and spent summer days cooling off in Lake Michigan.

My grandmother planted a dozen or more tomato plants in our backyard. (I remember eating fresh tomatoes but not what she did with all the rest!) Thus started the

practice of growing vegetable gardens in every house I have ever lived in since, and now my children are doing the same thing with their children. What a legacy to pass on that requires little more than time and effort!

Today, families fear letting children outside alone to play, and the vacant lots have mostly disappeared. Now it is more important than ever that we make the time to explore with children the many parks, woods, and streams in our areas. The cost of such family adventures is low, and the memories last a lifetime. We need to consider growing gardens of any size, so children learn that vegetables come from somewhere

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shares nature stories with CDC  
children at CRC's Earth Day  
celebration.*



## Nature Stories and Songs Make Earth Day Memorable

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besides the grocery store. Currently, teachers and children at the Child Development Center (CDC) are planting seeds in small pots to take home, and they are using sections of the outdoor play area for gardens to plant and harvest during summer and fall semesters.

We can also foster a love of nature through books and music. Earth Day at CRC

found the children from the CDC gathered with their teachers under a canopy with me and my story boards to sing familiar songs like “Old MacDonald Had a Farm” and “Three Little Speckled Frogs.” ECE student Yolanda Jones-Hankerson read *Planting a Rainbow* by Lois Ehlert, and fellow student Vanessa Moyo shared *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss and “Old MacDonald” with the

older preschool-age children. What a great way to celebrate the Earth with a new generation of children!

*Editor's note: Ruth Oxman is retiring in June after teaching at CRC since 2001. She has been a member of the Sustainability Committee since its inception in 2008. We will miss her contributions.*

## Checking in with CRC's New GreenForce Director

*Green Scene reporter Lizz Gaylord chats with newly hired CRC GreenForce Director, Torence Powell. To read the complete interview, go to the Green Scene link on the CRC home page.*

**GS:** Why did you apply to CRC to be the GreenForce Director?

**TP:** The GreenForce projects are what I see as a major catalyst for the Sacramento Region, and as a South Sacramento native, I am honored to be a part of them. These projects bring principles of green living to populations that have historically been left out of environmental and socio-economic movements. GreenForce acknowledges the importance of all people in promoting sustainability—environmental stewardship is not just for those who can afford hybrid cars or solar panels on their homes. We can all take small steps that, collectively, have a huge impact. Our GreenForce projects help to

foster an awareness of these small steps and equip our students with the skills to go out and make it happen.

**GS:** Why did you decide that a green career was for you?

**TP:** I've always had an interest in sustainability and the natural environment and have been working in green careers since my first job as a laborer for a landscape architect at 16 years old. My father is American Indian, and our tribal customs incorporated principles of sustainable living as a survival mechanism thousands of years ago. The absence of environmental consciousness and stewardship common in 20th Century governmental policy

has made life particularly hard for Indian tribes. My green career choice is thus largely due to a need to advocate for tribes, as well as for all life in general, that are adversely affected by

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*GreenForce Director, Torence Powell, answers student questions at CRC's Earth Day celebration.*



## Goals Include Composting, Water/Paper Conservation

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poor management of natural resources and waste.

**GS:** Where do you see CRC as a campus in five years?

**TP:** I would like to see our campus adopt some of the comparatively easy sustainability-themed projects that would enrich our campus environment. Foremost, it would be nice to have a composting program in place by then, one in which our pre- and post-consumed waste could be processed on site and used in our horticulture program and for landscaping.

**GS:** What is your biggest environmental concern, in general?

**TP:** I don't know if there is one singular 'biggest environmental concern.' If pressed, I would say continued apathy of people in developed and developing countries towards environmental degradation. If we don't change our collective interpretation of Earth's resources and recognize their finite nature, our clock is going to get punched very soon.

**GS:** What is your biggest environmental concern at CRC?

**TP:** As a campus, we could be doing a better job of reducing our consumption. I see this as a very real, yet very fixable, concern. We use a lot of paper on campus, and while it takes a

lot of water to keep this campus so green, it could be managed better. Just yesterday I saw the sprinklers watering grass while it was raining. When we go to grab lunch, many of us hop in the car and drive across the street to the Target shopping center when we could easily walk. Many of these are everyday issues that we can collectively help to change.

**GS:** Anything else you want the GS readers to know about you?

**TP:** I'm hiring instructional

aids for the Junior ACE program (teaching middle school students the importance of environmental stewardship and sustainability in the architecture, construction, and engineering fields). If any current students are looking for jobs teaching middle school students, get in touch quickly!

I'm in Office BS-116 and would love to talk with you more about our projects, sustainability in general, environmental stewardship, the NBA playoffs—anything!

### The Hidden Cost of Internet Searches

Fred Deneke reports...

While it is obvious that airline travel and paper use have environmental costs, what about the costs of Internet searches? As the old adage says, nothing in life is free.

According to a recent article in *NewScientist*, Google has about a million servers, each of which uses about one kilowatt of electricity. With about ten million searches per hour at Google, "one search has the same energy cost as turning on a 100-watt light bulb for an hour." That's astounding! And the total energy cost for Internet searches is expected to climb steadily as an increasing number of people worldwide conduct an increasing number of searches.

So many aspects of our hectic lives at work or at home rely upon electricity, thereby generating more carbon dioxide for the atmosphere. Expecting us to live a hermit's life would be absurd, but perhaps we should at least pause occasionally to reflect on the true costs of receiving 'free' services.



Calculate your own internet-search footprint. How many searches do you do in a week? Would you leave a 100-watt light on for that many hours?

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg20627546.700-search-engines-dirty-secret.html>



## CRC Earth Day: Think, Change, Act



“ We already recycle at home, but I plan to talk to my kids about recycling when they are away from home—for example, when they’re at school.”

- Amanda Karver,  
CRC student

### Earth Week Film Series

Lizz Gaylord reports...

If you missed these films during Earth Week, check them out at your local video store.

*Food Inc.* is an eye-opening look into food sources in the U.S., particularly the meat industry. With the consent of the FDA and the USDA, meat producers are trying to hide the truth from us. But don't we have the right to know what's going into the products we and our families eat? The *New York Times* has called the film “an informative, often infuriating activist documentary.” Visit [www.foodincmovie.com](http://www.foodincmovie.com) to learn more about the actions you can take to become more involved with your food.



*Buyer Be Fair* urges buyers to purchase Fair Trade products and Forest Stewardship Council wood. As consumers, we have huge buying power. Visit [www.buyerbefair.com](http://www.buyerbefair.com) to learn ways in which we can drive production trends for the good of mankind.



**TOP LEFT:** Design Awareness students Jonathan Taylor, left, and Javier Morales display LEED platinum designs for senior housing in Post-Katrina New Orleans. Projects from this architecture class will be entered in the USGBC Emerging Green Builders Design Competition. **ABOVE:** Prof. Rick Schubert uses the Socratic method in a discussion with engineering student Son Bui of the circumstances in which killing might be a moral choice.

## CRC Earth Day: What did you learn?



**LEFT:** Fourth-grade students from Irene B. West Elementary School help calculate the number of trees needed to make the paper used by CRC's duplicating center each semester.

**BELOW LEFT:** Student members of the Sustainability Committee Lizz Gaylord and Heather Downing displayed earth-friendly products. In the next booth, they offered free fluorescent light bulbs, thanks to a NWF grant.

**BELOW RIGHT:** A CRC student spins the water wheel at the County of Sacramento Dept. of Water Resources, Stormwater Quality Program booth. Prizes were given if students correctly answered a question about storm drains.



I learned about an organization helping people with carwashes so that the soapy water doesn't go into storm drains."

- Adrienne Gaines,  
communication media major





## Earth Day at CRC: How will you change?



**ABOVE:** Prof. Steven Coughran (in hat) leads students and faculty in singing John Lennon's "Imagine," sponsored by the Social Responsibility Committee. **LEFT:** Students from Prof. Cath Hooper's basic writing class display their projects about Goldman Environmental Prize winners. **BELOW:** Prof. Margaret Woodcock's art students showcase projects made from recycled and 'found' materials.



“I learned about the Goldman Awards. It's very cool. They award the prize to different people in many countries for their environmental work.”  
- Megan Goings, psychology major



## Green Sleuth: Composting Closes the Loop

Maureen Moore reports...

One man's food scraps are another woman's compost bounty. Of course, that's adding a slight twist to the old adage about garbage, but in the case of compost materials, this cliché rings true. And, more to the point, composting has never been easier than it is right now.

Here's how it's done at the Moore family residence. Wedged between the shoe rack and the hot water heater in the garage sits a small electronic composter—the Nature Mill Plus XE3 Indoor Automatic Composter Value Pack, to be exact. Inside the black box casing, the composter's motor whirs quietly. A green light on the face panel glows a reassuring message that all is well with the family's most recent deposit of orange peels, coffee grounds, and celery stalk root.

About once a month, we add to the brewing cocktail of organic waste a small deposit of wood pellets (the same as those burned in a pellet stove) and a tablespoon of baking soda to ensure texture and reduce smell. In around two weeks, the food scraps and additives reduce to a brown, sod-like substance, which

is then transferred into the box's lower chamber, ready to spread in the garden. *Voilà!* The Moore family has home-made fertilizer.

Composting has been around for a long time. Recent archaeological evidence shows that, about 8,000 years ago, people in the Amazon rainforest were composting fish bones and egg shells with charcoal from burnt trees to create a unique blend of dark soil known in Portuguese as *terra preta do Indio*, or dark earth of the Indians. In short, the earliest inhabitants of the Amazon were adding compost to the red dirt of the rainforest, making it more

fertile and better suited to their needs. As a result, these pre-historic rainforest dwellers were able to grow over 120 different kinds of trees and plants, producing a garden in the jungle that supported large human populations thousands of years before the Spanish and Portuguese arrived in the 16<sup>th</sup> century CE.

Of course, Elk Grove is not a jungle, and there's always a bag of compost readily available at a Home Depot near you, so why make your own compost? It's a good question, one worth

addressing.

First, composting reduces the amount of material that goes into regional landfills. Indeed, between recycling paper, glass, and plastic and composting organic materials, the Moore family has managed to reduce its overall garbage offering to one small can each week—and that's for a family of eight.

Second, composting is beneficial because it closes the loop. When organic matter remains on the property—rather than getting shipped to a landfill—it becomes a part of the cycle of life. (Yes, we're getting *kumbaya* here!) Compost feeds the tomato plants and orange trees and celery stalks that will later be consumed, except for the peels and scraps, which will eventually go back into the composter. Thus, the loop is closed.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, composting is fun. There's something distinctly satisfying about putting home-made fertilizer on a home-grown garden—all made even more enjoyable when the moment is shared with my seven-year-old daughter and four-year-old granddaughter. Nothing beats turning the spade in good clean dirt that's been fed by compost and plowed by worms as the girls squeal "Ewwww!" under the warm spring sunshine.





## Reader Reviews

### Fresh and Save Cleaners

8112 Sheldon Road suite #800, Elk Grove, located in the Winco Shopping Center plaza.

Fresh and Save Cleaners, a “non-toxic, environmentally friendly” drycleaner, uses the patented silicone-based Green-Earth Solution, rather than a harsh solvent, to lift out stains.

After three visits and about 30 articles of clothing, mostly suits and silk shirts, I have been impressed enough to change dry-cleaners. Their prices are lower than those of competitors; plus they offer coupons in some local advertisement mailers.

-- Lizz Gaylord, student



### Andy Nguyen's – Vegan Treat

Vegetarians for a long time, we made the move to veganism—a philosophy that excludes the use of animals for food—a couple of years ago. Our choice began out of concern for animals, but we also enjoy the benefit of good health and the knowledge that our actions are kind to the environment. As we have learned, folks who take pride in preparing food with these values in mind can make the most delectable treats.

Andy Nguyen's, on Broadway near 20<sup>th</sup> St., is one of a half-dozen restaurants near home where we can find great

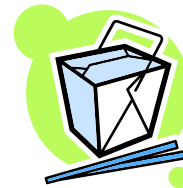
vegan meals. Andy's is truly vegetarian and nearly 100% vegan, so we love supporting it.

Andy's opened as a typical Vietnamese restaurant in 1984 and changed its menu to vegetarian after the owner, Lien Nguyen, and her family visited the Dalai Lama in India. The dishes have lovely Buddhist-inspired names, and the restaurant has Buddhist art and a serene ambiance. Due to high costs, ingredients are not always organic (with the exception of mushrooms), but much of the produce comes from the farmers market. For non-vegetarians, the menu includes house-made faux meats and seafood. Our friends and family, vegetarian or not, enjoy going there with us and always leave happy and satisfied.

Julie talked with Lien Nguyen and her daughter Jennine over oolong tea about the philosophy behind the restaurant. They explained that humans are born with the benefits of strength and power and need to respect and show loving kindness toward other living beings. Without them, our life is not complete. World peace begins with inner peace, and a vegetarian diet can be a way toward that.

You'll find a couple of less expensive vegetarian Vietnamese restaurants in the Sacramento area, but none compare in overall experience. Andy's dishes are beautifully

presented—fresh, colorful, and flavorful, each distinctly different from the others, some traditional and some California-inspired. Andy Nguyen's is not a place for a quick meal before an event. The food is prepared and served with care, so plan to spend an hour or longer for a relaxed meal. We find that one dish per person is plenty of food, but we usually order more because it all sounds so good.



On our last visit, we had the Good Karma Sampler, a gorgeous array of appetizers for two to four people, including bites of soft Treasure Rolls, Crispy Lotus Rolls, Tempura Okra, Soy Ribs, and salad, each with its own delicious sauce. We also enjoyed the Laughing Buddha Salad—mixed greens and sautéed onions with a light dressing and savory grilled soy beef. We knew this would be plenty, but the Blissful Asana special sounded so good that we ordered it too—sautéed soy beef with fresh mango, yellow bell peppers, onions, and broccoli, in a wonderful sauce. A week later, we are still enjoying the peaceful echo of our meal at Andy's and looking forward to another one soon.

-- Steven Coughran (music),  
Julie Hawthorne  
(Communication/English, SCC)





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Sustainability Committee**

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- Veronica Vogan

**Newsletter:**

- Cindy Erickson
- Cath Hooper

**Photos in this Issue:**

- Andrea Salmi

*We're on the Web!*

*Look for archived issues  
of the*

**GREEN SCENE**

*on the CRC homepage.*

**Asked on Campus  
on Earth Day:**

**How can CRC (or CRC students) be more green?**

“More recycling and composting by everyone around campus.”

- Lizz Gaylord, geography/env’l studies & sustainability major

“More teachers should use refillable marker pens. One set of those pens keeps over 200 disposable markers out of landfills.”

- Julie Vang, neurology/psychology major

“More assignments should be put on D2L.”

- Nicole Stewart, ECE major

“Hand dryers should be put in bathrooms to reduce paper waste. Also, students need to get on board and be more aware...”

- Megan Goings, psychology major



“Don’t ask what your Earth can do for you; ask what you can do for your Earth.”

- Ariel Gasca, env’l studies & sust. major

“Ours can either be the generation remembered for the planet’s destruction or its salvation.”

- Kate Ballou, linguistics major

**News In Brief...**

**Recycle Packing Peanuts**

CRC can now recycle Styrofoam packing peanuts. Bag the peanuts, send an email to Liz Johnson in Receiving (johnsoe@crc.losrios.edu), and she will pick them up to take to the UPS store. Thanks, Liz!



**Envelope Mystery**

Liz Johnson in Receiving notes that inter-campus envelope use has recently made a huge increase. Cases of envelopes seem to be flying off the shelves. Are they accumulating in mysterious stacks somewhere? Remember, these are the ultimate re-usable item. Please reuse them!



*Profs Julie Oliver (biology) and Scott Crosier (geography) explain how solar cookers would work on a sunny day. Clouds prevented an actual demonstration this year.*