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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF *Eleanor Greene*
 EDITOR & DIGITAL CONTENT MANAGER
Mary Meade

EDITORIAL ASSOCIATE *Anya Crittenton*
 EDITORIAL INTERN *Olivia Liang*
 PUBLICATION DESIGN *This is Folly,*
Dennis Greenia, Eleanor Greene

PROOFREADERS *Rob Hanson, George Millican*
 DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS
Shireen Karimi

DIGITAL DESIGN & COMMUNICATIONS
 SPECIALIST *Alec Badalov*
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COVER IMAGE:

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Crystallizing Solutions

Alisa Gravitz, President/CEO



Dear Ones,
 When you were in elementary school, did you ever make salt crystals in science class?

I clearly remember the day my third-grade teacher, Ms. Kelly, said that we were going to learn about solutions and make beautiful crystals. She pointed to a big beaker full of water sitting on the table in front of the room. Curiously, it had a single string immersed in it, draped in a way that it formed a “U” inside the beaker.

Always making science interesting and fun, she directed us to line up and, one by one, put a pinch of salt into the water. She told us to watch closely, and whoever first sees crystals forming along the string to call out.

Well, it seemed like it took forever. One at a time, we all marched by the beaker, adding a tiny bit of salt and ... nothing happened. It wasn't until almost all of us had a turn at dropping salt into the water twice that one of the boys, Emilio, shouted, “I see them! They're beautiful.”

We all broke out of line and crowded around the beaker to see. Sure enough, tiny crystals had formed along the string. We burst out clapping and congratulated Emilio for being the one who made the magic. Excited and hopeful that we could grow the crystals, we added more salt—and sure enough, big crystals formed!

After we settled down and returned to our desks, Ms. Kelly went on to explain solutions to us. One of the things she taught us, I remember to this day.

“You all made the magic,” she said. “The first bit of salt was as important in forming the crystals as that last drop of salt that made the crystals visible.”

And so it is with all solutions—whether we're focused on salt crystals or addressing the existential crises of our time, from repairing the climate emergency to ending racism. It takes all of us. It takes a long time. At first, it may seem that nothing is happening. Yet, if we look closely, we'll start to see the crystals forming. With that greater visibility, hope builds, more people join in the work, the solutions get more powerful, and the system starts to change more rapidly.

To make the beautiful crystals of social change that are all around us today even more visible, we bring you this issue of green solutions from around the world (p. 13). You'll read stories about what people—individually and in communities, businesses and governments—are doing across different cultures to heal the world and create a future that works for all people and the planet.

And check out the big 2022 victories from our work together here Green America—along with our plans for growing these powerful solutions in the year ahead (p. 6).

Thank you for all the ways you put your heart and soul into crystallizing solutions.

Together we are powerful,

CONTACT US AT: 800/58-GREEN • fax 202/331-8166 • GreenAmerica.org • info@GreenAmerica.org

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Before you toss your phone, educate yourself on repair and recycling options.

5 Billion Mobile Phones Will Be Thrown Away in 2022

FROM FAST FASHION to cheap furniture, planned obsolescence—the deliberately short lifespans of products—is costly to consumers and the planet. Mobile phones are poster-children for planned obsolescence with their cracked screens or run-down batteries, “antiquated” by newer models and disposed of for much touted upgrades. Because of this cycle, the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Forum estimates that over 5.3 billion mobile phones—of 16 billion worldwide—will be thrown away by the end of 2022.

While it may feel as if your device has become outdated, obsolete, or out-of-fashion, remember that there are alternatives to upgrades, like repairs. New York passed a law in June that requires electronics makers to provide repair information, parts, tools, and software

to consumers and independent repair providers, meaning there are alternatives to pitching your old phone when something goes wrong. And, if there’s nothing wrong, resist the upgrade and keep your phone until it breaks beyond repair.

Proper disposal of old electronics is critical to the reduction of e-waste. Adding to the landfill is one form of e-waste, but so is forgetting those items in a junk drawer.

“These devices offer many important resources that can be used in the production of new electronic devices or other equipment, such as wind turbines, electric car batteries, or solar panels,” says Magdalena Charytanowicz, communication manager for WEEE Forum and head of International E-Waste Day.

Knowing where to recycle electronics is crucial in the reduction of e-waste. Apple has a free recycling program

to trade in any device in any condition with the possibility of receiving credit toward a future purchase. Organizations like WEEE Forum are also working to make the recycling of electronics more accessible, by setting up collection boxes at grocery stores and encouraging companies to offer pick-up services for old products when delivering new models. 🌱

Beep Beep! Eco-Buses Coming Through!

No matter how we got to school growing up, the big yellow bus is a symbol of American education. Now, across all 50 states plus several territories and tribal lands, school buses are getting an eco-makeover.

As part of President Biden’s 2021 bipartisan infrastructure bill, the

Environmental Protection Agency is awarding \$1 billion to 389 school districts for the purchase of clean energy buses, 95% of which will be electric vehicles (with the remaining 5% as low-emission buses), as reported by *The Hill*.

According to Nexus Media News, almost all school buses currently run on diesel fuel, exposing young lungs to exhaust fumes (exacerbating respiratory issues like asthma) and contributing more than five million tons of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere yearly.

“As many as 25 million children rely on the bus to get to school each day,” said EPA Administrator Michael Regan in a press release. “We are making an unprecedented investment in our children’s health, especially those in communities overburdened by air pollution. This is just the beginning of our work to build a healthier future, reduce climate pollution, and ensure the clean, breathable air that all our children deserve.”

While these buses are a great green step for the clean-energy movement, it is only a drop in the bucket. The US has over 500,000 school buses, with only

2,463 buses receiving funding—that’s less than 0.5%. But it’s a good start.

White House advisor Mitch Landrieu reports that the new buses will be made in the US and plan to go into action in time for the 2023-24 school year. ☀

Landfills Get Sunny Second Lives as Solar Farms

The fight for clean energy is making strides as 223 US cities and states, as counted by The Sierra Club, have set 100% clean energy goals. One solution gaining traction across the country is transforming retired landfills into solar farms. According to “The Future of Landfills is Bright,” a 2021 report by RMI (a clean-energy nonprofit), there are over 10,000 closed and inactive landfills in the United States. These landfills, labeled as “brownfields” by the EPA, have few redevelopment opportunities as improper construction could pose environmental threats, like the release of hazardous substances or pollutants. However, as part of the

EPA’s RE-Powering America’s Land Initiative, one solution for these brownfields is a sunny one: turning them into “brightfields.” Closed landfills, with their open space and ample sun exposure, can be transformed into productive sites for capturing solar energy.

Thus far, 500 brightfields have been installed on American landfills. If all brownfields were converted to brightfields, the technical potential is an estimated 63 gigawatts, according to RMI. That’s enough energy to power 7.8 million American homes—the equivalent of the entire state of South Carolina.

Ultimately, these clean-energy transformations are local issues. States and local governments are in control of municipalities and the benefits of solar energy will immediately impact the surrounding areas by lowering electricity costs, preventing blackouts, creating jobs, and transforming what would otherwise be unusable space. This investment in a greener, sunnier future is possible, but will rely on a cohort of elected officials, community members, and developers pushing for change. ☀



Left: A brownfield turned brightfield in Billerica, Massachusetts. Photo by Greg M. Cooper, Soltage LLC. Right: A 2.6 MW brightfield solar project built on a brownfield site in Danville, Illinois. Photo by Amersco via BusinessWire.



Above: Dr. Rick Haney opened the Soil & Climate Alliance Summer Meeting on Adam Chappell's 8,000-acre regenerative transition farm in Cotton Plant, Arkansas, by leading his colleagues in the Network through layered regenerative practices along with measuring soil respiration as a measurement of soil health.

Green America's 2022 Victories! (And a Sneak Peek at the Work Ahead in 2023)

TOGETHER, we accomplish the extraordinary. Here we take a moment to celebrate our 2022 victories that Green America members make possible and spotlight advances that will make our work even more powerful in 2023:

- Thanks to our campaigns, Amazon, AT&T, and Verizon have gone from using no renewable energy to making some of the largest corporate commitments to clean energy ever.
- We launched our Soil Carbon Initiative (SCI) Go-to-Market pilots. SCI provides the “how to” road maps, commitments, and third-party verification to help farms and companies transition to regenerative agriculture for soil and climate health. The pilot farmers, companies, and their networks represent over three million acres.

- We reached a milestone of 15,000 registered Climate Victory Gardens that are sequestering carbon equivalent to driving 38 million miles and educated millions of people nationwide about the benefits of regenerative gardening through earned media, our website, and webinars.
- Our Toxic Textiles campaign moved Carter's, the kids clothing company, to commit that 100% of its cotton and polyester will be sustainable by 2030. The company has also committed that all 0-24-month baby clothes will be Oeko-Tex certified as non-hazardous by December 2022.
- Our Clean Electronics Production Network collected chemical data from over 100 electronics manufacturing facilities to map the chemicals in use in the electronics

industry. In 2022, smartphone maker Fairphone joined Apple, Dell, and HP in committing to eliminating high priority toxic chemicals and protecting workers from these chemicals. We are also working with these companies to substitute safer chemicals in electronics production to protect millions of workers from exposure to the most toxic chemicals in use.

- Our Skip the Slip campaign got CVS to offer digital or no receipt options to all customers, saving 87 million yards of receipt paper, enough to circle the globe twice.

In 2023, we'll build on these victories and our other progress on climate, regenerative agriculture, and protecting workers from toxic chemical for more extraordinary progress for people and the planet. Stay tuned! 🌱

Congress Passed the Inflation Reduction Act and Tabled a Dirty Side Deal

In 2022, Green America joined with allies in pushing for strong climate change and social justice provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which was signed into law in August. That coalition also worked together to oppose fossil fuel handouts in the bill. Unfortunately, the subsidies for fossil fuels were incorporated in the final legislation. Still, the IRA is the most significant expansion of climate policy in US history and provides tax incentives and funding that will:

- Rapidly expand wind and solar power in the US.
- Help millions of Americans switch to electric appliances and vehicles.
- Provide billions of dollars in support to Green Banks nationwide to further state and local climate change efforts.
- Provide support to struggling farmers and fund conservation programs.
- Ramp up manufacturing and installation of clean energy technologies in the US to create millions of jobs.

We will use the passage of the IRA to accelerate corporate adoption of clean energy, and ensure federal agriculture funding supports regenerative farming. We'll also help our members and the public learn how they can access the money that the IRA provides to go solar and switch to electric vehicles. And we'll help our Green Business members learn how they can take advantage of the IRA to further green their businesses.

Green America also joined with environmental justice allies nationwide to successfully oppose the "Manchin side-deal" from getting included in a must-pass budget bill. This side deal would have accelerated permitting for fossil fuels projects in exchange for

Senator Joe Manchin's vote in favor of the IRA.

"Communities most harmed by fossil fuels would have once again been most hurt by speeding up permitting of fossil fuel pipelines and other infrastructure," says Dan Howells, Green America's climate campaigns director.

Green America mobilized our individual and business members and reached out directly to Congressional staffers to encourage their members to oppose. In a victory for people and the planet, the side deal legislation was removed from the budget bill. But it could come back up after the election, so we'll be ready to mobilize opposition again. 🌱

Regenerative Agriculture Provides Healthier Foods for Consumers

The evidence is in. Not only is regenerative agriculture the solution to rebuilding soil health, restoring the climate and regenerating farm prosperity, but crops grown in regenerative fields are better for our health as well. Over the past several decades, conventional crops grown in tilled soils and doused in multiple chemicals produced food with decreasing nutritional benefits.

Not surprisingly, when farmers improve soil health and reduce chemicals, the food that is grown is healthier. Peer-reviewed research from a 2022 study published in the journal *PeerJ* shows that crops grown in regenerative fields are higher in phytonutrients, vitamins, and other nutrients.

Green America's Soil Carbon Alliance, our network of farmers and food companies, recently launched the Nutrient Density Working Group to draw attention to the nutritional benefits of regenerative agriculture. Working with farmers and food companies, along with consumer advocates, nutritionists, the medical community, and grassroots groups working on food access, this initiative will help spur the

demand for the transition to regenerative agriculture.

"The regenerative farmers we work with like to say 'healthy soil grows healthy plants, to feed healthy people and communities,'" says Jessica Hulse Dillon, director of Green America's Soil & Climate Alliance. "Connecting the impact of regenerative practices with nutrient density increases the impact of work in the climate, environmental, and food access spaces to transform our food system."

Keep up with the latest news from Green America by subscribing to our emails at greenamerica.org/signup.

Vote in Green America's Board Election

Find your ballot between pages 16 and 17

Postmark your ballot by January 21, 2023.

PLEASE CAST YOUR VOTE for your next representatives on Green America's board of directors. You'll find the information about the candidates and the election ballot between pages 16 and 17. Ballots postmarked by January 21, 2023 will be counted.

Green America's board is elected by its individual, green business, and worker members. This year, two individual member seats are up for election—one for a three-year term and the other for a two-year term.

If you would like to consider running in a future election, please contact boardnominations@greenamerica.org. Thank you! 🌱

5 GREEN GOALS FOR 2023

New Year's Resolutions don't always work. So, how about a different strategy?

by Olivia Liang

YOUR AMBITIONS for 2023 might be big or small, but lifestyle changes of any kind take some work to practice and perfect. Indeed, 80% of all New Year's resolutions are abandoned by the end of January. That's why, instead of New Year's resolutions, we've come up with five green goals to strive for in the new year that you can try, tweak, and restart as the year unfolds.

Buy and Read Banned Books

Many of the books we now value as literary classics were once challenged or banned: Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. These books, and many more,

were once removed from reading lists and classrooms throughout US history for their "anti-white" sentiments or inclusion of homosexuality, profanity, or blasphemy.

The fight against censorship continues today, as books that celebrate diversity are at risk in public schools and libraries. To join the national conversation about inclusivity, solidarity, and education, read these books that are currently under attack:

The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas (2017)—This young adult novel about 16-year-old Starr Carter who balances her poor neighborhood with elite suburban prep school has been banned and challenged because it was thought to promote an anti-police message and social agenda.

Lawn Boy by Jonathan Evison (2018)—This semi-autobiographical novel tells the coming-of-age story of Mexican American Mike Muñoz and has been banned and challenged because of LGBTQ+ content.



Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood by Marjane Satrapi (2000)—This graphic memoir depicts Satrapi's childhood and early adult years in Iran

and Austria during and after the Islamic Revolution, and was challenged for graphic language and images.

Take action to defend everyone's First Amendment right to read by reporting any censorship to The American Library Association and continuing this conversation at school boards, PTA meetings, and public hearings.

Spring Clean with Reuse in Mind

Sometimes "less is more," but cleaning for cleaning's sake is not as great or green as it sounds, especially when items end up in landfills. So, before you spring clean, consider these questions:

Think of the next 5 years: Before you pitch any furniture or tchotchkes, consider when they might come in handy. Will you have a family member going off to college in need of a desk? You don't want that Dutch oven, but your Julia Child-obsessed niece or nephew might!

Is this salvageable? Sew a stitch, patch a rip, repaint that old bookcase. Before you discard clothes or furniture, brainstorm how your items can be re-imagined for a second (or third!) life.

Throw away or give away? When parting with items, consider where they will be most useful. Call consignment and secondhand stores, or even houses of worship and local nonprofits, to learn where your items will be most beneficial. You can also post pictures on local online marketplaces to ensure your items will be used and loved, or list on your local BuyNothing group or Freecycle.

Spend Time Outdoors by Growing a Garden

If you want to spend more time in nature this year, grow your green thumb and start (or expand) your garden to help combat carbon emissions. Join the Climate Victory Garden community at greenamerica.org/cvg to add your garden to our map, get tips from tens of thousands of climate gardeners, and learn about gardening to fight climate change.

Start Small: Whether you live in a one-window apartment or have a low-success rate with plants, your home

garden can start as small as you want. Re-grow scallions in a mason jar or pot herbs to garnish every meal and cocktail.

Think Big: When expanding your garden, the most important thing to consider is what you actually enjoy seeing and eating! Plant bee- and butterfly-friendly flowers or grow peppers to spice up your life. For a basic guide to starting a soil-smart vegetable garden, visit: greenam.org/5stepgarden.

Cook with International Flavors

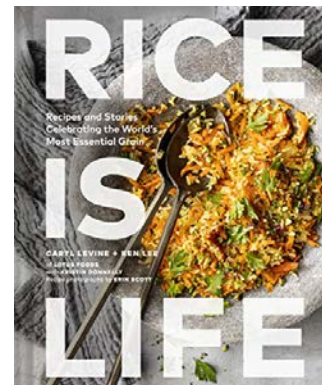
Experimenting with flavor combinations from around the world is a fantastic way to travel the globe and learn about other cultures while supporting local, ethnic grocery stores.

Expand your palate and refine your cooking skills with these 2022 international cookbooks:

- ❑ *Mabu Mabu: An Australian Kitchen Cookbook* by Nornie Bero
- ❑ *Mi Cocina: Recipes and Rapture from My Kitchen in Mexico* by Rick Martínez



- ❑ *The Woks of Life: Recipes to Know and Love from a Chinese American Family* by Bill, Judy, Sarah & Kaitlin Leung
- ❑ *Korean American: Food That Tastes Like Home* by Eric Kim
- ❑ *Gullah Geechee Home Cooking: Recipes from the Matriarch of Edisto Island* by Emily Meggett. The Gullah Geechee people are descendants of enslaved West and Central Africans who labored on coastal plantations in the American south. This geographic isolation allowed for Indigenous African traditions to survive, including food, art, spirituality, and language.



- ❑ *Rice is Life* by Lotus Foods{GBN} founders Caryl Levine and Ken Lee. This new cookbook shares rice recipes from around the world that feature "the world's most important staple food."

Get Finances in Order and Make Your Money Green

Initiating financial change can always feel like a challenge, but Green America has resources to help get you started.

Examine your shopping habits.

When buying soap, candles, clothing, or coffee, explore GreenPages.org to shop from sustainable businesses and vote with your dollars.

Break up with your mega-bank. Join thousands of others who have switched to a community development bank or credit union to keep your money in your community and fund projects you can be proud of. Get started at greenamerica.org/better-banking.

Consider a new credit card. Many credit cards are tied to major banks and support fossil-fuel investment. Switch to a green credit card (including Green America's!) that supports social and environmental justice. Explore your options at greenamerica.org/responsiblecards.

Need more green goal ideas? Check out our newest edition of *Your Green Life*—and find the ones that work best for you, with lots of hints and tips for your green journey at greenamerica.org/magazine/your-green-life-2022.

Here's to your 2023 green goals: For you, the planet and all people. You've got this! 🌱



HOW ATTACKS ON RESPONSIBLE INVESTING COULD HURT CLIMATE PROGRESS

Right-wing policymakers are banning investing strategies that finance experts call common-sense. Why are they doing it, and what will it cost us?

by Eleanor Greene

ATTACKS ON a socially responsible investing strategy called ESG (that considers environmental, social, and governance criteria) are being used—like accusations of widespread voter fraud or teaching critical race theory—as a wedge to divide and mislead Americans and halt social and environmental progress.

Lawmakers in 10 states, including Florida and Texas, have recently passed policies that prohibit considering ESG when making investing decisions with state money, and seven more states have introduced similar bans or have pending bans, according to tracking by Morgan Lewis law firm. The laws prohibit state investors or the banks they use from considering ESG criteria, even when it is the smartest financial decision. The supposed point of these rules is to protect industries that are important to state economies, but so far that has only included fossil fuels and firearms—and

the way the rules are written, even financial experts and banks don't understand them.

"Republican lawmakers are using this attack on what they call 'woke capitalism' as part of their anti-climate, pro-gun strategy," says Fran Teplitz, Green America's executive co-director for business, investing and policy. "With Republicans in control of the House again after the midterms, they will likely use committee hearings to further attack ESG."

Anti-ESG policies are already having a chilling effect on companies, by walking back climate commitments in order to keep doing business with these states.

"Whether it's a moral argument, financial argument, or risk-hedge argument, it's a very dangerous position, to say 'we're going to double down on fossil fuels,'" says Stephanie Cohn Rupp, CEO of Veris Wealth Partners{GBN}.

What is ESG?

ESG means taking into consideration environmental, social, and governance decisions of a company, alongside traditional financial analysis, when deciding whether to invest in it.

ESG commitments are booming from banks and big businesses, which are using ESG data like climate risk (environmental), labor issues (social), and board effectiveness (governance) to see both how resilient and profitable their portfolios will be in the future.

ESG is already deeply embedded in investing practices, with global sustainable investing surpassing \$35 trillion by 2020 and projected to reach \$50 trillion by 2025, according to *Bloomberg Intelligence*.

Attacks on ESG & Their Impacts

Two 2021 Texas Senate bills prohibit local jurisdictions from working with

banks that had adopted ESG policies “against” the oil and gas or firearms industries. After implementing the policies, Texas jurisdictions stopped working with JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs, Citigroup, Bank of America, and Fidelity for their municipal bonds ostensibly because of their ESG commitments.

Making that switch meant having to renegotiate terms of many bonds with different banks, which cost taxpayers up to an estimated \$532 million in the first eight months of the policy, according to a 2022 study.

Ironically, those megabanks are *not* boycotting the fossil fuel industry—in fact, JPMorgan Chase, Citigroup, and Bank of America are in the global top four banks funding fossil fuels, according to the Rainforest Action Network’s Banking on Climate Chaos Report. Those three banks have provided \$899 billion combined in fossil fuel lending since 2016.

Larry Fink, the CEO of BlackRock, the world’s largest investing firm, had issued a letter saying the company would “confront the global threat of climate change more forcefully.” But another executive at the company also issued a letter saying it would “continue to invest in and support fossil fuel companies, including Texas fossil fuel companies.” Companies going back on their climate statements is the exact chilling effect that politicians who introduce these laws are aiming for.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis passed a resolution that prohibits the managers for the state’s \$186 billion pension fund from considering ESG factors and requires managers to “only consider maximizing returns.” This fails to account for the ability of ESG criteria to contribute to maximizing returns, proving these attacks are being used as a culture war strategy rather than as investment strategy.

Why ESG Will Continue to Grow

Dan Garrett, the assistant professor of finance at the University of Pennsylvania who co-authored the study about Texas bonds, explained that most investment companies and investors are trying to get oil and gas off their balance sheets in the next 20 years, as the industry is declining and most agree it will continue

to do so. Though oil and gas companies are currently seeing record profits partially because of the war in Ukraine, as renewable energy increases, the sector’s revenues will decline, and face stranded assets—creating long-term risk. But in Texas, Garrett says, the industry directly generates 10.6% of the state GDP.

“So, [policymakers’] incentive is ‘we would like to stop this capital from flowing out of our state,’” says Garrett.



It’s a very dangerous position, to say ‘We’re going to double down on fossil fuels.’

—Stephanie Cohn Rupp,
Veris Wealth Partners



“Did this sort of policy slow that capital moving out of oil and gas? Maybe not.”

DeSantis’ position is that, “we are protecting Floridians from woke capital.” Most finance experts disagree with DeSantis and would say that considering ESG and maximizing returns are not in conflict.

In fact, a New York University report examining over 1,000 studies between 2015-2020 showed that sustainability initiatives at corporations drive better financial performance due to improved risk management and innovation.

What Green America Is Doing and What You Can Do

For decades, Green America has been working to help people align their investments with their values. Green America is now working to maintain

momentum for ESG and combat misinformation from the radical right among investors, institutional investors, financial advisors, and funds. An immediate focus is on public messaging especially through social media—check out and share our posts at facebook.com/green-america. There are also steps investors and concerned citizens can take to protect ESG investing. Folks who have their pensions in state retirement programs can be especially effective advocates.

“Pensioners are the ideal spokespeople, as investors, because they worked hard and want their money to be there to sustain them in their retirement,” says Rachel Kahn-Troster, executive vice president at ICCR {GBN}. “They want the people managing their money to ensure the money is there and be assured that our planet and society are there in the future.”

Kahn-Troster adds that concerned citizens should call their local and state representatives, no matter what color their state swings. Investors can speak with their investment managers to express that using ESG as a lens to navigate investments and mitigate risks is important to them. Investing that considers ESG criteria alongside financial analysis is a prudent investment approach to build wealth. ESG investing is financially competitive, helps improve companies, and generates better outcomes for workers, communities, and the environment.

While the attacks on ESG are dangerous, fortunately there is widespread recognition among investment professionals and many regulators that ESG is legitimate and generates positive outcomes for all stakeholders. By doing a better job of identifying investment risk and opportunity, sustainable investing is expected to continue to grow.

Former vice president Al Gore and David Blood, cofounder of Generation Investment Management, co-authored a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed in November, strongly defending ESG: “The investment community is adapting for the next chapter of capitalism, in which sustainable investing is mainstream. This is the only way the planet, its people, and their investments can thrive.” 🌱





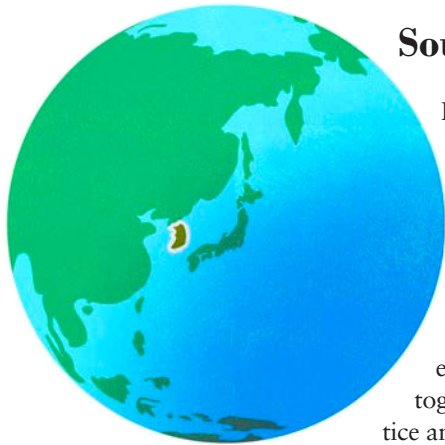
FARMERS AT THE FOREFRONT

THE EARTH is a place of incredible resources: powerful winds, rich soils, strong currents, and resilient life. When it comes to fighting climate change or investing in a greener future, our most crucial asset may be each other. For every harmful policy or practice, there's a green strategy or innovation to make our society better and heal our planet. This issue celebrates those solutions that abound from across cultures and around the world. This issue chooses hope.

For this issue, our editorial team searched to find inspiration from people in our backyards and around the world, representing the diversity we will need to solve the climate crisis and green the world. We've looked to countries across the globe with green policies, initiatives, and social movements (p. 14), and to people across the US. Here, green activists like Ietef Vita (p. 20) are engaging their communities about green topics they hold close to the heart—in his case, using rap music to connect with his Black community about vegetable gardening. Gardening is a common source of inspiration, as in Jewish and Zuni cultures, gardeners who might not know they are climate victory gardeners are practicing ancient techniques that restore the Earth (p. 18). In sustainable drag culture (p. 26), drag queens, kings, and supporters come together to find joy in gender, performance, and green practices.

For a more just and sustainable world, we have looked around the globe for innovation and inspiration, to expand the conversation and learn from our neighbors near and far. We hope you will find inspiration from creative thinkers and activists across the continents, and know that we are in this together. We will find our way into a green future, together. 🌍

—Eleanor Greene



South Korean Music Brings Fans Together for Climate

Devotees of Korean pop music are excited about making change in the world. Supporters of the mega-group BTS raised over \$1 million for Black Lives Matter in June 2020, matching BTS' own donation. K-pop enthusiasts globally have come together for numerous social justice and political causes, and climate change is no exception.

KPop4Planet is a group of supporters seeking to raise awareness about the climate crisis, with its biggest campaign, No K-Pop on a Dead Planet, speaking directly to music labels. They're demanding green album purchase options, low-emissions concerts, songs about the climate crisis, and artists themselves encouraging climate action. The campaign has collected over 10,000 signatures so far and hosted an in-person action about sustainable album releases, including CDs, in front of music company headquarters, according to Dayeon Lee, a Korean university student and leader of the campaign. In August 2022, JYP Entertainment became the first K-pop music production company to release an ESG report, thanks to supporter pressure.

"It's not only that fans are showing interest in social issues. They're concerned about political movements in the name of K-pop fans, such as raising money for Black Lives Matter and the Save Papua forest campaign [an important land to Indigenous people of Indonesia],

which are all fan-driven campaigns," Lee says.

She also points to BLACKPINK, a K-pop group with 23 million monthly listeners on Spotify, being appointed goodwill ambassadors for the COP26 summit in 2021 as "an example of how idols have encouraged K-pop fans to become engaged in taking climate action."

—Eleanor Greene

Taking Inspiration:

- Mobilize in your community, whether it is in person or online. Could your knitting group put pressure on yarn companies to source sustainable fibers? Could your book club talk to book publishers about recycled paper? Be specific about what you're asking for and create a campaign, whether it's social media, email, or letter-writing. Learn how to write an effective company letter at greenamerica.org/company-letter.
- Find green actions to bring together your community, like Kpop4planet's "Fandom 4 Forests" which maps fan-led tree-planting projects globally. Share your actions on social media to gain momentum. Check *Your Green Life* for other ideas—from creating community gardens to free food pantries at greenamerica.org/magazine/your-green-life-2022.

Protecting Land Is Protecting Culture in Puerto Rico

In 2017, Hurricane Maria devastated human and natural communities in Puerto Rico, including sand dunes, which are important natural barriers to weather and for archaeological sites, where important cultural artifacts have been found and continue to be threatened.

In the DUNAS project (Descendants United for Nature, Adaptation, and Sustainability), local communities in Puerto Rico have been using their knowledge of the environment to help bring back ecosystems and heritage sites.

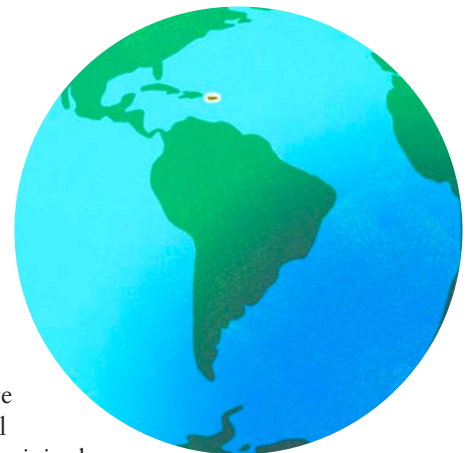
With Para la Naturaleza, a Puerto Rican environmental organization, the project is incorporating citizen science and engaging community members on climate change and conservation techniques, like staying on trails. Isabel Rivera-Collazo, assistant professor at the University of California San Diego's Scripps Institute of Oceanography, says protecting cultural identities by preserving Indigenous languages, passing information down, and recording the knowledge, are important steps in protecting local ecosystems.

"The idea of the project is to recover cultural heritage and use that link to the land to stimulate

climate action and to support restoration of damaged ecosystems," she says.

The project also included creating 3D images of pottery and artifacts found in archaeological sites in the dunes, which can be viewed online and printed with a 3D printer. Museums can more easily create exhibits this way and the actual artifact gets to remain with its original community. DUNAS printed these artifacts and gave them to elders in the community whose ancestors may have created the original pieces.

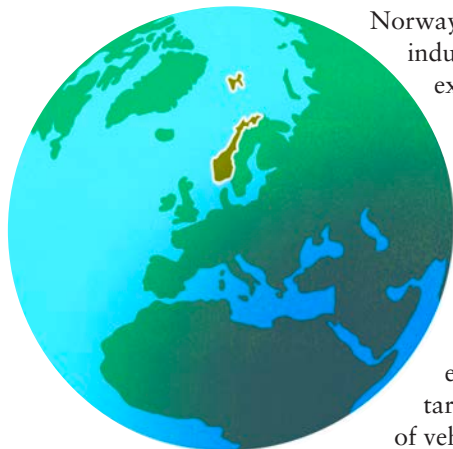
—Aja Hannah



Taking Inspiration:

- You can view or even 3D-print a piece of history from the DUNAS project at climatesciencealliance.org/dunas-artifacts.
- Participate in protecting lands and culture threatened by climate disasters. Contact a local archaeology office to see if they need volunteers and look up local Native lands to for volunteer or donation opportunities: nativeland.ca.

Clean Cars, Even in the Oil Country of Norway



Norway's biggest industry is petroleum exports, but it's also the country that has the highest percent of electric vehicles in use in the world (23%). The country even has a 2025 target for 100% of vehicle sales being electric. One way it

does that is through tax savings—instead of offering rebates, Norway taxes electric cars at 4% (or 12.5% if the car is over \$95,000 USD), compared to a 25% tax for non-electric vehicles. Along with monthly savings, electric vehicles end up being cheaper than gasoline-powered for many consumers.

“Tax incentives work. And once people drive an electric vehicle, most of them like it,” says Auke Hoekstra, founder of ZEnMo Simulations and senior advisor of smart mobility at Eindhoven University of Technology in the Netherlands, another country with very strong electric vehicle policy and usage.

“Norway is the biggest supplier of fossil fuels in Europe, but in-house, it's almost 100% clean energy,”

says Hoekstra, noting the country is not part of the European Union and relies on petroleum as a national source of income. Experts call the country's reliance on oil as it strives to become a climate leader a paradox, and many activists and climate experts are striving to align policy with ambitions to lead on climate.

Besides creating tax incentives, Hoekstra says governments must provide good infrastructure, like charging stations that are easy to find and connect with most vehicle types. Governments can also make data available to citizens that help them make choices clearly—he looks to the US' [fueleconomy.gov](https://www.fueleconomy.gov), which helps car-buyers to compare vehicles side-by-side with prices and fuel economy, including all cars, not just EVs.

—Eleanor Greene

Taking Inspiration:

- Show policymakers what's working. In Norway and the Netherlands, significantly lower taxes are put on electric vehicles, then those rates are slowly raised again as uptake becomes more common and the prices of the vehicles themselves come down. US lawmakers have recently passed tax credits for electric vehicles, but cities and states also need to take note and take action to create infrastructure to support the transportation transition, like accessible charging stations, says Hoekstra.
- Cities like Oslo and Amsterdam have great cycling and public transit infrastructure. Advocating for infrastructure for cycling, walking, and clean public transit will benefit urban and ex-urban communities and people of all income levels.

Australia Is Fighting Fire with Fire

Fighting fire with fire sounds counter-intuitive, but for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia, it's a way of caring for and protecting the land. For over 60,000 years, cultural burnings have been practiced by First Peoples as an essential part of life, livelihood and wellbeing.

These intentional and controlled burnings help wildlife thrive—key in Australia, where 30 species have gone extinct since European colonization, more than anywhere else in the world—by providing various vegetation patches in different stages of regrowth, which increase the variety of habitats. According to The Nature Conservancy, they also reduce greenhouse gas emissions by eliminating dry brush that can worsen wildfires later in the season.

“Following the principle of ‘Right Fire, Right Time,’ fire is applied to specific places at times of the year to heal Country. This



is an obligation and an active and empowering way of responding to climate change,” Rodney Carter, CEO of Dja Dja Wurrung Group says. As part of the Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan through 2034, Dja Dja Wurrung people would be contracted and compensated to practice cultural burning.

“It puts First Peoples' knowledge at the forefront, creates economic opportunities for First Peoples, and builds community resilience.”

—Anya Crittenton

Taking Inspiration:

- Learn from and respect the practices of Indigenous peoples across the world and the long histories stewarding their lands. Check out dadjawurrung.com.au to learn more about this community.
- Research where you live and volunteer where help is needed, like a fire unit or wildlife protection group. These exist across the world, including the US where Indigenous peoples also practice cultural burning.

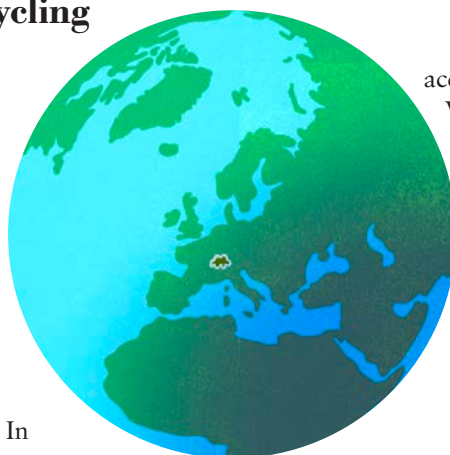
In Switzerland, Residents Rule Recycling

In the last 50 years, the volume of Swiss household trash has doubled, with the average person producing roughly 1,550 pounds of waste per year, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. This is just 150 pounds less than the average American, according to the 2019 Verisk Maplecroft report, and yet in Switzerland, where recycling is mandatory, half of that waste will be recycled, according to the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (SBC), compared to less than a third of American waste.

Swiss recycling depends on the everyday citizen. In Switzerland, there is an elaborate yet clear sorting system, separating paper from cardboard, PET bottles from plastic, even green, blue, and purple glass from brown and clear. Drop-off sites are detailed online, and door-to-door collection is available for the majority of recyclable materials in certified, color-coded garbage bags. Recycling etiquette is enforced through fines and “garbage detectives”—municipal workers who check garbage bags for rule violations.

“Like Santa Claus, they check who was naughty and who was good, at least on their home turf,” says Dardan Shehu, a writer for Study in Switzerland, who explains how foreigners and visitors may be scolded, lectured, or reported by neighbors when discarding waste in “un-Swiss” fashion.

Swiss consumers recycled 94% of their cans and glass bottles in 2018, according to the SBC. In the US, aluminum cans were recycled at a rate of 50%, with glass bottles resting just under 40%,



according to 2018 EPA data. Whether this success rate is due to higher social and community expectations, more intense accountability systems, a diversity of resources, or all of the above, American recycling has room to grow by comparison.

—Olivia Liang

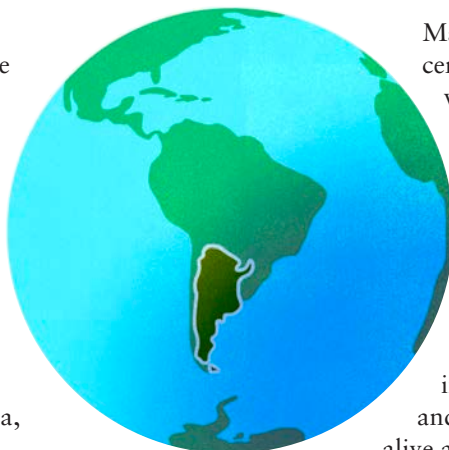
Taking Inspiration:

- Know the rules. Wash any liquids or food residue from recyclables and double check whether they can be added to your curb-side recycling or require special drop-offs. Read up on your local facilities (by searching “local recycling rules”) to stay informed about what is recyclable in your area.
- Speak up. Whether it’s in your schools, neighborhoods, or workplaces, not everyone might recycle properly and not everywhere may offer the option. If you feel comfortable, speak up to educate those around you or vie for clearer instructions or better recycling infrastructure.

Argentina Toasts the Planet with Eco-Wines

A glass of malbec, a taste of chardonnay—they all taste better when they’re made ethically. Wineries straddle numerous industries, from agriculture to cuisine and tourism to communications. The vastness of viticulture leaves plenty of room for waste and mistakes. However, in Argentina, the world’s seventh largest producer of wine, sustainability in the vintner’s world has been a priority for many years.

In 2010, the Bodegas de Argentina, the business chamber for wineries in the country, established its Sustainability Commission, aimed at providing wineries and the larger Argentine wine industry with education, tools, and resources that encourage successful sustainability, resulting in a certification. This helped set the benchmark for the world, with Argentina leading the way. In its second year, the Commission co-created the Sustainability Self Assessment Protocol, which outlines goals for wineries and tools to achieve them.



Many wineries in Argentina have already received certification from the Sustainability Commission with successes spanning all areas of business.

For Bodega Argento, a winery in Mendoza, now a global leader in organic winemaking, agricultural progress is vital.

“Soil health is reviewed and assessed annually,” Bodega Argento sustainability leader Andrés Valero says. “We utilize agronomic management and throughout the crop cycle, cover crops are maintained which, in addition to having a role in promoting surface and underground biodiversity, helps keep the soil alive and protects it from erosion.” —Anya Crittenton

Taking Inspiration:

- Transform agricultural practices to be regenerative-focused, both on the macro and micro levels with Green America’s Soil and Climate Alliance (soilclimatealliance.org) and Climate Victory Gardens (greenamerica.org/cvg).
- Vote with your dollar. When presented with numerous options, like wine at grocery stores, put your money behind an option that’s sustainably and ethically made.



Ghana Is Fashion Forward

Toxic chemicals, water contamination, miles upon miles of waste—the fashion industry is rife with sustainability and labor problems. In Ghana, people in the fashion industry and those concerned about climate change are dedicated to revolutionizing fashion. This is especially crucial as US exports of used clothing to Africa decimated several African countries' apparel sectors.

Over a year ago, the World Sustainability Organization (WSO) partnered with Ghanaian media personality, entrepreneur, philanthropist, and model Natalie Fort, to increase sustainability awareness and offer certifications across the country. Fort runs a firm, Fort Group, which is dedicated to improving the lives of Ghanaians from healthcare to financial aid. Since 2019, she has been the Patron of the Ghana Philanthropy Forum, a nonprofit dedicated to strengthening CSOs, NGOs, community foundations, and other third sector networks in Ghana.

This partnership directly impacts Ghana through two

areas of focus within the fashion industry: production of clothing and treatment of models.

WSO offers the Friend of the Earth Sustainable Fashion certification, which looks at prolonging the life cycle of materials, reducing the amount of waste, and reducing harm to the environment. In order to receive the certification, Friend of the Earth standards for Sustainable Agriculture, Sustainable Farming, and Sustainable Textile Processing must be met. Some of these standards include keeping an inventory of vulnerable wildlife and flora, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and more.

"Africa and Ghana's fashion brands represent an important potential added value for clothing's export, as well as work opportunities for local communities," WSO founder and director Paolo Bray says. "WSO's task is to highlight those sustainable African clothing brands and help them enter new markets, which are always more demanding for environmentally friendly products."

—Anya Crittenton

Taking Inspiration:

- Look for certifications. They take a lot of the guesswork out of green shopping! Check out the [GreenPages.org](https://www.greenpages.org) to find certified green businesses.
- Get educated and read more about the fashion industry in the Green American, "Unraveling the Fashion Industry" at greenamerica.org/magazine/unraveling-fashion-industry.
- Take action with Green America's Toxic Textiles campaign at greenamerica.org/toxictextiles.

Japan Is Making Sustainable Development Goals Fun

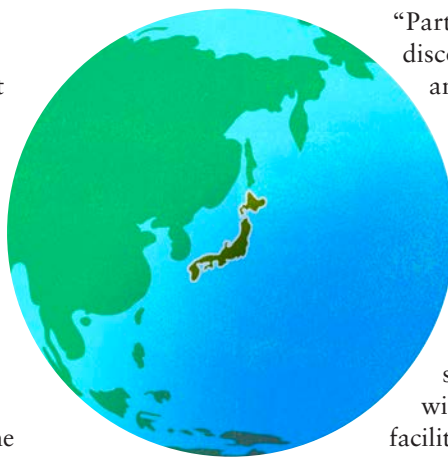
In 2015, the UN adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, aimed at enacting a plan for people, planet, and prosperity. As part of this plan, the UN created the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 17 goals for each country to achieve, addressing things like poverty, hunger, clean energy, and more.

Every country in the UN is pursuing the 17 SDGs in their own way. In Japan, it's become a nationwide trend, with SDGs playgrounds appearing, as well as SDGs trips offered by travel agencies and an SDGs Center at the popular amusement park, KidZania.

For one Japanese company, Imacocollabo, the SDGs presented an idea: a brand-new multiplayer, in-person, card-based game, the 2030 SDGs Game. Takeo Inamura of Imacocollabo explains the inception of the game on its website (2030sdsgsgame.com): "The SDGs are ambitious and can seem overwhelming ... While dramatic in their potential impact on the world, approaching them can be daunting."

The 2030 SDGs Game is meant to give people practical and accessible ideas for helping create a sustainable world.

After gameplay, players engage in a facilitated dialogue, called *kizuki*, a uniquely Japanese term indicating a transformation to awareness.



"Participants share and examine their discoveries and observations, personal and collective, about assumptions, cultural lenses and biases, and how these influence the world that was created," Aya Matsuyama, also of Imacocollabo, says.

The game is taking off globally and Inamura and his team have created an English version. On the game's website, you can read past case studies of facilitated events, find worldwide online events, and even become a facilitator or host yourself. 🌍

—Anya Crittenton

Taking Inspiration:

- Play to your strengths. Look at your own interests, hobbies, and skills—what can translate to sustainable efforts? Create art to get a message into the world or make and donate food.
- Create your own local gaming event, like a nature scavenger hunt or competition to identify native species.

Regenerating Traditions in Growing



by Mary Meade

Before it was climate-focused, regenerative growing practices were used by people from many cultures around the world.

Jewish and Zuni people in the US share their deep roots to their agricultural practices.

INDUSTRIAL AGRICULTURE has changed our relationship with the land—instead of picking a tomato by hand, many Americans pick it out of a lineup on the grocery shelf. But cultivating the land is a fundamental practice of humanity, stretching back millennia. Many traditional gardening methods from around the world maintained a natural balance between the soil, the climate, and community food needs, in their own unique ways. The modern regenerative gardening/agriculture movement is informed by these ancient and ongoing traditions—and it's helping people understand that we are part of maintaining the balance of the natural world as stewards of the land.



Above: Kenzi Bowekaty working on waffle garden repairs in Zuni, New Mexico. Above left: Active waffle gardens in ZYEP park community garden.

Shepherds of the Land

In Ortonville, Michigan, Tamarack Camps is helping Jewish children connect with their roots and the joys of tending the land. Farber Farm is an educational program at Tamarack Camps, where campers may grow and harvest peppers, kale, beans, broccoli, zucchini, and much more—the produce is served in the cafeteria, so the campers can experience the food from seed to table.

Alex Rosenberg, the Farber Farm manager, explains that while cultivating the land is not something typically associated with Judaism today, it is a foundational part of the religion.

“Our ancestors were shepherds of the land. All our holidays are woven into an agricultural calendar,” she says. “Just being on the farm and getting your hands in the soil is the absolute most Jewish thing you can do.”

One of the oldest Jewish traditions, *shmita*, is about nurturing natural balance—every seven years, cultivated land is to be left alone to rewild. As many ancient Jews were animal shepherds, this process protects the land from overgrazing. The belief is that, if the land is allowed to rest, then the following years will be bountiful. It's a reflection of the seven-day week with one day of rest.

During the most recent shmita, which occurred from September 2021 to September 2022, Rosenberg hoped to inspire the campers to think bigger than just their summer camp experience.

“How do we bring [shmita] forward into soil conservation practices that we can be doing year after year, rather than taking just a sabbatical?” Rosenberg asked. “How do we extend that and still be able to work within an agricultural framework where we are producing enough food in efficient ways to feed our communities?”

It’s food for thought that the regenerative movement is already working on. Shmita, interpreted for modern day farming, is rotational grazing—where animals are kept together to graze a short time and then moved to new fields, leaving the field where they grazed and fertilized to rest, for the diverse grass species to grow to support soil health, and sequester carbon.

For Farber Farm, the idea of shmita is a tool to teach campers about stewarding the land. The land requires rest and restoration much like humans do. It’s part of a curriculum that includes regenerative growing practices using methods like no till, cover crops, and composting to improve soil health. The lesson is that, with patience, nurturing the well-being of the land means caring for ourselves.

It’s also a lesson central to the Zuni tribe of the American southwest.

Bounty in Scarcity

Indigenous communities across the Americas have rich agricultural histories with holistic ecosystem management, many of which have informed the modern understanding of regenerative growing practices.

Venturing into the dry and hot environment of New Mexico, the Zuni tribe has practiced waffle gardening (*heko:we* in the Zuni language) in the desert for centuries. From above, the ground looks like a waffle, with little depressions in the soil to hold water for plants. A waffle garden can be sustained with limited water resources, making it extremely efficient in arid environments. This mindfulness towards limited resources is central to regenerative growing practices, which is conscious of waste.

Culturally, food sovereignty (the belief that people have the right to determine what and how they grow and eat) is woven into the Zuni way of life. As expert desert farmers, the Zuni people would grow food like maize, squash, and beans, historically. But in 1908, the Zuni River—what sustained gardens in the Zuni *pueblo* (village)—was dammed to form the Black Rock Reservoir. Since then, grocery stores proliferated, and gardening became scarce.

Kenzi Bowekaty is the food sovereignty leader at Zuni Youth Enrichment Project (ZYEP) in Zuni, New Mexico, a nonprofit dedicated to connecting Zuni children and families with their traditions. Bowekaty says that during the pandemic, waffle gardens began to reappear.

“ZYEP decided to give out garden kits because we couldn’t continue our regular programming the way we would have,” says Bowekaty. “I feel like it’s really growing back again, because of people wanting their own food.”

Just as the waffle-shaped depressions in the ground are home for the plants, homes in the Zuni pueblo are parsed out in a grid. That reflection is just one of many for the Zuni and the plants they nurture.

“We really believe that the plants resemble us as people in the stages of life,” Bowekaty adds. A planted seed is like an embryo in a mother’s womb, that eventually emerges in the sun. When harvest time comes, and the heavy corn stalks slump over, which Bowekaty

relates to how a person would hunch as they aged.

Like how taking care of each other in a family builds a strong unit, taking care of our plant family results in food we can eat. When it comes to regenerative growing practices, the belief that humans are akin to plants keeps us mindful of how to treat and maintain the land.

Take Action

Learn more about the cultural roots of regenerative growing in “Native Growers Decolonize Regenerative Agriculture” at greenamerica.org/decolonize-agriculture or read the book *Healing Grounds* by Liz Carlisle, which shares the stories of Indigenous, Black, Latinx, and Asian American farmers reviving traditional methods of growing food. If you’re interested in starting your own regenerative garden, visit greenamerica.org/cvg to get started. 🌍



Camper harvesting red clover for herbal teas at Farber Farm. Photo by Tamarack Camps.

SOWING SEEDS & DROPPING BEATS

As DJ Cavem Moetavation, Ietef Vita created the genre of eco hip-hop. His lyrics tell stories of gardens and composting while his fans plant literal seeds in food deserts.

by Sarah Ratliff

THE UNITED STATES is a country of dichotomies. Few things illustrate this better than access to healthy food. Take for example the affluent city of Beverly Hills, which boasts nine supermarkets that serve its 32,000 residents. By contrast, 30,000 residents of Detroit, Michigan, lack access to even one grocery store with fresh food. Instead, heavily processed, pesticide-laden foods line the shelves of neighborhood convenience stores.

Because politicians have historically done little to address this disparity, community organizers invest their time and money, and have an army of

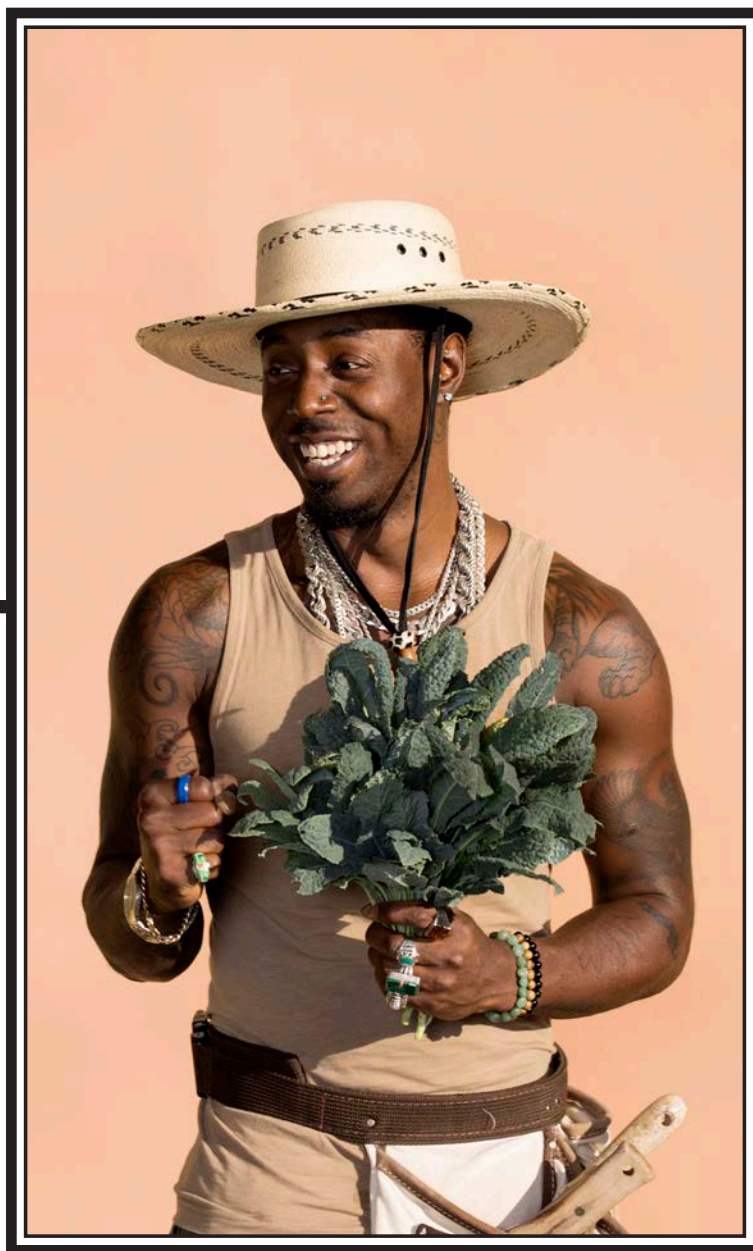
volunteers to provide their communities (mostly of color) organic food at affordable prices. But what is access to fresh produce without an understanding

of good nutrition? One Denver native figured out a clever way to use music to explain what healthy eating looks like.

Ietef Vita was raised in the Five Points neighborhood of Denver. Before the gentrification of the last decade, Five Points was home to mostly lower-income Black families.

"We didn't have the Boy Scouts, we had gangs, so I became a gang-banging Crip," Vita explains. "A lot of my friends ended up in the youth penitentiary, which was two blocks from my high school. Five Points was a prison town kind of vibe."

How Vita went from a processed-food eating gang banger to



Ietef Vita, aka DJ Cavem Moetavation, poses with kale from his garden.
Photo by Jeff Nelson.

becoming a yoga-loving, meditating vegan, rapping about greens and organic farming is simple.

"I owe it all to my mother," he says.

Two things happened during Vita's adolescence that served as the inspiration behind his lyrics about healthy eating. While working as a curator for the Denver Film Festival, his mother put herself in debt to pay for Vita and his brother to visit Burkina Faso for the Pan-African Film & TV Festival of Ouagadougou.

"As I walked through the port at Gorée Island in Senegal, I thought I was something special in my gang colors. Back then, I didn't understand this was the largest slave-trading post back in the day," recalls Vita. "Seeing where my people originated and the brutality they faced there and once they arrived in the new world, forced me to examine my life and the contributions I wanted to give humanity. I felt called upon to make a difference."

Upon his return from West Africa, his mother gave him a package of tofu. While this may not seem out of the ordinary to those with limitless food options, for a gang banger from the "hood" without access to a supermarket, for Vita, it was more evidence to answer the call.

"At first I was the only tofu-eating, vegan gang banger, which provided the punchline for many jokes, but for me it was about self-reflection. Did I want to be part of the problem or provide a solution?"

Vita not only quit gang life, but he began studying Indigenous agronomy and permaculture, and started writing.

Using Eco Hip-Hop to Promote Healthy Eating

Vita, known professionally as DJ Cavem Moetavation, created a subgenre of rap he calls Eco Hip-Hop.

"My songs are about sustainable agriculture, but there's more to my lyrics. Apart from police brutality, the Black community has multiple issues that aren't being addressed in Hip-Hop.

"The same way Public Enemy, Tupac Shakur, N.W.A., and other prominent Old School rappers brought this consciousness to the mainstream, my

mission is to expose the health crisis people of color face everyday. My albums have seeds with growing instructions. I got the USDA to certify them, enabling me to get them into schools. I'm also working with the WIC program. My songs provide context for all of this."

Vita's wife, Alkemia Earth, is a certified master energy healer who appears in most of his videos. "It may seem corny to tell people that you write rhymes about vegetables, but absent the lyrics, his music is modern-day rap," known as Trap.

"Nothing makes his day more than to hear a kid rapping about broccoli, collard greens, and kale," she says.

Roger James, of Aurora, Colorado, is one of those young people. James is a recording engineer with Atlantic Records.

"I met Ietef when I was in middle school in Five Points. He came to our school and organized rehearsals, taught us about healthy eating, and provided venues for me to perform and get comfortable presenting my art to the world," James says. "He definitely impacted my life a great deal when it comes to music and growing organic food."

Ten years after their first meeting, James returned the favor by arranging and producing Vita's latest album. *Koncrete Garden* is an EP with eight songs that sprinkle in issues that impact the Black community with more rhymes about vegetables. In the song "I'm on the Move" Vita describes a day in the life at Kiss the Ground, the Five Points farmer's market he co-founded.

*7 am at the market
Washing that kale and I park it
I got that cabbage on low
I got that spinach on low
I got tomatoes on low
I got that garlic on roast*

About Vita's influence on young people, Shane Wright, the development director of the Denver nonprofit organization Lincoln Hills Cares, concurs.

"Vita is a fixture, father figure, and feature in Denver's community-based environmental movement. Not only does his music represent Denver, but he shows up for the youth. When he's not touring, you can find him juicing greens from his own garden at Kiss the Ground."

Respect for the Founder of Eco Hip-Hop

Today the gang-banger-turned-musician has garnered respect from the music industry. Chuck D, front man for Public Enemy (known for their politically-charged songs like "Fight the Power" and "Can't Truss It"), is Vita's mentor. "DJ Cavem's music will propel us as humans. Spirit energy and fuel define his mantra. He is a gift from beyond to listen, watch, feel and emulate for generations to follow."

Todd Thomas, known professionally as Speech, is a founding member of the group Arrested Development. He calls Vita, "Always dope, always authentic and a 'back-to-earth visionary.'"

It's a Koncrete Garden Out There

Disparities in food access—to quality affordable foods in grocery stores—affects 11.8% of the US population, according to 2020 data from Feeding America, but doesn't consider the pandemic, which increased food insecurity. People of color are likelier to live in those food insecure areas, which is part of the reason why Vita finds it so important to educate those in his community about growing foods, provide food access through community gardens and events, and teach about how healthy food, when it is accessible, can be fun and tasty.

Vita brings it all full circle. "As good health continues to elude most Americans, I will continue writing music to bring back ancient wisdom to address current problems. And I owe it all to my mother."

If you'd like to know more about Ietef Vita, a.k.a. DJ Cavem Moetavation, his website is www.chefietef.com. 

Sarah Ratliff is the co-author of Being Biracial: Where Our Secret Worlds Collide, an anthology of essays exploring mixed-race identity. Her main topics of interest are Puerto Rico, cannabis, natural healing, race and gender, politics, STEM, and sustainable agriculture.

Eating Insects to Fight the Climate Crisis

Almost 2 billion people worldwide partake in the culinary delight of bugs. In a climate crisis, American palates might try insects—and like them.

by Mary Meade

Dr. Cortni Borgerson serves up cicada tacos as part of her work to introduce more people to tasty and sustainable bugs to improve food security around the world. Photo by Joel Borgerson.

ALMOST TWO BILLION people worldwide partake in the culinary delight of bugs. In Thailand, fried caterpillars are common treats at street markets. In Mexico, cooked grasshoppers are bar snacks and taco fillings. And in Uganda, flying African termites, which have more protein than vertebrate meat, are eaten à la carte.

Yet many Americans are revolted by the idea of bugs for dinner. In a warming world, insect cuisine may become commonplace—to fight climate change, and because it's tasty.

Katydid Cakes, Anyone?

The Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that 25-50% of Native American tribes had traditions around entomophagy (the practice of eating insects) before the 18th century. The Cherokee would enjoy fried cicadas, the Kitanemuk would eat red harvester ants as a hallucinogenic, and the Ute near Great Salt Lake shared katydid cakes with Mormon settlers during icy winters.

Dr. Cortni Borgerson, a Montclair State University professor researching insect-eating as a means of wildlife conservation, explains that American settler hesitance with entomophagy has to do with exposure. If people saw bugs as part of a regular meal, like French fries accompanying a burger, or in the meat aisle alongside pork and chicken, it would be normal.

“Most things that we like to try are introduced to us by family and friends,” says Borgerson. Without that, we are cautious to try something new.

Additionally, there is a geographic piece to the cultural puzzle. In northern latitudes, bugs die off for half the year, whereas cultures around the equator see bugs year-round, establishing ample time to experiment with entomophagy.

“When we do encounter insects, we’re not encountering them on our plates, but we are encountering them as taking our food away through spoilage or pests in our home—as opposed to this exciting new source of incredible food,” says Borgerson.

Protein Shake with a Side of Sustainability

Mounting concern over global food insecurity and the climate crisis are causing Americans to reconsider their protein sources. While highly processed plant-based meats are grabbing headlines as climate friendly options, one-third of Americans are receptive to a different protein: cricket-based foods.

Crickets have a much better environmental

footprint than livestock. Insects get most of their moisture needs from food, using 95% less water than conventional animal agriculture. They are 20 times more resource-efficient than cows, producing 80% less methane, and release far less ammonia than pigs, which can pollute waterways and soil.

Industrial soy agriculture—a high-protein plant option—is better than livestock when it comes to resource management, but soy production is connected to deforestation and biodiversity loss in Brazil’s Amazon Rainforest, as well as high pesticide use and genetic engineering. Comparatively, crickets can be grown indoors in sealed facilities and stacking habitat enclosures to be even more space-efficient. Indoor growing promotes food security in cities affected by climate change-related transport disruptions.

Sarah Schlafly started the food company Mighty Cricket with these points in mind, offering protein powders, flour, and oatmeal made from ground crickets. Schlafly notes that outdoor fitness enthusiasts gravitate to her products.

“Mountain bikers, rock climbers, trail runners—they’re already in nature,” says Schlafly. “Bugs don’t really ick them out because they’re always getting them in their face anyway, and they’re very passionate about preserving their ‘playground.’ I think it’s a combination of the [high protein content] they can get from the products with that sustainability piece.”

Crickets seem to be a palatable option for Americans because they are not associated with spoilage in the same way other bugs are. Crickets are reminders of delicate chirping on calm evenings and cute cartoon sidekicks in Disney movies. Many of Schlafly’s customers don’t just buy the products because of the environmental benefits, but because they like the taste, she says.

A New Take on Taco Tuesday

It’s hard to predict when insects will become a regular part of the American diet, says Schlafly, but change is happening. Restaurants across the country are offering Americanized takes on cultural dishes. Los Angeles is home to many chapulin restaurants (derived from the Nahuatl word chapolin for grasshopper) such as Guelaguetza and Expresion Oaxaqueña, and New York City’s The Black Ant, a modern Oaxacan-style restaurant, serves black ants on guacamole and espresso martinis.

“Those are actually what I recommend when someone’s like, ‘Oh, I want to try a bug for the first time,’” says Borgerson. “Get a chapulines taco, get some black ant guacamole because you get a citrusy profile versus a chicken profile with a nutty edge.”

While protein powder is one way to integrate insects into your diet, Borgerson hopes more people try insects in plated dishes. Seeing bugs served next to chips or on a taco helps to normalize it as food.

“If you think of things like sushi, tacos, and pizza, we’re constantly turning any neat, exciting food in the world around, and then finding what it means to be American in that place,” says Dr. Borgerson.

Americanizing entomophagy has already started. Salt & Straw,



Zipiny Razafindranoro is a member of Cortni Borgerson’s Madagascar-based research and conservation team with Montclair State University. As a test chef on the Sakondry Project, she trains rural households and organizations across Madagascar how to sustainably farm sakondry (bacon bug, *Zanna tenebosa*)—a native and traditionally eaten insect.

the Pacific Northwest ice cream-favorite served chocolate-covered crickets and toffee-brittle mealworms in one of its seasonal Halloween ice creams. The company takes inspiration and sources its bugs from Monica Martinez, who is on a mission to share the joy of entomophagy with Americans by selling bugs grown on her urban farm, Don Bugitos, in Oakland, California.

For most Americans, the world of insect cuisine is a new frontier. But giving a bite a try is a chance to explore exciting new flavors and advance environmental sustainability in a warming world. Look for restaurants serving bugs near you, try a cricket protein shake or ice cream, and if you like it, share it with your family and friends.

Not ready for bugs yet, or practicing veganism? Like insects, plant-based proteins are climate-friendly alternatives to meats like beef, chicken, and pork. Tofu, tempeh, seitan, lentils, beans, and nutritional yeast are great contributions to a tasty meal. 🌱



Avilio Velasquez and Bertilia Gonzales, Guillermo's brother and sister-in-law, drying the first beans of their 2022-2023 coffee harvest in October 2022 on Velasquez Family Farm, Rio Negro, Honduras. Photo by Velasquez Family Coffee.

HOW ENTREPRENEURS MAKE CULTURE THEIR BUSINESS

Green businesses inspired by countries of origin are building community in the US and giving back to their people.

by Anya Crittenton and Olivia Liang

WHEN it comes to green business, caring for the earth is a given. But Yamacu{GBN} and Velasquez Family Coffee{GBN} surpass this mission as they forge worldwide connection through cuisine. Salimata Bangoura, CEO of Yamacu (and Green America board member), sells West African food and drink to support her community in Mali. Cathy and Guillermo Velasquez, founders of Velasquez Family Coffee, sell the Honduran coffee beans that Guillermo's father, siblings, and neighbors hand-pick and sun-dry. When supporting these companies, you're not just purchasing tasty cold-pressed ginger drinks or your morning coffee, you are joining an international network of community

and culture, by tasting flavors from around the world that have been brought stateside with purpose.

Yamacu

Food brings us together—the labor of love creating a dish and then sharing it with others, explaining its history and significance.

Growing up in Ferkessédougou, [a city in Ivory Coast,] “the melting pot of West Africa,” Salimata Bangoura discovered this early on in life.

“I ate food from all different West African countries,” recalls Bangoura. “I like to focus on things that bring us closer, remind us we come from the same threads, and create a bridge. Food is the most powerful medium to do that.”

Bangoura runs Yamacu, a company that food and beverage company specializing in Malian cuisine and flavors. Inspired by her mother, Rokia Diarra, and Diarra's original ginger drinks, the business offers seasonal prepared meals for catering purposes as well as take

out, and is currently fundraising for a café (numarket.co/fund/yamacu).

Diarra began making ginger drinks, an anti-inflammatory and digestive aid, in 1995 in the Bronx after emigrating from Mali. As a child, Bangoura helped her mother make and deliver the beverages in the NYC borough, where there was a large concentration of African immigrants familiar with the flavors.

“You blend the ginger with things like pineapple and lemons and water,” Bangoura explains. “Some people make it really strong, like my mom.”

Eventually, when her mother got older, Bangoura took over the company and merged it with her own West African-inspired company, a meal delivery service called Dugu.

Creating a product that is good for people, shares her culture, and directly benefits West Africa are Bangoura’s main goals. While the business is not yet profitable, Bangoura says once it is, “all profits” will go towards supporting the people of Mali, where her mother has returned.

“Hunger leaves room for no other thought, trying to alleviate it is the number one goal, and that’s why we help support the people my mom feeds and cares for,” Bangoura says. “She helps young people from the villages looking for domestic work in the city. People come to her home, and she finds them employment and negotiates better pay.”

Bangoura further explains that her mother’s impact and reach has created a network in which Malian villages refer one another to her aid.

“By supporting Yamacu, you’re directly aiding this mission,” says Bangoura. “The absolute best way you can help is with funding, to support what women like my mother are doing, which helps us create and maintain sustainable communities.”

Velasquez Family Coffee

Some thirty years ago, a man helped his neighbor start her lawnmower. Guillermo Velasquez, a recent emigrant from Honduras, had just met his future wife, Cathy Eberhart.

Guillermo and Cathy Velasquez sound like the perfect pair to run a sustainable coffee business: he studied animal and plant systems and works in crop research at the University of Minnesota; she has a master’s in public affairs and worked with an organization that aids sustainable farmers with direct marketing. But the roots of Velasquez Family Coffee run so much deeper.

Guillermo grew up helping his father on his coffee farm in the Rio Negro community located in the mountainous rainforest of Comayagua, Honduras. In 2001, when the global market price of coffee sank, Guillermo’s father worried that to harvest and sell to his standard exporter would in fact lose him money.

That’s when Cathy and Guillermo asked



Salimata Bangoura, CEO of Yamacu, at work.

themselves a life-changing question: Why don’t we bring this coffee home to Minnesota to sell at a fair price?

“We didn’t start out intending to have a business,” says Cathy. “Frankly we were just trying to help our family.” So, with the humble ambition of bringing coffee to St. Paul family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers, what started out as 400 pounds of coffee brought to the United States in suitcases has transformed 20 years later into the import of 20-30,000 pounds of coffee per year. Velasquez Family Coffee ships around the country or is hand-delivered one Friday a month in the Twin Cities by Cathy or Guillermo themselves, one of their children or, on occasion, their kids’ friends.

“We’ve gone beyond delivering to friends and family, but it feels like a big family, a big group of friends,” says Cathy.

The Velasquez’s coffee beans are grown beneath the rainforest’s canopy, where the forest minimizes erosion and preserves the surrounding habitat. The beans are then hand-picked for ripeness and sun-dried to seal in natural sugars and flavors.

“Honduras before had a bad reputation about coffee,” says Guillermo. “But right now, Honduras has one of the best coffees in the world.”

Cathy says simply, it’s good coffee with a good story, and it directly supports Guillermo’s brothers, father (who is now 97 years old), and the broader Honduran community.

“That inter-cultural connection and our bi-cultural family is really what I love being able to share with others,” says Cathy. “This is a lot more than just selling coffee.”

Take Action:

Green businesses that care for people and planet allow us to connect with cultures around the world, support diversity, and make our dollars count. Visit GreenPages.org to learn more about green businesses to purchase with purpose. 🌍

STRIKING A POSE IN SUSTAINABLE DRAG

by Anya Crittenton

Despite dangerous critics, drag performers stand, wigs high and makeup bold, proud and resilient as Mother Earth herself. Their ties to nature run deeper still in the genre of sustainable drag.

Bohonne Arreaux, a drag performer of Diné and Creole descent, dressed as Deer Woman, a character from their Indigenous mythology. Photo by Bohonne Arreaux.

“WE SHALL COME IN DRAG, which means men wearing women’s costumes,” declared an 1870 party invitation printed in the UK’s *Reynolds Newspaper*.

It was the 19th century and drag as we understand it today—the exaggerated performance of gender—was being defined and shaped for the first time. Of course, drag existed long before, in the days of Ancient Rome, Shakespearean theater, and Japanese kabuki.

Despite dangerous critics threatening violence at drag events, drag performers nonetheless remain, wigs high and makeup bold, proud and resilient as Mother Earth herself. For some queens and kings, their ties to nature run deeper still in sustainable drag.

Three people, connected by the drag world but occupying separate roles—a performer, costume designer, and photographer—speak about how community fosters sustainable action and fulfillment.

You’re Born Naked and the Rest Is Drag

An Indigenous drag star, a photographer who grew up on a sustainable herb farm, a South Korean costume designer raised by activists. Their origins set the stage and the communities that followed, from drag to family and friends, shaped them.

Bohonne Arreaux is Diné (Navajo peoples) and Creole, from the Jena Band of Choctaw, and their Indigenous roots are not only a part of their drag persona, but the foundation. (Note: Bohonne Arreaux is Two-Spirit and uses all pronouns.)

“I was definitely a novelty in the beginning,” they say of being an Indigenous drag performer. “But I’m not doing my drag in a way that performs culture as much as I am sharing who I am with people.”

Cassidy DuHon, a DC-based photographer and amateur drag queen has had a deep love of nature cultivated by his parents, including his soil scientist mother, from birth.

“Our role as humans in nature is to go out and commune with larger spirits, commune with your friends through the act of removing yourself from [the distractions of] society,” he says.

Similar to Arreaux’s Indigenous community and DuHon’s parents, Hahnji

(who prefers to go by their first name only) recalls their childhood in South Korea: activist elders put solar panels on the roof and visits to their thrift-loving grandmother in Michigan resulted in a return to South Korea sporting 70s lace bell bottoms from Goodwill.

Drag came from their gender identity: “I’m gender-fluid and I like to play with different silhouettes. I went through a high femme phase, with heels and skirts with petticoats, only to change into basketball shorts and a tank top when I got home. I was doing drag on the regular and didn’t know it.”

It made sense, then, to infuse their earliest lessons and values into their drag community, just as Arreaux and DuHon did.

Making Treasure from Trash—Together

Shangela, a drag queen who gained fame on *RuPaul’s Drag Race* and now co-hosts *We’re Here* on HBO Max, has called drag queens some of the most resourceful people. In a 2021 article in *Wealthsimple*, she praised how they use makeup to the very end and recycle costumes, all while relying largely on tips earned at shows—which they booked using their own talent for both entertainment and cultivating connections.

One of Arreaux’s most iconic looks was crucially made with the help of others, from friends to ancestors and creatures who lost their lives.

“I was in a competition, the theme was Monster Ball,” she recalls. “I knew there would be Frankensteins, vampires, zombies, and I wanted to do a creature

from Indigenous mythology.”

She went as the Deer Woman, a fertility and love figure for everyone who shows respect to women and children, and a vengeful, murderous spirit to those who harm women and children, known to lure men to their deaths.

Creating the costume for Deer

given to him by an old roommate, and Deer Woman’s creation began.

Wanting to honor the animal which lost its life for the couch, Arreaux gave the skin new purpose while sustainably upcycling and avoiding waste. It’s a rule they follow when creating anything, from a theatre prop to a new drag

character: “You have to be really wise about making something that lasts.”

Wandering, But Not Lost

DuHon saw drag differently through understanding resourcefulness and seeing drag in nature amongst community.

In 2012, a friend invited DuHon to Beltane, the Gaelic May Day festival honoring the start of summer. His friend was a member of the Radical Faeries, a counterculture movement started by gay men in the 1970s seeking community and spirituality in nature.

“At first it was like, ‘Oh, this is this strange party in the woods.’ But then I really took to the deeper spiritual aspects of it,” DuHon says.

Everything changed for him then. He became a Radical Faerie, started the hashtag #dragofthewoods on Instagram, and began hosting his own sustainable drag events, like a queer camping trip. One of his friends made an entire ballgown and accessories from grocery bags upon realizing the bags custom-ers return in the hopes they’ll be recycled often go straight in the trash.

Another sparkled and dazzled with a flowing, golden cape made of salvaged honey packets.

“Doing drag in nature takes teamwork,” he says. “Limited electricity, no place to plug in that glue gun. You work together to craft a look from less. The woods remind us to get back to our communal nature.”



A photo taken by Cassidy DuHon at the queer camping event known as LISA. Model is wearing a gown made of upcycled plastic bags to bring awareness to the issue of non-recyclable plastics.

Woman stemmed directly from their Indigenous beliefs of respecting the land and not creating waste.

“The costume was actually made from a couch,” Arreaux explains. He stripped the leather from the couch,



Designer Hahnji, center, wearing all secondhand and vintage at Refashion Week 2022. The models behind are India Shea and Rami Margron, wearing secondhand clothing sourced at Housing Works and Big Reuse respectively. The event was located at the Brooklyn Army Terminal, hosted By the NY Department of Sanitation and their DonateNYC branch promoting Zero Waste initiatives. Photo credit Gil Jang.

Living in this world, finding community and support can be transformative and life-giving.

Five Corporations in a Trench Coat

Hahnji sees community all around them. It is the Mexican artist down the street in New York City they buy pieces from for a play by a Mexican American playwright, and then develop a friendship. It is the performer who wants to keep their costume made by Hahnji, giving the piece life again and again. It is the young queer people, lacking resources, who come to Hahnji for styling help.

“We live in a country of five corporations in a trench coat and they don’t want us to be a community,” they explain. “A lot of what I do is promote resources and give back.”

Hahnji’s approach to this is anti-capitalist, focusing on the green values of paying fair wages and reducing the use of non-renewable resources.

“I have to spend capital,” they say begrudgingly. “So my focus is where: ‘Can I refocus on labor? Can I refocus on valuing people?’”

They encourage buying from BIPOC-(Black, Indigenous, People of Color)-owned businesses and

re-thinking what capital can be, such as resources or education.

“Everything is super gatekept,” they explain, and doubly so for queens and kings who are members of communities of color, who are forced to fight uphill battles upon the intersection of racism and homophobia. It’s why they’re focused on aiding communities of color and gender-expansive communities, to give them the tools and aid purposely kept out of reach.

Eventually, they want to expand this sense of community even further: “A lot of these resources are focused in liberal areas like New York, but I want to take them to the Midwest and beyond.”

Drag exists everywhere, as do communities of color, queer, and marginalized people. Beyond New York City and Los Angeles, there are countless people pursuing their identity, their art, their look, dreaming of more, if only someone offered a hand.

Don’t Be a Drag, Just Be a Queen

As DuHon puts it, drag is the “great equalizer.” It is a powerful, unifying force, especially for queer people and reinforcing their community. It examines gender and privilege, and it cannot be done alone.

As drag queens and kings rely on their resourcefulness and resilience, their cheering section of friends at brunch, their mentors and ancestors, to thrive together in the face of protesters calling for their banishment, there is much to learn from them.

Sustainability in drag shows us that we can thrift clothes, make things using recycled materials from services like FABSCRAP, support small, LGBTQ+, BIPOC-owned businesses, and above all else: find community, ask for help. Green America’s Vote with Your Dollar toolkit also provides first steps to adopt a money-saving, community-building lifestyle at greenamerica.org/votewithyourdollar.

You are never alone, and you certainly can’t get that two-foot thrifted Dolly Parton wig on your head yourself. 🌍



GREEN ECONOMY NEWS

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NEW “HOW-TO” DIGITAL GUIDES FOR GREEN ENTREPRENEURS

by Fran Teplitz

PERHAPS YOU, or someone you know, is an entrepreneur who brings both a social and environmental focus to your business. As you work to build your business, you might wonder how you stack up in terms of labor justice, community impacts, and environmental sustainability. If you're looking for next steps on your green business journey or aspire to a green certification that affirms your commitments to people and the planet, the Green Business Network is on your side.

The Green Business Network's new, online How To Guides for specific business sectors may be just what you need!

This fall, the Green Business Network is releasing guides to the essential elements of being a green entrepreneur—and ultimately, the team will cover dozens of industry sectors. We'll be kicking off the series with guides for Apparel and Textiles; Body & Personal Care Products; and Landscaping & Gardening. GBN will create guides for other sectors for release throughout 2023.

Each guide mirrors key criteria in the Green Business Network's certification program that is tailored to entrepreneurs (including “solo-preneurs”) and small businesses. If an enterprise meets all the steps in the guide, it is a strong candidate for earning the Green Business Network certification seal.

Using the Apparel and Textiles sector as an example, the guide explains the need for supply chain transparency and support for fair labor practices; the use of organic, reclaimed, or recycled fabrics; the choice of phosphate-free,



Nicky and Dave Schauder of Permaculture Gardens {GBN}, a landscaping and gardening business. Photo by Devon Roe Photography.

fiber-reactive dyes and water-based adhesives; and the reduction of product packaging. Each guide also contains links to educational organizations, government agencies, articles, and other resources to deepen entrepreneurs' understanding of the leading social justice and environmental sustainability practices related to their business.

“If you are committed to launching a truly green business or creating a greater impact in your existing one, this quick resource gives you bountiful ideas and solid direction at your fingertips to deepen your ecological and social commitments,” says Carolyn Parrs, CEO and founder of Mind Over Markets {GBN} and a Green Business Network representative to Green America's board.

Applying for the Green Business Network certification is a great way to evaluate business practices, identify areas

for continued improvement, and demonstrate to consumers that the business' approach to its operations integrates social and ecological commitments. No matter where you are on the path to becoming a green business owner, the Green Business Network has tools you can use. Access to the certification program is part of the membership package, which begins at just \$150 annually.

“I chose to pursue certification with Green America to assist with giving the craft of papier-mâché the recognition it deserves as a viable participant in the sustainable market place; to give folks an opportunity to rethink and reimagine the use of paper—more than just a recycled grocery bag,” shared Tuesday Winslow of Mirrors Decorated {GBN}.

Check out our first three ‘How To’ guides and join the Network at GreenBusinessNetwork.org. 🌱

Communities for a Better World

ON THE NIGHT of November 19th, an armed man, with intent to harm, walked into Club Q in Colorado Springs, Colorado, one of the only havens for the city's LGBTQ+ community, and opened fire. He killed five people—two bartenders who served and were members of the queer community, and three people visiting the bar in celebration, including a mother, a trans woman, and a young man.



ANYA
CRITTENTON

Nineteen others were injured. Shock, grief, and anger immediately spread throughout the LGBTQ+ community and their allies across the country. When I heard the news, knowing my community was violently and senselessly targeted again—devastation seemed too tame a word.

In the days that followed, grit emerged from the wound. I reached out to my queer family, reinforcing the ties that bind, as we shared headlines of a veteran and trans woman stopping the shooter and joyful stories of Club Q's meaning to local queer residents.

It was a crucial reminder that a community's resilience stands bold in the face of hate and violence.

Looking forward, I'm focusing on what we've presented in this issue: community and our ability, together, to choose our future. In the times to come, think about the drag community you met in these pages, relying on each other to look fierce and authentic for Mother Nature, or the K-pop fans, once strangers, now banded together to address the climate crisis. Across the globe, progress and fellowship shatter borders.

During a still-present global pandemic and an increasingly polarized political divide, it is easy to feel alone. But though you may live in a small town in Kansas, there are millions of people across the world, from the villages of Mali to the Five Points neighborhood of Denver, who care about this planet, our future, and you.

In writing this issue with my colleagues, we opened ourselves to new points of view. The many people we spoke to showed courageous vulnerability as they shared their stories. At the end of our conversations, a space opened for growth and bonding, based—yes—on trauma, but also joy and knowledge.

By seeking and fostering connection and understanding, we are better equipped to step into the world as more responsible and compassionate humans for having listened and learned.

—Anya Crittenton, editorial associate

GREEN LIVING ADVICE

Thanks for your recent Q&A regarding plastics [greenamerica.org/more-of-your-plastic-questions-answered]. I have a question—I was considering purchasing a "Cora Ball," a "microfiber catching laundry ball." Do you think these are helpful or just another piece of plastic that should be avoided? Thanks for your work! —Hilary, via email

Thanks for reading the article and for writing in. My gut said don't put more plastic in the wash, so I dug around on the Cora Ball website to see if they had addressed your question. I found a link to a study that says that Cora Ball is effective at filtering out 30% of microfibers, which seems to mean that it doesn't add more. The study also looked at five other devices for the same purpose, and found the Xeros XFiltera to be the most effective, and the Guppyfriend washing bag to be the second most effective. So I would recommend going with one of those options if they are within your budget. The full study is called "The efficiency of devices intended to reduce microfibre release during clothes washing" from 2020 if you would like to read it. —Eleanor

We have (and I love) a gas stove; however, your spring issue [greenamerica.org/magazine/healthy-kitchen-healthy-world] confirmed what my husband has been telling me, that it is not environmentally friendly. From an environmental standpoint, does it make sense to replace an appliance that works perfectly well? Would it be better to replace it when the time comes with an electric or induction model? It seems like such a waste to dispose of a functional appliance. Thanks so much. —Stephanie, via email

Unfortunately, a 2022 study from Stanford shows that gas stoves emit far more methane and other pollutants than previously thought, even when not in use. It suggests that gas fittings and connections in gas lines are responsible for emissions, not age of the appliance or amount of use. A *New York Times* article originally recommended not ditching your gas stove yet but was retracted in September 2022, for these health and climate reasons, and because of new government rebates for electric stoves. If a major appliance switch isn't in your future, use your gas stove in a well-ventilated space, and consider a portable induction or electric cooktop, both of which can be found for around \$100, to reduce air pollution or see to which you'd prefer to switch. —Eleanor


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Questions? Contact

Kathy Harget, Director of Development:
202-872-5330; kharget@greenamerica.org



1612 K Street NW, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20006
www.greenamerica.org


202/872-5307

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