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water quality & recycling • wildlife habitats

May 2012

Healthy soil is the foundation for a healthy garden, and there are many ecological approaches to developing and improving soil improvement. This issue of the Newsletter views soil through several lenses from Hugelkulture to biochar and biology, and an ELA member in Georgia, looks at holding soil in place in the face of record flooding.

But before you dig into the articles, please take a moment to think about the vital role your membership plays in growing a healthy ELA. Your membership is part of a web linking you to other organizations and individuals with similar interests and concerns. If you haven't yet renewed your membership, [renew your ELA Membership](#) by May 21st so that you're listed in the 2012 Membership Directory. ELA members want to connect with you! *MS, editor*



Nutrient Dense Hugelkulture: An Experiment in Land Management at Woody End

by M.L. Altobelli

What do you do with an old, central Massachusetts farm - much of it poor-quality pasture with depleted soil - that has stayed within one extended family's responsibility from the beginning? My sister and I, as the next-in-line owners of just such a farm, have accepted the challenge to revitalize the land so that it will produce healthy

plants and animals. [\[click to continue...\]](#)

Recent Research on Biochar's Potential in Soils

by Thayer Tomlinson

There are many types of soil additives and fertilizers used to improve the structure and functions of soil. One that has re-emerged in the last five years is biochar, a solid material obtained from the thermochemical conversion of biomass in an oxygen-limited environment-which creates a fine-grained, highly porous charcoal. Interest in biochar has increased recently as horticulturalists are looking for sustainable ways to improve soils and decrease their use of chemical fertilizers.

[\[click to continue...\]](#)



Soil Biology Basics by Joe Magazzi

It is always difficult to understand concepts that we can't see. Most landscapers understand the importance of healthy visible landscape ecology in terms of plants, trees and turf; the bees that pollinate them; etc. Many professionals employ practices that help this ecology naturally thrive, and this leads to a healthier landscape with less disease and fewer pests. [\[click to continue...\]](#)

Streambank Stabilization after the 2009 Atlanta Floods: A Case Study

by Paul Slovisky

In September 2009, the Metro Atlanta area experienced record flooding when a major rain event dumped 10+ inches of rain on the region in a three-day period. Local watersheds were already saturated by above-average precipitation in the weeks preceding the event, and the results were devastating to the region, with a cost of \$500 million for repair and cleanup. As an aquatic resource management firm based in the Metro area, [Aguascape Environmental](#) was involved in recovery efforts immediately.

[\[click to continue...\]](#)



"It's All About the People"

by Laurence Coronis

The quote in the title for this article is a comment made by Burt DeMarche of the Laurel Rock Company at a recent landscape association meeting, and it reminded me of the importance of taking care of your team. This really is the secret to achieving your competitive edge. After all, we all have the same equipment, skid steers, mowers, trucks, etc., (albeit different brands and condition) and similar supplies from our vendors. So the real difference is YOU and YOUR TEAM. [\[click to continue...\]](#)

ELA's Environmental Vision Award Recognizes Magma Design Group Exhibit

The ELA Environmental Vision Award for 2012 recognized the Boston Flower and Garden Show exhibit created by Samantha Best, Senior Designer and Principal at [Magma Design Group](#), Inc. ELA presents this award to the exhibitor whose design and execution best represents ecological concepts. Criteria include conservation of resources, use of recycled materials, and a design guided by knowledge of and respect for natural ecosystems.

The Children's Garden designed by Best, incorporated native plants with many edibles in the landscape, including lettuces along paths and a wagon filled with lettuces. The exhibit also utilized natural and local materials, such as wood rings for stepping stones, granite for a hobbit house and tower, and trimmings for a rustic ladder and roof. According to Nanette Masi, who served as one of ELA's judges, a major ecological component was "the fact that this is a garden that totally invites children and adults to get away from their ipads and play in and with nature." Risa Edelstein, ELA President, concurred that the winning entry fostered "a sense of stewardship with a young generation and that... is important for our future."

As the winner of the ELA Environmental Vision Award, Best received a \$150 donation to the environmental non-profit of her choice. Best assigned her donation to The Rhode Island Center for Agriculture Promotion and Education ([RICAPE](#)) a non-profit that provides training, technical assistance, and marketing support services to farmers, gardeners, agricultural professionals, educators, and community leaders in Rhode Island and southern New England with the goal of reinforcing the connection between people and agriculture.



May Gleanings

Check out the titles available through the ELA's new online BOOKSTORE accessible from the homepage of the ELA website. When you buy a book from the ELA Bookstore, a percentage of the purchase price goes toward supporting ELA educational programs.

Hands-on Wetland Creation Workshop. Mass Audubon, 345 Bone Hill Rd, Barnstable, MA; May 22-24.

The Rare Plants of Massachusetts, Grow Native; Cambridge Public Library, Cambridge, MA; June 6, 7:00pm.

Sustainability Leadership Summit; Ryan Hall, UMass Boston, Boston, MA; June 7, 8:30am.

Green Roof Design & Installation, Yestermorrow Design/Build School; Warren, VT; June 17-22.

Rehabilitation for Stream Stability & Improved Stream & Riparian Functions; New England College, Henniker, NH; June 18-22. For schedule and registration form, email: Martin.J.Curran@usace.army.mil.

Regenerative Design, Yestermorrow Design/Build School; Warren, VT; June 24-29.

Weed Identification Workshop; Arnold Arboretum, Jamaica Plain, MA; June 26.

Weed Identification Workshop; UMass Amherst, Amherst, MA; June 29.

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We hope that you enjoy this edition of the ELA newsletter.

We welcome your comments at ela.info@comcast.net.

Maureen Sundberg, ELA Newsletter Editor