Enjoy this issue as you explore principles and practices that support the living landscape.

Introducing the new ELA staff!

Hello ELA Community! As many of you are already aware, there have been some changes at ELA HQ. We are pleased to announce a new team of support staff here to help advance ELA's work and execute all of the events to support membership. Our new team consists of a small group of dedicated non-profit professionals from Richmond, Virginia. We would like to introduce the ELA community to Peggy McElgunn, Mads McElgunn, Zach McElgunn, and Aviva Clayman. The team prioritizes relationships and community building in the work they have done. This comes especially naturally to them as the three McElgunn's are, in fact, related!

Peggy McElgunn joined ELA as head of finance and strategic initiatives. She is looking forward to reaching out to membership and getting to hear what the ELA community has in mind for future events and planning of ELA. She goes out of her way to guarantee quality work that satisfies everyone while strengthening existing community, and she has instilled this in her team as well. You can reach her at **peggy@ecolandscaping.org**!

Mads McElgunn is the new director of ELA. They are the go-to person for all ELA membership and are excited to not only become a familiar face for all, but to connect with all ELA members in an effort to serve their various needs. In fact, if you would like to set up a time to ask them questions or just have a friendly conversation, please reach out to them at **mads@ecolandscaping.org**! They want the chance to speak to anyone who has interest, ideas and/or feedback for ELA.

Zach McElgunn is the head of education and publications for ELA. His understanding and experience of "education" runs the gamut from writing the "Call for Proposals," to submitting his own abstracts, to ordering the tea and coffee for the break rooms at education events. That is to say, having been in every role from event attendee, to speaker, to administrative conference support, he is committed to ensuring that educational events are built on a foundation of collaboration to ensure that the relationships developed and the learning engaged in extend well beyond participants' time in the classroom. If you have any ideas about extending the many learning experiences of ELA - *networking events; any insights you'd like to share; topics for further exploration among members; etc.* - please don't hesitate to reach out to **zack@ecolandscaping.org**.

Aviva Clayman works primarily with communications. She will be working primarily on membership efforts and strengthening membership experience. If you would like to set-up any regional member experience or learn more about membership offerings, you can reach her at **aviva@ecolandscaping.org**.

The support staff is here to listen to all ELA membership and leadership in order to provide the best experience possible. We are eager to help engage and reinforce ELA's closely-knit community. At a time where the knowledge and expertise of ELA's members are more valuable than ever, we feel privileged to help leverage the collective vision and expertise of ELA's community to create a more just, sustainable, beautiful, and healthy world.

Thank you for taking the time to be a part of this important work!

Introducing Current Climate

Each month, we want to take the chance to shed light on current events and how they effect our community! If you have any ideas for a potential article, reach out to Mads to set up a meeting time.

Written by: ELA Director Mads McElgunn, MA

Organic farming has long been in and out of the news. There is the general recognition that this approach to farming is better for the soil, better for the environment and produces better results for humans. As organic farming is connected to ecology, it is inevitably connected to the work we do at ELA.

But as this form of farming becomes more of an imperative, it is clear that greater understanding and learning is necessary in order to support expansion of this approach effectively and meaningfully. We can see that simple mandates do not have the results intended. For example, the President of Sri Lanka demanded that organic farming be instituted without any implementation steps or ramp up for success. As a result, since the beginning of July, international headlines have reported the turmoil coming out of Sri Lanka due to a recent economic crisis. It has become so tumultuous that the president has fled to the Maldives for his safety. This turbulent time in Sri Lanka can be connected directly to issues created, in part, by wide-sweeping agricultural failings due to a drastic change in farming practices. The result has given a perfect example of how not to approach organic farming.

Organic farming can have beneficial effects, however, when implemented intentionally. One of the benefits of organic farming is the reduction of greenhouse gasses (GHG). In the United States alone, **11% of the country's greenhouse gas emissions** come from industrial agriculture alone. This does not take into account the impact of various agrochemicals on local water systems and health networks, although it should be noted the impact of agrochemicals on water systems has been devastating in other areas around the world. Globally, the GHG emissions from agriculture and land use are closer to 20%. In an effort to both reduce GHG emissions and return to cultural roots, Sri Lankan president, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, made a country-wide mandate to switch to 100% organic farming, subsequently banning the import and production of all agrochemicals in the spring of 2021.

On the surface, this ban seemed well intentioned; however, it was clear the president's team lacked evidence-based practices, as there was no real transition planned for the country's agricultural sector. Even worse, the country did not have a support system for the farmers and those most impacted by the new policies.

Looking only at fertilizers, conventional methods tend to be cheaper than organic by virtue of the fact that less fertilizer is needed than when using organics. By failing to provide subsidies or financial assistance to the farmers, the Sri Lankan government ended up putting *more* stress on an already strained population.

Moreover, the rapid change had a serious effect on crop yields. Rice alone **dropped 30%** resulting in Sri Lanka importing rice for the first time in decades. The government eased some restrictions in November, but failed to provide adequate subsidies for the farmers experiencing the greatest financial pains.

While the on-going crisis in Sri Lanka is a result of many overlapping problems and lack of appropriate support, it has provided invaluable insight into countrywide organic farming schemes. Unfortunately, due to this failure, critics of organic farming have been somewhat vindicated. One of the main hesitations in switching from industrial to organic farming is the fear of lower crop yields. **One study** showed a decrease of up to 40% when using organic farming techniques and resources.

This is not to say organic farming cannot be achieved. There have been successes on smaller scales in making the switch to organic farming. **Cuba has been successful in implementing organic farming** on a country level since the fall of the USSR in

1991. This switch did not come overnight, and is not yet at 100% organic, but the Cuban government and population have worked together over the past three decades to improve farming as much as possible. They have done so through massive government support and worker coalitions – specifically, **Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños** (ANAP) has helped with educational efforts to instill organics as part of the culture. Additionally, ANAP maintains advocacy for the farmers of Cuba to ensure as much security as possible.

The stark differences between Sri Lanka and Cuba's approach to organic farming highlight the need for collaboration and community, as well as the necessity of using evidence-based practices in the implementation of new systems. "Power to the people" is a call we often hear, and solidarity is crucial in these efforts. However, what's more important is "Power to the people closest to the problem." Outside help with little to no concept of daily functions, struggles, and wins is rarely successful in helping in sustainable ways.

The community of ELA is a beacon of hope when news like Sri Lanka's farming failures are so loud. Not only is the membership dedicated to their own education and craft, but the community that has grown is beyond happy to help when called upon. It is this trait of community that makes change efforts viable and successful, and it's this characteristic that makes ELA so important in the field.

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Enabling ecological change amid climate change is key to preserving biodiversity and ecosystem services, says study – Phys.org

As the need to address climate change becomes increasingly urgent, so too does the concurrent need for proactive stewardship of the Earth's rapidly changing biosphere, according to research published today in the journal Science. "There is actually a lot we can do to help systems cope with oncoming climate change," says Simon Fraser University biology professor and author Jonathan Moore, who with University of Washington professor Daniel Schindler, reviewed and assessed the potential benefits of forward-looking approaches. "From restoring connectivity to reducing local stressors to conserving future habitats—all of these proactive approaches can help the ecosystems that we rely upon to adapt to climate change." **Read more at Phys.org.**

The Tricky Politics of Ecological Restoration – The Nation

In her new book, Wild by Design: The Rise of Ecological Restoration, environmental historian Laura J. Martin charts the history of a practice devoted to mending damaged ecosystems, which she argues is currently the most important mode of environmental management in the world. Martin, an assistant professor of environmental studies at Williams College, defines ecological restoration as “a mode of reconciliation with the human past.” Her definition encapsulates the way restorationists have had to approach the blurry line between protecting and interfering with the natural environment in response to human action, which has, for the better part of human history, been interchangeable with human harm. **Read more at The Nation.**

Study finds chaos is more common in ecological systems than previously thought – Phys.org

Chaos in natural populations appears to be much more common than previously recognized, according to a new analysis by scientists at UC Santa Cruz and NOAA Fisheries. Populations of organisms in natural ecosystems fluctuate a lot, and a key question for ecologists is whether those fluctuations are regular (varying around some theoretically "stable" equilibrium), random (completely unpredictable), or chaotic. Chaotic systems, like the weather, can be predictable in the short term but not in the long term, and they are highly sensitive to small differences in the initial conditions. **Read more at Phys.org.**

Garden Guru: The greenhouse pot has become an ecological marvel – Yahoo!

No longer will trays of flower transplants create a mess, a sore back from picking them up and cluttering the garden shed with thoughts of future use. Thanks to the Eco+ Grande Pots that caught most of us by surprise at the garden center this year we can now simply pull four tabs and plant them and the pot in the hole, a true ecological wonder. **Read more at Yahoo!**

Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Saving the Humboldt Marten – North Coast Journal

Unfortunately, we're not just at risk of losing the Humboldt marten but also the very thing that could save them: traditional ecological knowledge or TEK. TEK is the body of expertise accumulated by Indigenous people concerning their environment and relates to both a spiritual and ecological understanding of nature. According to Tiana Clausen-Williams, a Yurok tribal member and director of the Yurok Tribe Wildlife Department, the loss of ancient knowledge is the reality for many Indigenous tribes in the U.S. **Read more at North Coast Journal.**

Grass is a water hog. Here’s how to create a drought-tolerant yard. – Washington Post

With numerous municipalities and states considering or enacting strict limits on residential grass, you may have considered ditching your home’s turf. Xeriscaping — or designing a landscape that needs little irrigation to survive — is no longer a radical idea, even if you don’t live in an area where lawns are being restricted. **Read more at the Washington Post**.

Yes, You Can Do Better Than the Great American Lawn - New York Times

Daniel Jaffe Wilder still remembers the conversation he had maybe six years ago with a former colleague, when they were working at Garden in the Woods, the native-plant garden in Massachusetts. The two ecologically focused horticulturists were looking for a way to talk to visitors about that massive monoculture of European turfgrass species that we grow and mow like mad. They wanted a catchy slogan, perhaps, to convince people that they could do better ecologically than the great American lawn — something encouraging, and not too intimidating. You know, like “Kill Your Lawn.” **Read more at the New York Times.**

Ripping out his lawn made him a native plant fanatic – LA Times

For Georg Kochi, tearing out his Koreatown lawn has been as much about spiritual growth as water conservation — a deep and sometimes playful exploration into habitat, rebirth and decay on the property where he lived as a boy and returned decades later as a retiree. **Read more at LA Times.**

Learn how to kill lawns for good while saving these nuns from crushing water bills – LA Times

Once upon a time, the grounds surrounding the Maryknoll Sisters home in Monrovia were 6.5 acres of lushly green lawn and trees. They'll never be that way again — not with water being so rare and expensive these days — but the retired nuns of Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic, about 15 former nurses, teachers and social workers in their 80s and 90s, are working with Grow Monrovia and other conservation activists to find a better use for their land. **Read more at LA Times** .

Ecology and traditions - Indian Country Today

On this edition of the ICT Newscast, a distinguished Indigenous professor talks about his career and next chapter. We learn about the ecology at Leech Lake and its traditions, and we talk more about a United Nations recommendation that aims to protect environmental defenders. **Click here to watch the newscast**.

Education system 'neglecting the importance of plants' - ScienceDaily

People are becoming 'disconnected from the botanical world' at a time when plants could help solve global environmental problems, warn a group of research scientists. They say the problem has been exacerbated by schools and universities reducing their teaching of basic plant science, including plant identification and ecology. They describe a self-accelerating cycle which risks '...the extinction of botanical education,' where biology is taught predominantly by people with research interests in animal science. **Read more at ScienceDaily.**

Upcoming Events

Events to Note (listings indicate local time unless otherwise noted)

Many events continue to be held online; check with organizations to confirm the most up-to-date information.

July

July 21 **Inclusive Placemaking: Creating Urban Habitats and Sanctuary** ; 1:30-3:45pm EDT.
July 21 **Xerces Society's Bring Back the Pollinators - Managing Pests While Protecting Pollinators** ; 10:00-11:00am PDT
July 26 **GreenThumb's Creating and Maintaining Shade Gardens** ; 6:00-7:30pm EDT
July 27 **ELA Eco-Tour→Native Plant Center**; 10:00am-12:00pm EDT
July 27 **The Perennial Ground Layer: Context and Creativity**; 9:30-11:45am EDT.
July 27 **Cultivating Community Through the Creation of Nourishing Gardens** ; 2:30-3:45pm EDT.
July 27 **SAWS WaterSaver Landscape Program by EcoCentro** ; 7:00pm EDT

August

August 1 **Perennial Plant Association National Symposium** ; Lancaster, PA; 9:30am-3:15pm.
August 3 **ELA Eco-Answers→Tree Health and Longevity**; 6:30-7:30pm ET.
August 10 **WGLBBO's Avian Vision, Window Collisions, and How You Can Save Birds** ; 7:00pm-8:00pm CDT
August 12 **Bernheim's Forests and Climate Resilience** ; 12:00pm-1:00pm EDT
August 20 **ELA Eco-Tour→Flying Trillium Gardens and Preserve** ; Liberty, NY; 10:00am-12:00pm.
August 24 **ELA Webinar→Native Plant Gardens: Designing for Beauty** ; 2:00-3:00pm.

September

September 7 **ELA Webinar→ The Clandestine Orchid** ; 12:00pm-1:00pm EDT
September 9 **ELA Eco-Tour→ Demonstration Meadows at Helia Native Nursery** ; 10:00am-12:00pm EDT
September 17 **ELA Eco-Tour→ Private Garden in Rye, NY** ; 4:00pm-6:00pm EDT
September 21 **ELA Webinar→ The Watershed Approach - Land Management Like the Earth Depends on It** ; 12:00pm-1:00pm EDT
September 21 **ELA Eco-Answers→ Living Shorelines** ; 6:30pm-7:30pm EDT
September 23 **Bernheim's Social Justice and Landscape Architecture** ; 12:00pm-1:00pm EDT

Anytime

URI Cooperative Extension Learn at Home Webinar Series
Deep Roots: Native Plants at Noon
FIRST Fridays; 4:00-4:40 ET on **Instagram Live**, experienced Black women farmers answer audience questions about gardening, livestock, agroforestry, plant medicine, and food preservation.

Submit events by the 10th of the month for inclusion in the next newsletter.

ELA shares job postings as a courtesy to our community, with no endorsement implied. We've expanded our search methods to include a wider range of publicly advertised postings that may be relevant to ELA members! If you are hiring, send your job posting to aviva@ecolandscaping.org!

Land Stewardship and Ecology Technician - Longwood Gardens, Kennett Square, PA

Conservation Stewardship Coordinator - Heartlands Conservancy, St Louis, MO

Steward, South Coast Region - The Trustees, Wareham or Westport, MA

Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture - Univ. of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA

Preserve Manager, Oak Glen Preserve - Wildlands Conservancy, Oak Glen, CA

Restoration Technician - Resource Environmental Solutions (RES), Various Locations

We hope that you enjoy this edition of the ELA newsletter and welcome your comments at **office@ecolandscaping.org**. ELA Newsletter Team

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