

December 2015

Dear Friends and Family,

Please feel free to forward these Greetings to any and all of your closest extended families and friends!

As the Native Americans remind us, *“We give thanks for unknown blessings already on their way.”*

The mild temperatures, warm breezes and abundant rains coming all the way from the Gulf of Mexico are helping us to close out 2015 -- the latest warmest year on record!

Hopefully the trees and plants will be patient a little while longer until some more seasonal winter weather arrives to send all that precious Life Force back to the roots where it can hold up till the real Spring arrives!

With the creeks here singing with some abundant rain over the past few days, we're reminded of the blessings of rain over the summer months here in the mountains. And all this rain came as gifts and blessings for all our berries, apples and chestnuts!

The Blueberries put on so much new growth – branches, leaves, and flowers! -- that we'll be devoting a lot of the winter season to transplanting them because they've grown into continuous hedges instead of single bushes that would allow circumambulatory picking!

In many past years we've been blessed with ripe, everbearing Heritage Variety Red Raspberries and late season Blueberries sometimes coming in even after Thanksgiving!

But this Fall, alas, an Arctic blast sealed their fate a little earlier in November....

So the silver lining with this early killing freeze is that we've already begun serious transplanting efforts with our several Blueberry varieties!

Ah, it's being here surrounded in the moisture-laden mountain clouds that we head towards the promises of the New Year – the time of transformation, and the return of the Light!

When Pueblo Elder Larry Littlebird returned to these ancient mountains two winters ago, he told us that whenever we find ourselves up in the clouds, surrounded and interpenetrated by the mists, that we are truly immersed in the “Breath of God!” – and this is the very name he gave his daughter! Please check out his most extraordinary book, *Hunting Sacred*.

So we give thanks for the reminder of the hydrogeological cycles being the very same stuff of our highest aspirations!

“As you know, we are all part of the Great Cycles of things. And so Magnificent and Divine and Harmonious is this Universe, that it's still a Great Mystery!”

– Tuscarora Elder, Ted Williams, from the Prelude to the Thanksgiving Address

And we patiently await the coming of the New Year and the renewed evolutionary consciousness it will surely bring with abundant revitalized awakening for every living being – especially the 2-leggeds!

Some of the most powerful inspirations for us this year have been from the Pachamama Alliance, based in San Francisco, who have been extraordinarily effective in helping indigenous cultures in Pachamama (Mother Earth -- South America) gain skills in protecting their sacred lands and sacred sites from deforestation, mining, fossil fuel extraction, and development.

The way the indigenous elders frame it is like this – **we must be the ones to change the dream of the modern world.** If we can be effective in shifting the dream, then traditional cultures will be able to continue their -- and our -- Original Instructions – to be the guardians, protectors and caretakers of the natural world.

Long Branch was invited to become one of the founding organizations of the Global Alliance for Rights of Nature (rightsofmotherearth.com)

based in the Sierra Nevada mountains not far from our old friend Gary Snyder. And this Global Alliance for Rights of Nature helped to inspire every delegate to the Climate talks in Paris this month!

One awakening we'd love to see:

With our collaboration with the Buncombe County Bee Club to get Asheville to become a "Bee Friendly City," Asheville could even become a "Pollinator-Friendly" City by adopting an ordinance eliminating any spraying of herbicides or pesticides on City-owned property...?

Perhaps this ecologically-minded decision might also wake up city and county residents to keep their own private property "Pollinator-Friendly" by not spraying any kinds of biocides...?

Keep the Dream Alive!

"We must be the change we wish to see in the world." -- Gandhi

3 Times 3 Times 3 Big Time Thank Yous –
Now in our life, energy, divine consciousness
We are like One!

-- Ted Williams, Tuscarora Elder

We continue to smile, and are reminded of all the kind, generous, and good-hearted folks and families who've come to see us this past Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall, whether going on wildflower hikes, picking Raspberries, Blueberries, Blackberries, Wineberries, Apples, Chestnuts, attending workshops, checking out our Portable Solar Generators, cloud watching, or just hiking the mountains -- some even making it to Big Sandy Mush Bald at 5,152 feet in elevation! We are most grateful for everyone's visits, cheerfulness, and kindness! And most of all we're grateful for the countless number of volunteers hours, days, weeks and months offered in service to help our work to grow!

We've been able to welcome so many groups this year for a variety of service learning programs, including Davidson College's Odyssey Program and Alternative Spring and Fall Breaks, University of Central

Florida, University of Wisconsin, UNC Asheville, Warren Wilson College, UNC Chapel Hill, , the Timothy Project, Evergreen Charter School, Azalea Mountain Waldorf School, Buncombe County's Migrant Education Program, the United Methodist Volunteers in Mission, the Journeymen Program, and Red Oak Recovery.

A recent great piece of news -- Long Branch has been invited to be a Community Partner of BreakAway – an organization linking universities and colleges with non-profits doing a wide variety of citizen activism! Our interns and volunteers this year have been coming from all over – Greece, Canada, Brazil, Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Florida, South and North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, California, Oregon, Montana, Ohio, Michigan, Massachusetts, Missouri, Ohio, New York, Washington, DC, and each person contributed a tremendous amount of help on our diverse projects, especially with transplanting our Backcrossed hybrids of the American Chestnut, heirloom apple trees, Pawpaws, and scores of Blueberries and Raspberries.

For many consecutive years now, we once again celebrated Earth Day at A-B Tech, reconnected with many staff and instructors, and folks continue to be amazed by the output of our Portable Solar Generator!

Despite the cancellation of the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project's Farm Tour in September over the Autumnal Equinox this year, a large number of folks came out to learn a bit about Permaculture, Edible Landscaping, headwaters conservation, wildlife habitat restoration and solar design. Not to mention some great apple and berry picking, and chestnut gathering – a most extraordinary Fall season!

Our work on backyard wildlife habitat restoration here at Long Branch diligently continued this summer, and we invite everyone to come see our ever-expanding Blueberry Terraces and Blueberry Fields Forever! – an amazing and ever-evolving accomplishment! We're also expanding our Edible Landscape and Permaculture Design with establishing several

new areas for our other berry varieties! We're still offering many plants to support our efforts to encourage widespread Edible Landscaping, Permaculture, and habitat restoration – ever-bearing Heritage Variety Red Raspberries and several varieties of Blueberries, Thornless Blackberries, native Blackcap Raspberries, Wineberries, Hackberry, Mulberry, Heirloom Apple varieties, American Chestnut Back-crossed hybrids, Pawpaw, and Persimmon tree seedlings. This winter will be a great time to transplant, so please come out and get some plants and tree seedlings for growing your own edible landscape and Permaculture Design!

With excellent rainfall this summer, our best-ever Summer crop of Heritage Variety Red Raspberries came in with amazing generosity and abundance throughout the Summer, as did the Wineberries, native Blackcap Raspberries, and Thornless Blackberries.

The fall crop of the Red Raspberries started ripening in mid-September, and what gifts they turned out to be! So do plan some family outings to take advantage of their next sweet and luscious ripeness about the middle of next June!

Our four thousand-plus Blueberry bushes have ripened so much delicious fruit this season that we had to stake up the berry-laden branches with bamboo canes! We could have worse problems, right? Since we have many Early-, Mid-, and Late-season Blueberry varieties, we were continuing to pick all the way through the Fall, so plan to bring your families out for some great communing with Nature next year! Please do bring your families out for some extraordinary picking!

Our over 72 different heirloom varieties of apple trees gave us several opportunities to conduct several cider pressing workshops for our community's cider aficionados, and we're certainly grateful for those of you who brought your extended families out to celebrate our much-anticipated Apple Harvest – with the added bonus of finding Heritage Variety Red Raspberries and bursting ripe Blueberries to add to your pickings!

After a hiatus of over 20 years, we have emptied our Trout Pond and are in the process of moving the trout-fertilized, nutrient-rich sediment to our Edible Landscape – and even the Red Wiggler worms are celebrating! And the Buzz continues –our three hives of honey bees have been enjoying the rain catchments and visiting with every other flowering being and providing magnanimous pollination services for these Newfound Mountains!

2015 has seen some great accomplishments on the project list, including literally many, many tons of woodchip mulch and leaf mulch spread over our garden beds, paths and Edible Landscape with the much appreciated help of many, many students and volunteers...! We certainly couldn't accomplish all that we do without your help!

Our good friend Debbi Mize is celebrating with us the one year anniversary of her working with us here at Long Branch and keeping the Orchard House as a welcoming and valuable demonstration of our reinhabitation efforts here! And we are so grateful for all her knowledge and skills!

With the help of some of our neighbors, we've been able to cut quite a few dead Black Locust trees in the woods and drag them out with our tractor. So if anyone needs some seasoned Black Locust firewood this winter, let them know we've got plenty, and all donations are gratefully appreciated.

Our work continues with the native stone foundation of the Cordwood Masonry demonstration that will become a wood-fired sauna when complete. So [do](#) come out and try your hand at some sustainable building whenever the spirit moves!

Copies of Paul's book, coauthored with Al Fritsch, *Healing Appalachia: Sustainable Living through Appropriate Technology*, published by University Press of Kentucky, are still available through Long Branch for a tax-deductible donation of \$40. If folks buy their copies through us

we get a percentage of the sales to support our programs, not so much with bookstore or internet sales. We're still interested in donating copies of our book to every public library in Western North Carolina, and then to every public library across Appalachia. Please help us with your donations to make this vision come alive.

Our American Chestnut Restoration Project continues to draw quite a bit of attention, and many folks have planted some of our blight-resistant backcrossed American Chestnut hybrids across the region. We will once again be digging trees this Winter and into Spring, so if you or anyone you know may be interested in planting some to help restore this keystone tree species to its original habitat, please have them get in touch with us.



Golden-winged Warbler by Barth Schorre

The 3 acres of second growth Tulip Poplar we cleared above our Edible Food Forest to establish some habitat for the **Golden-winged Warbler** (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) in conjunction with the Natural Resource Conservation Service are thriving! Some of you may already be aware

that the Golden-winged Warbler is one of the most seriously threatened, non-federally listed species in eastern North America. Its decline is due primarily to habitat loss, particularly the loss of early successional habitats to suburban sprawl, regeneration of eastern forests, competition and hybridization with Blue-winged Warblers, cowbird parasitism, and potentially loss of wintering habitat.

In the adaptive spirit of *Field of Dreams*, “**Conserve it and the wildlife will return...!**”

The other great benefit to establishing this Golden-winged Warbler habitat is that it includes over 30 different varieties of nectar producing plants – some flowering in the spring, some in the summer, and some in the Fall to give the honeybees and other pollinators some much needed habitat to re-encourage them to stay around for servicing all the plants and trees in this range of mountains! As Bill Oliver reminds us,

**Habitat, Habitat, Have to Have a Habitat
Habitat, Habitat, Have to Have a Habitat
Habitat, Habitat, Have to Have a Habitat
You have to have a Habitat to carry on!**

**The ocean is a habitat, a very special habitat
It's where the deepest water's at
It's where the biggest mammal's at
It's where our future food is at
It keeps the atmosphere intact
The ocean is a habitat we depend on! (Chorus)**

**The forest is a habitat, a very special habitat
It's where the tallest trees are at
It's where a bear can scratch her back
(ch-ch-ch-ch-ch-ch-ch)
It keeps the ground from rolling back
Renews the oxygen, in fact
The forest is a habitat we depend on! (Chorus)**

**The river is a habitat, a very special habitat
It's where the freshest water's at
For people, fish, and muskrat
But when people dump their trash
Rivers take the biggest rap
The river is a habitat we depend on! (Chorus)**

**People are different than foxes and rabbits
Affect the whole world with their bad habits
Better to love it while we still have it
Or rat ta-tat-tat, our habitat's gone! (Chorus)**

So, just another reminder to change our habits into habitats!
Just as the Raspberries and Blueberries are teaching us the true nature and value of generosity and abundance, we once again come to each of you to humbly ask for your tax-deductible support for our environmental and educational efforts here at Long Branch. Your donations help us to help others and their families to reconnect with Nature. Many of you may know that Richard Louv, in his book *Last Child in the Woods*, coined the great phrase, “Nature Deficit Disorder.”

Please help Long Branch continue to be a cure for this all too prevalent modern condition – curing through berry picking, apple cidering, chestnut planting, learning to listen to birdsong and the running water music, and remembering to breathe in the great gift of oxygen from our forests here, the Lungs of the Planet, as the Indigenous know so well. Please be as generous as you can and we will be grateful for gifts of any amount.

We continue to invite each of you and your extended families to come for regular visits throughout the many seasons, picnicking, hiking the trails, trout fishing, and -- who could forget -- picking ripe berries, chestnuts, and apples!

In fact, any of you who are receiving this letter are automatically entitled to an Everbearing Heritage variety Red Raspberry plant and a Berry Picking Bucket when you come out for your next visit this Winter, Spring, Summer and/or Fall!

As Southern Ute Elder Grandma Bertha Grove always reminded us, all of our lives are infinite Giveaway Ceremonies!

Closing Words, adapted from the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address....

We have now arrived at the place where we end our words.
Of all the things we have named, it was not our intention to leave anyone
or anything out.

If someone or something was forgotten, we leave it to each individual to
send such greetings and thanks in their own way.

Now our minds are one.

"Three times, three times, three big time thank yous!
Now in our life, energy, divine consciousness,
we are like one."

-- Ted Williams, Tuscarora Elder

With Much Appreciation and Gratitude to Everyone,
Pat, Paul & Our Extended Long Branch Family!

For conservation and sustainability,

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***"To restore the land one must live and work in a place.
To work in a place is to work with others.***

***People who work together in a place become a community,
and a community, in time, grows a culture.***

To work on behalf of the wild is to restore culture."

-- Gary Snyder