

WHAT'S NEW ON EVERYTHING EARTH

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Guest Feature: Menako Rao

How to Start a (Wild)fire

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HOW TO START A (WILD)FIRE

The biggest U.S. wildfires of 2021 are raging in California, Oregon and Wyoming.

It's no mystery how these catastrophic blazes get started: Most logged forests look uncannily like purposely prepared [Scout](#) campfire sites.

Except on an enormous scale. ... and without the precautions:



STEP ONE: SCOUT

"Ladder" forest materials, small to large:

Tinder (dry leaves, grass, pine needles)

Kindling 1 (small branches) on top of tinder

Kindling 2 (small logs), standing or "teepee'd" to create the fire's "upsurge"

Fuel (larger logs)

Note: *Big logs have fire-resistant bark and will not burn without kindling stacked beneath them.*



Source: [ScoutLife](#): [Tips to Help You Build a Fire](#)

STEP ONE: TIMBER INDUSTRY

"Ladder" forest materials, small to large:

Tinder (dry forest floor)

Kindling 1 (branches slashed off the big trees and small bulldozed trees) on top of tinder

Kindling 2 (doghair thickets) left standing or "teepeed" encourages "upsurge"

Fuel (large trees and neighboring forests)

Note: *big trees are commercially VALUABLE! Drag the stripped trunks to your taxpayer-funded [logging road](#). (See [skidders in action](#) in USFS equipment catalog.)*



Logged Western Forest. Photo @lisabforce

STEP TWO: SCOUT

Never leave your fire-ready site unattended. (Scouts are too smart for this.)

Spark your fire and blow on it to encourage the blaze to move up into the kindling. Then add the large logs on top – a perfect scenario for a long-lasting hot campfire!

The above is a simplified summary of the complex science of fire ecology. This does not imply that the timber industry, the US Forest Service or the BLM purposely cause wildfires. Rather the "slash" and doghair thickets are discarded in the forest because they have no profit value. Combined with outdated forest management practices and climate change, you have the perfect conditions for destructive multi-state infernos.

See ["How Wildfire Came to the West"](#) for more information.

STEP TWO: TIMBER INDUSTRY

You have left your fire-ready site unattended.

Lightening will spark the fire and move it up into the kindling. Wind can now catch the embers from atop the thickets and blow them for miles around – a perfect scenario for a massive canopy fire!

GUEST FEATURE: DESIGN YOUR OWN NATURAL NATIVE GARDEN

by Menaka Rao, Landscape Architect

Most people's idea of a garden is usually one of a lush green lawn surrounded by neatly trimmed hedges. However, an unmanicured garden with native plants could be just as beautiful and enjoyable and more suitable for drought prone regions of California and Oregon.

Designing a native garden simply is to mimic nature. Draw inspiration for your planting scheme from plant combinations that grow naturally in the wild nearby. There are also wonderful resources that can help you choose plants native to your area. The [North American Native plant society](#) can direct you to the native plant society website of your state where you can find hundreds of recommendations local to your zip code.

Ideally, try to design your garden in layers just like it occurs in nature with an overstorey of trees, a middle layer of large shrubs followed by smaller shrubs and ground cover. However, if you are a gardener like me that doesn't like to be restricted to a narrow palette, consider mixing in plants with similar water and sunlight needs.

Click [here](#) for the full article and a list of Menaka's favorite drought-tolerant plants to use in the gardens she designs. Many are also pollinator-friendly... and all are gorgeous!



Sebastopol Garden with California natives Source: CA native plant society (<https://www.cnps.org/gardening/featured-garden-sebastopol-ca-4732>)



Menaka Rao is a landscape designer who grew up in India, and now lives in Fremont, California. She has a degree in landscape architecture from University of Melbourne, Australia. Her areas of interest include drought tolerant planting, dry gardens and edible landscapes. Contact her at rao.menaka@gmail.com.

VIDEO OF THE MONTH: RUDER INTUDE

This Month's video is just for Fun: [Ruder Intruder!](#)

In the United States alone, outdoor cats kill approximately **2.4 billion birds** every year. Please consider keeping cats indoors. If you provide lots of toys (check out the tunnel in the video!) for exercise and stimulation, your kitties will be happy and healthy and live longer lives.



RECIPE OF THE MONTH: EDIBLE BOUQUET

August is the perfect time to transform a beautiful bouquet into a delectable [pesto](#). There are many varieties of greens and nuts that you can substitute for the traditional basil and pine nuts. Whatever you choose, be sure to use organics – for the extraordinary fresh flavors as well as the health of the earth and your family.

TAKE 3 MINUTES TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Pandemic face masks are the “new” trash, and they are creating havoc with the world's oceans. [The Ocean Conservancy](#) reported collecting 107,000 items of personal protective equipment from beaches and waterways during just a few months in 2020. And that is the tip of the iceberg.

Tossing single-use masks into the trash is no guaranteed solution – trash blows from uncovered trash bins and landfills into storm drains, and eventually into rivers and out to sea.



PPE is Killing Wildlife. As this Gull Struggled, Mask Straps Wound Tiger.

Photo Source: [bbc.com](#)



Source: [Greenpeace.org.uk](#)

Disposable PPE items are made of plastics - persisting in the environment indefinitely, just like all the other plastic pollution is already choking rivers and oceans.

Please, ditch the plastic masks in favor of cloth ones. If you must use a single-use mask, be sure to snip the straps and put it in the bottom of your trash bin. And, no, they are not recyclable.

Stay tuned for September's “What's New on Everything Earth”. Meanwhile, check our [website](#) for weekly blog posts and updates including:

Grow Potatoes in a Bag: [Colorful Harvest!](#) (scroll to bottom of page)

[August Flowers](#) Spectacular

Watch a soothing [butterfly video](#)

We'd love to hear from you! Send us a message at [Contact Us](#).