

The Newsletter

👣 👣 *Go barefoot all over!* 👣 👣

WNGD Blooms For A Sixth Year

It seems to be working. Or *growing*, to make use of the obvious metaphor. The annual World Naked Gardening Day is now in its *sixth* year. The Body Freedom Collaborative's Daniel Johnson and Naturist Action Committee's Mark Storey wanted to nudge people into incorporating some fun, whimsical, and ecologically friendly nudity into their everyday lives.

Back in 2005, the pair crafted a project with a merry blend of goals. How might people be gently coaxed into giving nude living a try? What might nearly everyone enjoy doing naked? Swimming is the obvious first choice, but few have access to pools, rivers, lakes, or ocean shores for carefree skinny-dipping. Gardening! Just about everyone at some point or another likes to work with plants. Repotting house plants, harvesting backyard vegetable plots, arranging annual flower beds or perennial displays in the front yard, pruning fruit trees, raking leaves, pulling dandelions, volunteering at city park clean-ups, maintaining trails in nearby wilderness areas—there's some form of calming, life-affirming work with flora to enjoy for each of us. The idea behind WNGD is that many would find it enjoyable to do so clothes-free.



Sifting compost from a worm bin during an earlier WNGD.

WNGD began as an experiment designed to capture the attention of individuals, writers, photographers, and the media. Gardening naked is too interesting a topic to be ignored, once one hears of it. It's a

non-threatening activity having no political bent, and lends itself well to the common ribbing radio talk show hosts, newspaper reporters, and bloggers offer about the "danger" of pruning shears and thorny bushes. It

For employees and interns at Wisconsin's clothing-optional Rising Sun Farm, every day can be WNGD.

WNGD BLOOMS FOR A SIXTH YEAR, cont.

also germinates into more thoughtful discussions about how easily casual, non-sexualized nudity can be part of a pleasant, flourishing life. That's exactly the array of comment that WNGD has yielded these last six years.

Slated for the second Saturday of each May (a good day for gardeners in the northern hemisphere, if not always for outdoor nudity), WNGD is not so much an event as it is a phenomenon. WNGD urges people to practice the form of gardening they enjoy, but on this one day to try it nude. They can do so by themselves, or with family or friends. They might do so in their private back yard, indoors with potted plants, at a local nudist club during an organized grounds clean-up, or—if they are feeling bolder—in a more public setting to help beautify a city park or streetside garden. Weather, location, age, or shyness needn't keep people from participating, as anyone can give the wholesome practice of working in some fashion with Nature dressed as Nature intended.

WNGD encourages people to try being naked while relating to Nature, and—ideally—to *tell* someone about it. Participants can send notice of the enriching experience to garden club newsletters, newspapers, blogs, Internet groups, Facebook pages, tweets...the opportunities go on. As more people hear of this simple, natural, human activity, and how much more alive one feels working naked with Nature, the more others may give it a try. WNGD is thus an unabashed promotion of social nudity as part of a healthy, natural lifestyle.

The goals of WNGD involved an experiment in grassroots (there's



Michael Cooney

that metaphor again) activism. WNGD avoids political issues, is open to everyone, and costs nothing (maintaining the official WNGD website has been the only expense). The project is intended to be self-supporting, with no one particular group pushing it or claiming ownership. Groups like the Body Freedom Collaborative, The Naturist Society, and the Naturist Action Committee have regularly promoted WNGD, but not in terms of it being *their* project. Instead WNGD can be modified by an AANR-affiliated nudist club to promote a volunteer grounds clean-up, a beach or hot spring support group can pull invasive weeds, friends from a garden club can get together to spruce up one of their backyard gardens, or an individual living in an apartment building can sit at a dining room table by herself and repot a root-bound houseplant.

One “misfire” for WNGD is the too common misunderstanding that

it's an event that people can attend, an organized group of specific people, or a discussion for lurkers. Media attention has motivated the inquisitive to *WNGD.org*, and here people find not only a link to WNGD's sister Wiki site, but also an invitation to join a WNGD Yahoo group. Now numbering in the hundreds from around the world, some have approached the “group” thinking it a chat room of sorts, or a calendar of entertaining naked events. WNGD is not a group, however; it's a collective idea urging individuals and assemblies of friends to give naked gardening a try. The Yahoo “group” is simply one of many means by which people can share their experiences of naked gardening with others. It all goes back to the grassroots notion of breaking away from our computers and overly-clothed lives, and reminding ourselves of what it's like living naturally with Nature, even if only for an hour.

WNGD BLOOMS FOR A SIXTH YEAR, cont.

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The sixth annual World Naked Gardening Day is set for Saturday, May 8, 2010. If you've stumbled onto this April issue of *The Newsletter* by chance, and think all

this talk about nudity is a riotous hoot, continue to smile (naked folk shouldn't be taking themselves too seriously anyway). But while you're laughing—and while no

one's looking—try gardening naked for five minutes. You'll probably still be smiling, but for a different reason. Maybe you'll even want to tell someone about it. 🐾

N Trends

Nudity InAPPROPRIATE for Apple

Apple customers in 2009 could download a variety of apps containing nudity from the Apple Store. An app (or “application”) is one of any number of packages you can download into your computer, cellphone, or other piece of digital wizardry. An app designer might create a ring tone, game, or a fun little whirling dervish to help you justify purchasing yet *another* techno-toy. Some of these apps included images of naked and nearly naked people, in everything from soft porn to swim suits ads. Why actually enjoy social nudity with human friends when you can see it virtually on the three-inch screen of your iPhone?

Apple *does* encourage freedom of expression, all the while of course encouraging consumers to express themselves with an Apple product. A new one. Each year. But all that seems up for grabs in 2010, as Apple is courageously responding to a trickle of customer criticism. Apple's head of worldwide marketing Philip W. Schiller explained, “It came to the point where we were getting customer complaints from women who found the content getting too degrading and objectionable, as well as parents who were upset with what their kids were able to see.”

App designers and purchasers are expressing irritation internationally. Generating the most comment so far is Germany's Naked People project, in which Sebastian Kempa photographs ordinary people both clothed and nude. You then go to his app (or see www.naked-people.de), find the clothed image, place your cursor over the person, and watch as his or her clothes fade to reveal a fully natural human being. The artist says that clothes are a “second layer of skin,” which can either reveal or hide our true being.

Apple recently rejected Kempa's app, and when the artist resubmitted the app replacing naked people with those wearing undergarments, Apple still said no, claiming that “Applications may be rejected if they contain content or materials of any kind (text, graphics,

images, photographs, sounds, etc.) that in Apple's reasonable judgement may be found objectionable, for example, materials that may be considered obscene, pornographic, or defamatory.”

Reasonable? Right. According to one app designer who claims to have interviewed Apple on this, the new ban rejects apps containing images of men or women in bikinis, any showing of skin, anything sexually arousing (as deemed by Apple product managers, no doubt), or anything sexually suggestive. Apple seemed particularly concerned about an app called Wobble that lets people shake their iPhone to make images of women's breasts appear to jiggle. The horror!

Private companies like Apple can certainly decide what they want to sell or not, but they've set themselves up to be pretty much *the* outlet for many of these apps. If Apple is going to start getting irrationally skitterish about anything containing the body revealed in its full humanity, they'll need to backtrack considerably from any claim to valuing expression. 🐾

Nudity Sometimes Appropriate for Texting

A far too common news story these days tells of a teenager sending a nude image of herself to her boyfriend, who then—in mindless teenage fashion—places it on Facebook and forwards it to his buddies, who then post it on 20,000 websites. School officials catch wind of the damning photo, alert the police, whisk all youthful parties and their parents into a frenzy, and generally overreact like fools, hyperventilating about how the girl's future as an Apple marketing executive is now ruined. The boys who received and forwarded the ill-conceived image should, of course, be tried as adults, found guilty of *some* sort of sex crime, jailed, and registered as a sex offenders.

The trend toward lunacy in the USA is real. Still, there is a ray of hope from the courts. *The New York Times* reported the following on March 17. “In the first federal appeals court opinion dealing with “sexting”—the transmission of sexually explicit photographs by cellphone—a three-judge panel of the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit ruled Wednesday that parents could block the prosecution of their children on child pornography charges for appearing in photographs found on some classmates’ cellphones.”

District Attorney George Skumanick, Jr. threatened to prosecute students in Tunkannock, Pennsylvania for “possession and distribution of child pornography” because they had nude photos of fellow female students (some being minors) on their cellphones. Skumanick threatened to prosecute those photographed, too. He informed the parents of the students and offered the students a deal. They could avoid prosecution by participating in an “after-school program” in which each student would write an essay explaining (as *The New York Times* reported) “why they were there, what they had done, and why it was wrong.”

Three of the families with girls in the images refused to participate, and sued to block prosecution. After initially losing in court, the parents appealed the decision. The appellate court ruled in their favor, recognizing the parents’ right to decide what is appropriate for their children.

Naturist Action Committee Executive Director Bob Morton explains the relevance to naturists: “Although Skumanick played a principal role in the events that led to the lawsuit, he did not argue the appeal before the judicial panel. Skumanick had been defeated in his bid for reelection, and it was Michael J. Donohue (attorney for Skumanick’s successor, District Attorney Jeff Mitchell) who argued the case. That’s significant for naturists because it shows that the commitment to the paternalistic position of the State is institutional. It transcends the ranting of an individual wing nut who is no longer in public office.”

The positive side of the appeal, Morton believes, is that it may prove important for naturist parents facing paternalistic prosecutors trying to usurp parental

authority by denying them the right to raise their children in naturist environments. Alerting the NAC board of directors to the case, Morton said, “This ruling from the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit deals with a case in Pennsylvania that we’ve discussed previously [in a NAC teleconference], and for that reason it’s of interest. But I believe the ruling contains a great deal *more* for us to like. Although it doesn’t resolve the issue completely, there’s much we can use from the text.”

NAC board member Morley Schloss agreed, saying, “The most important statement [in the decision] deals with the parents’ right to raise a child as they see fit, while a school has a secondary responsibility, and law enforcers have no say. This should help us in nudity cases pertaining to children.” Let’s hope so. 🐾



George Skumanick, Jr.

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