

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)



June 21, 2016

The Ecological Benefits of Shade-grown Coffee



A shaded-coffee farm. PC: Ecotropics

Ah, coffee. That steamy mug of comfort that urges many of us out of bed every morning. For true coffee lovers, it's much more than just a caffeine source - it's a life enhancer. So what could possibly make it even more satisfying to consume this liquid love? Perhaps knowing that its production benefits our planet's ecological health and contributes to the reversal of climate change.

Events

**Climate
Mobilization
Teach-In, Music**



PC: Pinterest

Not all coffee is created equal. Traditionally, all coffee was grown in the shade of nitrogen-fixing trees, contributing to healthy ecosystems in some of the largest biodiversity hotspots in the world. But in the early 1970s, new hybrid varieties of coffee were developed; their smaller beans were easier to harvest and allowed for higher yields. These varieties grew best in direct sunlight.

Like many other mass-produced consumables, conventional coffee farms often involve [considerable environmental damage](#): creating space for a vast monoculture entails cutting down millions of native trees, and thus destroying the habitat of endemic species. Now, however, more consumers are demanding organic shade-grown coffee: in the U.S., the market for such beans is currently about \$30 million.



A local co-op worker harvests wild coffee in Ethiopia. PC: Indrias Getachew

Coffee is an evergreen shrub that [captures and stores atmospheric carbon](#). Shade-grown coffee thrives

and Potluck

When: 3 p.m. on Sunday, July 10, 2016.

Where: Community Church of Boston, 565 Boylston St, Copley Square, Boston, MA

Biodiversity for a Livable Climate has taken a key role with the Boston-area chapter of The Climate Mobilization, a push to raise climate efforts to an emergency footing. With presentations and performances from local faith leaders, environmental activists, artists and musicians, it's a great opportunity to learn more about the most pressing issue of our time - while enjoying good food, music, and company!

For up-to-date info on our events

[Visit our Website](#)

[Join our Meetup Group](#)

Stay Connected



Donate



About BLC

without chemical fertilizers, and crop diversity protects plants from pests and invasive species, reducing the need for pesticides and herbicides. Additionally, native birds naturally control insect populations. Shade-grown farms support around 150 different species of migratory birds, compared to the 20 to 50 species on non-shaded farms. A study at Utrecht University in the Netherlands [compared shaded and conventional coffee farms](#) and found higher numbers of butterflies and more species richness in areas of shade-grown coffee.

During the COP21 Paris Climate talks in 2015, [a side session at the Global Landscapes Forum](#) focused on the issue of coffee farming and climate change. The coffee plant is extremely sensitive to changes in precipitation and temperature, so global climate change [poses a major threat](#) to the international coffee industry. Yet that industry holds great potential to help reverse climate change by shifting its practices away from conventional, monoculture farms and increasing the scale of its shade-grown operations. Compared to conventional farms, shaded organic coffee farms sequester more than twice the amount of carbon per acre. They also contribute to [micro-climate control](#) because the air is cooler and more humid in the surrounding region.

Through education, policy and outreach, our mission is to promote the power of the natural world to stabilize the climate and to restore biodiversity to ecosystems worldwide. Collaborating with organizations around the globe, we advocate for the restoration of soil, and of grassland, forest, wetland, coastal and ocean ecosystems-along with the associated carbon, water and nutrient cycles-to draw down excess atmospheric greenhouse gases, cool the biosphere, and reverse global warming, for the benefit of all people and all life on earth.

Learn more about our ongoing projects, upcoming events and find additional information and resources at bio4climate.org.

INFOGRAPHIC:
SHADE-GROWN COFFEE



Shade-grown coffee supports healthy ecosystems. PC: Conservation.org

People around the world consume a lot of coffee: 24.6 million kilos of the stuff each day, according to the International Coffee Organization. Because of this high demand, the coffee industry has enormous influence over the way other commodity crops are

produced. As the challenges brought by a changing climate intensify, coffee farmers who practice sustainable growing practices, such as shade-growing, will be in the best position to cope. In buying shade-grown coffee, consumers signal to the industry that they are aware of the ecological benefits and want to support these sustainable farming practices. Can you imagine a better excuse to pour that second cup in the morning?

To find shade-grown coffee, check out these resources*:

<http://www.coffeehabitat.com/certification-guide/>

<http://modernfarmer.com/2015/09/how-to-buy-ethical-coffee/>

http://eartheasy.com/eat_shadegrown_coffee.htm#b

**With some exceptions, the country of origin is an indicator. Coffee produced in El Salvador, Peru, Panama, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Sumatra, New Guinea and Ethiopia is primarily shade-grown. Coffees from Colombia, Brazil and Costa Rica are typically "sun" coffees.*

From our April 30 Conference: Presentation on Biodiversity in the Gulf of Maine



Biodiversity Possibilities in the Gulf of Maine

Restoration Ecologist Jim Laurie's students share their insights about the ecology in the Gulf of Maine ecosystem.

The Food is Free Project



The Food Is Free Project in Austin, Texas

This community-building nonprofit uses repurposed resources to build free, low-maintenance gardens and grow organic food to be shared and enjoyed by neighbors.

Keeping your Garden Pollinator-friendly



A pollinator-friendly garden. PC: Xerces

Environmental writer, Kathy Westra, [reminds us to think about pollinators](#) when devising a garden. Planting more native species is always a great decision!