

# Buddha Root Farm Summer Retreat

## 佛根地夏季打七

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The annual retreat at Buddha Root Farm (BRF) was resumed this summer (July 10 - July 17, 2022) after a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic. On Buddha Root Farm's new website, it begins with three questions, "In the midst of unease and anxiety, where can we find a reliable refuge? How can we create an inner sanctuary capable of withstanding external instabilities? And how can we expand this sanctuary of the heart to include our families, friends, and ultimately, all living beings?" For many returning BRF retreatants, coming to Buddha Root Farm certainly helps address all those three questions.

During the two-year hiatus, nature took over Buddha Root Farm. Tall grass and blackberry bushes blanketed the entire land. Small wild creatures found their sweet homes in the Half Can—the main building at BRF that includes a kitchen, a meeting, working, and dining area, a small lodging space for guests, and storage. A work crew of sixteen volunteers arrived a week early, weed wacked and cleaned. During the morning and evening check-ins each day, the work crew expressed their gratitude and joy to work together and prepare the land for the retreat.

因新冠疫情而中斷兩年後，佛根地一年一度的打七活動，終於在2022年夏天（7月10日至7月17日）恢復舉辦。在佛根地的全新網站上，以三個問題開頭：「在不安和焦慮中，我們在哪裡可以找到可靠的皈依處？我們如何才能創造一個能夠抵禦外部不穩定的心靈庇護所？我們如何才能將這個心靈庇護所擴大到涵蓋我們的家人、朋友、最終包括所有的眾生？」對於許多重返佛根地打七的人而言，來到佛根地，肯定有助於解答這三個問題。

在兩年的停辦期間，佛根地充滿了大自然的野趣。高高的草叢和黑莓灌木覆蓋了整片土地。小型野生動物在佛根地的主要建築物中，找到了牠們甜蜜的家——佛根地的主要建築物包括廚房、會議、工作和用餐區、客人使用的小型住宿空間和儲藏室。由16名義務人員組成的工作團隊提前一星期到達，負責除草和清洗。每天早晚

Within a week, they transformed the untamed wilderness back to a true “sanctuary of the heart” before another thirty plus participants arrived for the Dharma session.

To prevent possible community spread of COVID, the Half Can was not utilized as it was pre-pandemic and other indoor activities were limited to a minimum. Pre-arrival PCR tests, frequent antigen tests, and mid-retreat PCR tests were conducted for all participants. Outdoor tents were set up for dining. The daily Dharma sessions were held in the newly set up “Outdoor Chan Hall,” which consisted of two large tents, two medium tents, and two small tents set in front of the BRF’s Chan Hall on the hill. Everyone willingly observed the COVID protocols for community safety and there were no Covid cases during the retreat.

Lack of Internet access at Buddha Root Farm granted everyone a break from digital screens. Camping in the forest, waking up to myriad birds’ chirping, watching deer walking by calmly, hearing the sound of the stream...all these have become luxuries for most modern people. At Buddha Root Farm, participants had the opportunity to connect with nature outside and the nature within.

The community practice this year was reciting Guanyin Bodhisattva’s name and studying the Longer *Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra* or *Infinite Life Sutra* with Doug Powers, a senior teacher at Dharma Realm Buddhist University (DRBU). Reciting Guanyin’s name is a method that has been practiced for thousands of years. It opens the door to the refuge within. As Doug put it, through reciting and connecting to Guanyin Bodhisattva’s spirit of great compassion, we are led toward the infinite light of Amitabha Buddha and the pure land within.

Dharma Masters from Berkeley Buddhist Monastery (BBM) led the daily sessions. Each day began with the morning ceremony, meditation, morning Guanyin recitation, followed by the meal offering and lunch, and then community service. After lunch break, the afternoon Guanyin recitation was followed by the afternoon Dharma discussion or meditation (participants could choose either). After dinner, the evening ceremony was followed by the Dharma talk by Doug. Each day ended with the Transference of Merit. On the first day, each person wrote two plaques, on which names were written to be put up on either a “long life” board or a

簽到時，工作人員都表示感謝和高興，他們一起工作，為今年打七清理場地。一周之內，在另外三十多人抵達要開始打七之前，工作人員已將原野大地清理成真正的「心靈聖地」。

為防疫起見，不能再像疫情前那樣，使用佛根地的主要建築物；其他室內活動也減到最少。所有參加打七的人，在到達前都要先作新冠核酸檢測，打七期間經常快篩、期中還要再次核酸檢測。山坡上的禪堂前，搭建了新設立的「戶外禪堂」，由兩個大帳篷、兩個中帳篷和兩個小帳篷組成，大家就在這裡打七。另外還有帳篷作為戶外用餐區。每個人都願意遵守防疫規定，以保障整體的安全。這次打七期間，沒有任何確診病例。

佛根地沒有網路，讓每個人都可以遠離電子屏幕。在森林裡露營，在萬鳥爭鳴聲中醒來，看著鹿從容地走過，聽著淙淙溪水聲……這一切已成為大多數現代人難以企及的奢侈品。然而在佛根地，來打七的人，都有機會與外在的自然以及內在的自性連在一起。

今年打七共修的功課是持誦觀世音菩薩聖號，並與法界佛教大學的資深老師包果勒居士，共同研習長版《阿彌陀經》，即《無量壽經》。持誦觀音菩薩聖號，是流傳幾千年的法門。它開啟了通往內心皈依之門。正如包果勒所說，藉由念誦和連接觀世音菩薩的大悲精神，引導我們通往阿彌陀佛的無量光和內心的淨土中。

來自柏克萊佛寺的法師主持每日法會。每天從早課、打坐、上午持誦觀音聖號開始，然後是午供和午齋，接著出坡。下午的觀音念誦之後是佛法討論或打坐（打七者可以二選一）。用過晚餐，晚課之後是果勒居士結法緣演講。每一天都以功德迴向圓滿。第一天，每個人各寫兩張牌位，上面寫著名字，放在「延生」板或「往生」板上，以便將大家共修的功德迴向，並表達每個人各自的深心關切。在晚間課上，果勒居士分享了他在佛根地一如既往地感

“rebirth” board as a way to express each person’s prayers through community practice and to honor what they deeply care about. In the evening class, Doug shared about the strong presence of the founding teacher Venerable Master Hsuan Hua that he always felt at Buddha Root Farm.

As each day went by, the group chanting of Guanyin’s name became increasingly synchronized, and the connections among retreatants grew stronger. The kitchen crew’s laughter frequently flew out of the kitchen. Their joyous working spirit made the dishes at the retreat not only delicious, but also delightful: the heart-shaped pancakes, freshly made buns, mango smoothie, special homemade pan-fried bread, and all kinds of creative vegetarian dishes. What a cheery scene to see mothers and daughters working and laughing side by side! Good and warm meals every day truly made the participants feel home in the “wilderness.” Through community service, new connections were formed and old relationships were renewed and deepened.

On the final day, everyone took part in taking down the tents, putting away the tarps, cleaning, and packing. On the very last night of the retreat, under the night sky (the tents had been taken down), participants sat in a circle outside and shared their roses (highlights), buds (growth), and thorns (challenges) during the retreat. A turtle was placed in the center of the circle to honor the turtle spirit on this sacred land and beings who had lived here way before we came.

One participant shared that the three important things that had kept bringing her back to Buddha Root Farm year after year were nature, Dharma, and friendships. A participant who was accustomed to a tidy and clean home environment began to appreciate the rustic way of living in nature. Another participant shared in tears that, by reciting Guanyin’s name, she realized how important it was for her to regard all beings she meets as equal. Some participants began to feel compassion for mosquitos. Merit was also dedicated to all beings such as ants, spiders, and insects that had been unintentionally harmed during the retreat.

Everyone who went to Buddha Root Farm this year has returned home safely. But the individual and collective memories at Buddha Root Farm will continue to bond everyone for years or even generations to come. The true magic of Buddha Root Farm lies in the strengthened community practice, and how the serene and refreshing natural setting outside brings forth our originally pristine nature within. ☸

受到，開山祖師宣公上人和我們同在的那份強大存在感。

隨著時間一天天過去，觀音聖號的持誦聲越來越整齊，打七者之間也越來越契合。廚房不時傳出工作人員的笑聲。他們歡樂的工作精神，讓這次打七期間的菜餚不僅美味，而且令人愉悅：心形烙餅、新鮮出爐的包子、芒果冰沙、特別的自製煎麵包，以及各種創意素菜。看到母女倆並肩工作歡笑的情景，多麼開心啊！每天吃得好又熱乎的飯菜，讓打七者在原野中找到「家」的感覺。在出坡工作中，認識了新佛友，老交情則得以更新深化。

最後一天，大家一起拆帳篷、收油布、打掃衛生、收拾行李。在打七的最後一晚，帳篷已拆除，夜空下，大家在室外席地圍坐，分享打七期間的玫瑰（亮點）、花蕾（成長）和荊棘（挑戰）。圓圈的中心放置一隻烏龜，以紀念這片聖地裡的龜靈，和很久以前住在這裡的眾生。

一位打七者分享說，讓她年復一年回到佛根地的三個重要原因是：大自然、佛法、和友誼。一位習慣整潔乾淨家居環境的打七者，開始珍惜生活在大自然中的鄉野生活方式。另一位打七者含淚說，念誦觀音名號，讓她明白了平等對待所有眾生的重要性。一些打七者開始對蚊子產生慈悲心；功德也迴向給所有在打七期間，受到意外傷害的眾生，例如螞蟻、蜘蛛和昆蟲。

今年去佛根地打七的人都已平安返家。但佛根地的個別和集體記憶，會繼續將每個人聯繫在一起多年，乃至未來的世代。佛根地的真正魅力在於加強共修，以及外在寧靜清新的自然環境，帶出我們本有的自性。☸