



[About Us](#)

[STORE](#)

[About Greenhouse](#)

[New Space](#)

[Support Green Maps](#)

[Board & Advisors](#)

[Staff](#)

[Partners](#)

[Supporters](#)

[Guestbook](#)

[Our History](#)

[What People Say](#)

[Credits & Thanks](#)

[Copyright Info](#)

Green Maps: We Chart the Earth

Written for the Summer 2001 issue of *Whole Earth Review*
Guest edited by Mr. Viridian Green, *Bruce Sterling*.

As I write this in mid-April 2001, our millionth Green Map is poised to roll off the presses, globally speaking. It's the newest one from NYC, LoMap, the Lower Manhattan Youth Green Map, a pilot project that involves youth authors and adult designers. Though I was aware of the local-global potential of the Green Map strategy from the beginning, I have to say I'm amazed by the flexibility and the decentralized nature of this eco-cultural vehicle.

It's not just the Web that makes Green Map System work: it's fueled by the love of home. As an artist/designer, activist/ web-weaver, New Yorker/citizen of the world, I'm proud to see the whole far exceed my original vision. Our global network now includes about 135 projects of all sizes and scales in 35 countries, each of which contributes to the System's ongoing evolution and shared resources.

Each Green Map is defined, researched and created under local leadership. Whether a city-wide map produced by environmental professionals, a grassroots community-based effort covering a bioregion or a neighborhood-scale Green Map investigated and designed by young people, each displays a locally-determined context, theme and goals. Each of the 60 Green Maps completed to date is very different in appearance and scope - but they are all friendly, resource-efficient reference guides that use our shared set of globally designed icons to highlight the naturally and culturally significant places their makers want recognized, revitalized and sustained. Whether published on line or on paper (or both!) each Green Map can reach thousands of people.

The Green Map System connects the web-of-life and the info-web. Local knowledge informs the global whole. Our technology is modest, but our creative energy is vast.

Being a Green Mapmaker is an arduous yet exhilarating role. Green Maps are powerful, compressed portraits of place, filled with meaning and motivation. They're not perfect: sometimes we neglect end-users' needs, or we lean too hard on whiz-bang technology, and sure, many of us are first-time cartographers. But every Green Map is a fresh perspective on daily experiences that lead to a greener tomorrow. Green Maps inspire personal involvement and community pride in local assets. They encourage discovery of the nature that's nearby, and build respect for the special sites that shape our sense of place. They impact residents as they commute, dine, shop, study, recreate and vote, and through visitors, Green Maps transfer successful initiatives from city-to-city. They advocate for actions and foster volunteerism through the efforts of a web-based medley of environmentalists, designers, educators, students of all ages, activists, city agencies, tourism boards and geographers.

This world is a beautiful place. Let's work together to create more Green Maps and help our homes become more sustainable, culturally enriched places to thrive.

Timeline

March 1992	Green Apple Map of NYC published
March 1995	Launch of global Green Map System
April 1996	Green Map Icons made available

September 1997	GMS projects on every continent
March 1998	Youth GMS program launched
April 2000	Non-profit status granted
April 2001	One Million printed!



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