

LIVING BRIDGES



The living bridges of Cherrapunji, India are part of a pedestrian network that criss-crosses the fast flowing mountain streams and rivers of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. The bridges are made from the roots of the *Ficus elastica* tree, a species of rubber tree that thrives in the region. This tree produces a series of strong secondary roots that allow it to comfortably perch atop boulders along riverbanks or even in the middle of rivers themselves. In order to make the tree's roots grow in the right direction the local people form a basic bridge frame and use betel nut trunks, sliced down the middle and hollowed out, to create a root-guidance systems. The roots of the rubber tree, prevented from fanning out by the betel nut trunks, grow straight out and once they reach the other side of the river are allowed to take root in the soil. Given enough time, approximately 10-15 years before the bridge is fully functional, a living bridge is produced. The number of bridges is ever-growing and within the network some are over a hundred feet long and 500 years old. [Atlas Obscura's Wonderful Post](#)

I was first aware of this wonderful sustainable network of bridges watching a series called "Planet Human". The tree, *Ficus elastica* is also known as the strangler fig. The abovementioned area holds the world's record for rainfall in one year – 1,000 inches!

Wally Ewalt is recovering from knee replacement surgery. Wilson is undergoing a series of treatment as a follow-up to his surgery, a program of short chemotherapy followed with radiation. We send them and their families, all of our best wishes for their complete and rapid recovery!

Our son, William Judson got married to Miller Jefferson on a windy, cold October 29th at Bald Head Island in front of Old Baldy. Nell is once again travelling in Viet Nam. From the one email, it sounds wonderful.

Reminder: November/December meetings are combined with our traditional decorating of the Square for Christmas. Jim has asked that we arrive at **10:00 a.m. on Thursday, December 1st. We'll gather in the Courthouse basement.** This kicks off the holiday season. You will only get a reminder to remove the decorations for our January meeting!

Year's end often brings reflection on life's journeys. Reading and seeing how the people in Cherrapunji adapted to their environment was an "ah-ha moment" for me. It suggested to me, that we too are bridges for our community. I just hope that we reach others that will keep the good work going. While this has not happened as rapidly as I had hoped, our commitment and dedication to our county's gardens has led to a better looking county seat. I hope you too share in my pride on a job well done. Visitors to the gardens have increased and while most of them are non-natives to Caswell, they seem delighted with the gardens. Walkers are back on the trail of the arboretum and lunching on the benches. On behalf of Caswell County, thank you CHC!

*Best Wishes for a Happy, Safe, and Healthy Holiday
Season and 2012!*