



Photography by [Hilary Nichols](#)

clayton horton



by [deborah crooks](#)

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the next level of service

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[San Francisco](#) yoga teacher Clayton Horton's [Greenpath Studio](#) on Lombard Street has been a showcase of what it means to maintain a sustainable and joyful practice since it opened in 2001. Offering [teacher trainings](#), special workshops, weekly *kirtans* and a host of daily classes, Greenpath reflects Clayton's commitment both to *Mysore*-style *Ashtanga* and to fostering sustainable communities.

This year, Clayton has taken his yoga aesthetic to Yoga Tree Valencia, where he is incorporating *Mysore*-style yoga into that studio's weekly schedule while maintaining the Greenpath roster. The soft-spoken Oklahoma native decided that teaching *Mysore* classes at Yoga Tree was the "next level of service."

"I wanted to expand my community and be more accessible," he said, over coffee after teaching a crowded studio of *Mysore* practitioners during his first week at Yoga Tree's Mission District location. A musician and founding board member of the Green Yoga Association, Clayton possesses a quiet manner that belies an activist streak, which finds him spreading the *Ashtanga* teachings both locally and globally virtually nonstop.

In the last few years, Clayton has put together several San Francisco Yoga Community events such as the Bhakti Yoga Sunsplash. "I like to promote events and help inspire consciousness and community," said Clayton. His efforts are fueled by

his “sense of creativity and relationship with my own *dharma* that wants to share what I know to be true and fun.”

Clayton began studying yoga 18 years ago, not long after he came to the West Coast, taking his first classes in 1987 at the Walt Baptiste Center of Yoga in San Francisco. In 1996, at a juice bar in Fairfax, he met the Greensufi, who became his mentor and teacher. “He’s been a constant source of support and inspiration,” said Clayton. “It’s not dogma or religion.”

“I came to San Francisco excited and anticipating something as significant as the summer of love,” he remembered, alluding to the rock and roll counterculture movement of the ‘60s. “What I have found myself involved in is the Green Yoga Movement, a yoga community that is evolving with the environmental movement. I never expected it, it just kind of happened.” Today, Greenpath Yoga Studio is acknowledged as a “green studio” by the Green Yoga Association’s Green Studio Pilot Program, leading the way for studios around the country to protect the health of the planet.

Clayton recalls that early on, before teaching yoga, “I had an aptitude for the practice. Several years later I started asking ‘what am I doing? How can I make a difference in the world?’” It follows that Clayton’s *Mysore* room is at once traditional and noteworthy for its democratic feel. Employing a rotating crew of nine assistants who have taken his *Ashtanga* training programs, the room is grounded in practice. “Having a team is important,” says Clayton. “Doing this alone can be exhausting. A lot is going on in a *Mysore* class and I want my assistants to grow.”

Since beginning his own study and practice of *Ashtanga*, Clayton has traveled to India five times to practice at the Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute at the feet of Sri K. Pattabhi Jois. In 2003 he received the blessing of becoming an Authorized *Ashtanga* Teacher from Jois. Clayton recently returned from a teaching tour of Asia with stops in the Philippines, Tokyo and Hong Kong. He also participates in an annual yoga conference in Brazil. “Seeing different cultures and communicating without words has taught me how to be with people.”

“It’s been a long road from a beginning teacher to who I am now,” he continued. “I still view myself as a young teacher, but I have had several years of getting my ego and personality out the way and standing in the fire to come into more of a place of presence and compassion.”

The result is a committed teaching schedule: hosting weekly *kirtan* chanting along with David Lurey, the assistant director of Greenpath; playing an instrumental role in launching the Green Yoga Association; and now spearheading “Teenpath Yoga” to help direct students to an after-school yoga program through scholarship and sponsors.

Despite his busy global and Bay Area teaching schedule, Clayton hasn’t forgotten his Midwestern roots. On his 40th birthday, he traveled back to his hometown of Tulsa, Oklahoma to lead a class, 20 years after he first came to the Bay Area.

“If you’re doing your practice, you learn to be present and open your heart,” Clayton noted. “Judgment and confusion falls away and compassion arises as you begin to see yourself in others.”

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