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COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

PERMACULTURE

Social Sustainability

The Sharing Gardens

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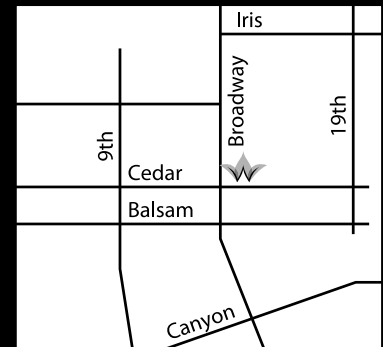
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Stacking Chickens
 Chickens step into many roles in permacultural communities. Here, they greet back porch visitors at the Possibility Alliance Sanctuary, La Plata, Missouri, on a crisp March day.



Chris Roth

COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

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LETTERS



Right Left Out

I'd like to add a footnote to Laird Schaub's statement in the fall issue of COMMUNITIES (#152) that politically, American communitarians are "all bracketed on the Left end of the spectrum." I think that's probably the case for the FIC's core constituency, mainly secular and inclusive spiritual communities, but the communities movement is a lot larger than FIC-member communities.

The US has a great many religious communities that can only be classified as socially and politically conservative. The fundamentalist (usually polygamous) Latter Day Saint communities have an estimated 30,000 to 50,000 members and are politically solidly conservative. The Hutterites, numbering around 50,000 in North America, largely don't vote, but are socially conservative (Canadian Hutterites issued an official statement opposing gay marriage a few years ago). Many other Christian communities are solidly conservative, socially and politically, as well. The Move of the Spirit communities, for example, are solidly on the far Right and have over 1,000 members in dozens of communal enclaves. There are also right-wing secular communities, such as the survivalist and/or racist communal villages.

American intentional communities are truly diverse in outlook, and they have no

universally common features other than the fact that the members live together. Some are Left, some Right, some apolitical, and some don't want to say. My two cents' worth, anyway.

Tim Miller
Lawrence, Kansas

Laird Schaub responds: Tim is right to point out that the political breadth of all the groups that legitimately fit under the tent of "intentional communities" is far broader than I stated in my Publisher's Note. What I should have said was that the communities that are actively engaged with FIC and that are committed to creating models of a more cooperative culture are solidly progressive in their politics.

Missing: Writers from Mars

I have really enjoyed reading the Intimacy issue (#151)—just wonder if it can be helped that so many writers and contributors are female. I like a balance, especially when it can demythologize the cultural prejudice that people from Mars are ignorant, dense, and unaware when it comes to emotional intelligence and sensitivity.

Rich Koster
Fort Thomas, Kentucky

On Diversity

The concept of intentional communities has recently become a reality in my life that I find really thrilling. Before now, all I ever knew of intentional communities were communes and the bizarre stories that surround them in the media: cults, Waco, guns, strange sex practices, Helter Skelter. With so much negative and often misleading information about ICs already in the mainstream, I was excited to stumble across your magazine and immediately subscribed.

My first issue is the "Intimacy" one and it's been a great read so far that I keep returning to over and over. One thing, however, has really stood out for me: the lack of anyone represented outside of

Caucasian people. Granted, there are a few ads that show a dark-skinned person standing amidst a crowd of White people, but that seems to be it. I'm curious: are there any intentional communities that are integrated or should I believe that most ICs, at least the ones that have made it into your magazine, are predominantly owned, operated, and filled by Caucasian people?

My thoughts about community, especially "intentional" communities that are striving to live in a more natural, gentle, open, and loving way on earth, are that they should represent a breaking down of the boundaries that keep us all separate; race, gender, economics, and politics

seeming to be some of the biggest. So, when I read through your magazine, and see almost no representation of any race other than Caucasians, it feels very disheartening. Although I'm Black, I would have loved to see any other brown-skinned (or olive-skinned, or yellow-skinned, or red-skinned) people represented somewhere other than a few ads for Twin Oaks (one of which was just a drawing).

Please understand that I'm in no way accusing you or your publication of being racist or any other "ist" that has become so popular in mainstream jargon. What I am suggesting is that there are plenty of people who read your maga-

zine, myself included, who would love to see more reflections of themselves in your pictures and art. While it won't stop me from reading your magazine, or believing in the possibilities for ICs, it's just something that would make the experience of your magazine all the more pleasurable.

I appreciate your consideration and time.

Sincerely,

Darvin L. Martin

via email

Editor's Note: Thank you for your very timely observations! As it happens, our Summer 2012 issue will focus on Diversity.

We welcome reader feedback on the articles in each issue, as well as letters of more general interest. Please send your comments to editor@ic.org or COMMUNITIES, 81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter OR 97431. Your letters may be edited or shortened. Thank you!

FIC NEWS

Communal Studies Association Honors COMMUNITIES



Connie Pitzer

On October 1, 2011, at the banquet concluding the Communal Studies Association's annual meeting (held this year at the historic Shaker Village at South Union, Auburn, Kentucky), COMMUNITIES magazine received a big, and welcome, surprise: the CSA's Donald E. Pitzer Distinguished Service Award.

Named in honor of Dr. Donald E. Pitzer, who has served the Communal Studies Association over the years as founder, board member, president, and executive director, the award recognizes "those...who have contributed greatly to the organization's work." COMMUNITIES joins 14 previ-

ous recipients—including the Fellowship for Intentional Community itself, which received the award back in 1997. (To find out more about the CSA, visit www.communalstudies.org.)

FIC Board members Deborah Altus and Harvey Baker were on hand to accept the award.

Thank you to everyone at the Communal Studies Association for this vote of confidence and boost to our spirits!

In the week following the award ceremony, we received many messages of congratulation, including this one, from the award's namesake himself:

Dear Chris,

Congratulations on COMMUNITIES magazines' well-deserved receipt of the 2011 Distinguished Service Award from the Communal Studies Association! Since its inception, COMMUNITIES has been the most consistent and informative networking organ for the modern communitarian movement. You and all who have edited and contributed to its incisive content can be rightly proud. I congratulate you, Laird Schaub, and all who

have faithfully held COMMUNITIES up as the standard voice in this most important field of human endeavor. You have treated truthfully and critically subjects of vital importance to the very survival of social life and civilized society. In many ways the world has already taken notice and begun to apply the trail of communal evidence you reveal in every issue. I wish you a strong second wind for doubling the years COMMUNITIES has served the needs of communal groups and the broader world so well.

It was my privilege to be at the CSA awards ceremony last Saturday. I am attaching a photo of Harvey Baker, Deborah Altus, and me with the wooden plaque that was made at the Amana Colonies in Iowa and engraved beautifully by laser.

I have quoted you, Laird, and others in my recent addresses and publications, and send you my personal congratulations and best wishes.

Don Pitzer

Professor Emeritus of History
Director Emeritus, Center for
Communal Studies
University of Southern Indiana, Evansville

COMMUNITIES Editorial Policy

COMMUNITIES is a forum for exploring intentional communities, cooperative living, and ways our readers can bring a sense of community into their daily lives. Contributors include people who live or have lived in community, and anyone with insights relevant to cooperative living or shared projects.

Through fact, fiction, and opinion, we offer fresh ideas about how to live and work cooperatively, how to solve problems peacefully, and how individual lives can be enhanced by living purposefully with others. We seek contributions that profile community living and why people choose it, descriptions of what's difficult and what works well, news about existing and forming communities, or articles that illuminate community experiences—past and present—offering insights into mainstream cultural issues. We also seek articles about cooperative ventures of all sorts—in workplaces, in neighborhoods, among people sharing common interests—and about “creating community where you are.”

We do not intend to promote one kind of group over another, and take no official position on a community's economic structure, political agenda, spiritual beliefs, environmental issues, or decision-making style. As long as submitted articles are related thematically to community living and/or cooperation, we will consider them for publication. However, we do not publish articles that 1) advocate violent practices, or 2) advocate that a community interfere with its members' right to leave.

Our aim is to be as balanced in our reporting as possible, and whenever we print an article critical of a particular community, we invite that community to respond with its own perspective.

Submissions Policy

To submit an article, please first request Writers' Guidelines: COMMUNITIES, RR 1 Box 156, Rutledge MO 63563-9720; 660-883-5545; editor@ic.org. To obtain Photo Guidelines, email: layout@ic.org. Both are also available online at communities.ic.org.

Advertising Policy

We accept paid advertising in COMMUNITIES because our mission is to provide our readers with helpful and inspiring information—and because advertising revenues help pay the bills.

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If you experience a problem with an advertisement or listing, we invite you to call this to our attention and we'll look into it. Our first priority in such instances is to make a good-faith attempt to resolve any differences by working directly with the advertiser/listener and complainant. If, as someone raising a concern, you are not willing to attempt this, we cannot promise that any action will be taken.

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What is an “Intentional Community”?

An “intentional community” is a group of people who have chosen to live or work together in pursuit of a common ideal or vision. Most, though not all, share land or housing. Intentional communities come in all shapes and sizes, and display amazing diversity in their common values, which may be social, economic, spiritual, political, and/or ecological. Some are rural; some urban. Some live all in a single residence; some in separate households. Some raise children; some don't. Some are secular, some are spiritually based; others are both. For all their variety, though, the communities featured in our magazine hold a common commitment to living cooperatively, to solving problems nonviolently, and to sharing their experiences with others.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE BY LAIRD SCHAUB

Changeaculture

Why Chinese Garlic in Iowa Is Not a Good Sign

There's a lot of attention these days on the concept of “permaculture”—the theme for this issue—but the term is somewhat misleading. It's not like perma press clothing (which never needs ironing) or permafrost (ground so high in latitude and so far below the surface that it never thaws).

Permaculture has been trumpeted as an antidote to the dominant culture, which is decidedly impermanent. However, despite what the prefix “perma” implies, permaculture is not geared toward permanent solutions. Rather it focuses on a set of design guidelines, aimed at adapting to changing conditions. While the principles (and questions) remain constant, the answers change with the factors—whether that's climate, resources, population, or how many dogs are in the neighborhood. Thus, the application of permaculture thinking can lead to a surprising array of developments. It's a rolling reality.

What's intended is achieving a steady-state system, where inputs and outputs are in balance in a way that's permanently sustainable.

Downshift Happens

As we bump up against the limits of natural resources—oil, water, arable land, and many key industrial minerals—something's gotta give. And not just a little bit. Things are going to change *a lot*. The aim of permaculture is to help people figure out how to have the softest landing possible, where we shift our lives to depend mostly on local and renewable resources, while maintaining the best possible quality of life. This is not going to be simple.

When permaculture first burst on the scene in the 1970s (the principle articulators were Australians Bill Mollison and Dave Holmgren) the main focus was on ecological systems, and how much healthier for all species it was to think in terms of whole systems, such that everything fit together in an interdependent way with minimal outside inputs.

While inspiring, the concept has now been broadened to include social sustainability and economic sustainability. Thus, it's not impressive if you have a spiffy new water catchment system and super insulation on your house, yet nurture a grudge

against your neighbor because you're downwind too many days when he's operating his homemade smoker. How sustainable is it if the triple-pane windows you've installed to stop heat loss were affordable only because of the inheritance you got from Great Aunt Betty?

The point here is that permaculture is a three-legged stool, and you need all three legs—ecological, social, and economic—to be strong, or you don't have a very useful stool (or a very useful tool, for that matter).

As it turns out, embracing permaculture means embracing change on an unprecedented scale. It means objecting to adversarial dynamics, top-down hierarchies, global markets, materialism, and the automatic placement of "I" before "we" (even though that's the way it happens in the dictionary). Figuring all this out is a work in progress. There are hopeful signs (intentional communities are the R&D centers for much of this), yet there is much yet to do. The results are preliminary, and it's clear that good intentions alone are insufficient to ensure success.

Stacking Fictions

One of the core permaculture principles is that it's a good idea to stack functions—figuring out how to accomplish multiple goals through a single action.

For example, when we make tempeh at my community, Sandhill Farm, we try to use the oil-rich water that is a byproduct of cooking the soybeans to feed pigs instead of just pouring it down the drain. When we have community meetings, we often do quiet handwork while we discuss issues (labeling jars, peeling garlic, cleaning beans, seed saving, etc.—farm work never ends and a number of the rote jobs can often be accomplished painlessly while our minds are focused elsewhere). When we thin oak trees to improve our forest, we retain the larger chunks for shiitake logs, and use the smaller pieces for firewood. The wood shavings from our planer become just the thing for aerating and carbon balancing the humanure in our composting privy.

Going the other way, when I think about the decaying dominant culture, I believe the principle at work among politicians and practitioners of "voodoo economics" is stacking *fictions*. Here are some examples of what I mean:

- **Technology will save us**

Even allowing for gains in efficiency, and new breakthroughs in nano-technology, there just aren't enough resources for all the world to live at current US standards. And as challenging as it is to figure out how to grow enough food for the Earth's steadily rising human population (nearly one billion more in the last decade), we're exhausting our natural resources even faster than we're increasing the mouths to feed. I think technology is a good thing, but it's not a panacea.

- **Supply-side economics**

This is the concept that everyone benefits a little if a few at the top benefit a lot, because the rich are the ones who will invest in new businesses more than the poor. There is absolutely no evidence that tax breaks for the rich lead to a better life for the poor. This is simply a myth to deflect attention away from equitable taxation.


- **A rising tide floats all boats**

Huge fractions of the Earth's population live in abject poverty, and the rich countries are happy to keep it that way—perhaps not morally happy about it; but economically happy about it. It turns out that not everyone even has a boat, and rising water is not such a good thing if you're treading water. And it may not even be good to be in a boat if the rising tide comes in the form of a tsunami.

- **Large farms are more efficient than small ones**

It's perhaps true that large farms are better positioned to make the best use of investment tax credits and accelerated depreciation allowances, but they are demonstrably not more efficient in terms of what products can be produced per unit of human input. Large farms are better only at farming the tax code.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE BY LAIRD SCHAUB

• Capitalism is the surest path to ecological solutions

In truth, capitalism is inimical to ecological sustainability. How can it be acceptable that \$1 million spent on cleaning up an oil spill and \$1 million spent on wind turbines count the same (because they both contribute equally toward GNP)? It can't be right to reduce everything to dollars pushed through the system. Capitalism is about returning the highest possible returns to shareholders. The higher the interest rates, the more you can discount the future and focus on the short term. We've been steering this country under the influence of this particular strain of myopia for more than two centuries and it's just about time to pay the piper.

• Free trade leads to the most efficient distribution of resources

Free trade allows the markets in rich countries to dictate to poor countries how to use their natural resources, forcing them to devote their precious arable land to luxury crops for the rich markets rather than for feeding their own people—because rich countries can outbid the subsistence farmers for use of the land. How can that lead to a sustainable world? What free markets do is make sure that worldwide economic decisions are made on the basis of what returns the most on investment; not what is most humane or sustainable. Since free trade agreements (such as NAFTA) have been in place, the gap between the haves and have-nots has increased, and it is easier than ever for large corporations to out-source their labor needs, eliminating domestic jobs.

• • •

I'll close with a vignette that showcases the dilemma we're facing. I was at the annual Fall Festival in Keosauqua IA this past October, peddling a variety of Sandhill's food products. This event is about 50 miles from our home, and for the past two decades we've been offering a potpourri of high quality, homegrown food to area customers. One of those products is organic garlic bulbs, harvested from our fields in July. Given that garlic is not difficult to grow, it's somewhat surprising that we can sell very much to the locals. Mostly we grow it for ourselves, and make the excess available at the fairs we attend.

We're currently selling large bulbs for \$1 each. A couple came up to our booth and told me a story of chagrin. Earlier in the summer they'd bought a little net sack containing three bulbs of garlic at a local grocery store. The bulbs were medium size and cost \$2, which is approximately the value that we were offering. After they got home however, they noticed that the garlic had come from China. Yikes! Chinese garlic was successfully penetrating areas of the US market where garlic grows well. How can that be?

Think about how much of the cost of that garlic must be tied up in transportation to ship it half way around the world to a place where it already is locally abundant. This is a small, clear example of free trade run amok, accelerating how quickly we're using up our remaining oil, enabling garlic to be dumped in Iowa. How much money can the Chinese farmer possibly be earning on that sale (given that the shipping company will assuredly not be transporting products at a loss)? This is not market efficiency; this is market madness.

I figure it's about time to permanently change a culture. Or there may not be any left. ☹️



Laird Schaub is Executive Secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), publisher of this magazine, and cofounder of Sandhill Farm, an FEC community in Missouri, where he lives. He is also a facilitation trainer and process consultant, and he authors a blog that can be read at communityandconsensus.blogspot.com. A version of this article first appeared in his blog October 8, 2011.

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Permaculture 101

Photos by Chris Roth

Thirty-five years ago, this issue's theme would have left readers scratching their heads—the term “permaculture” did not yet exist. Today, while not yet universally familiar in the mainstream, permaculture has become a household word in many communities. To assure that readers are up to speed with our current theme (and to repeat some of what appears elsewhere in this issue), here's a paraphrased version of what Wikipedia, that bellwether of “accepted definition,” has to say:

Permaculture is an approach to designing human settlements and agricultural systems modeled on the relationships found in nature. Based on the ecology of how things interrelate, it aims to create stable, productive systems that provide for human needs. In permaculture design, each element supports and feeds other elements, ultimately aiming at systems that are virtually self-sustaining and into which humans fit as an integral part.

Permaculture as a systematic method was developed by Australians Bill Mollison and David Holmgren during the 1970s. The word “permaculture” originally referred to “permanent agriculture,” but was expanded to also stand for “permanent culture” as it was seen that social aspects were integral to a truly sustainable system. Mollison has described permaculture as “a philosophy of working with, rather than against nature; of protracted and thoughtful observation rather than protracted and thoughtless labor; and of looking at plants and animals in all their functions, rather than treating any area as a single project system.”

Permaculture's three primary ethics, **Care for the Earth**, **Care for People**, and **Fair Share** (“set limits to consumption and reproduction, and redistribute surplus”), support a set of

design principles which suggest how to apply these values in practice. As articulated by David Holmgren, these include:

1. **Observe and interact.**
2. **Catch and store energy.**
3. **Obtain a yield.**
4. **Apply self-regulation and accept feedback.**
5. **Use and value renewable resources and services.**
6. **Produce no waste.**
7. **Design from patterns to details.**
8. **Integrate rather than segregate.**
9. **Use small and slow solutions.**
10. **Use and value diversity.**
11. **Use edges and value the marginal.**
12. **Creatively use and respond to change.**

(For more information about the above, see en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Permaculture#Holmgren.27s_12_design_principles and permaculture-principles.com/principles.php.)

Permaculture Design Courses have trained thousands of students all over the globe, who themselves have taught many others while applying permaculture principles and techniques in the design of everything from gardens to ecovillages. Today, most ecologically-oriented intentional communities and towns seem to have at least one if not several trained permaculturalists, and permaculture's influence has spread far beyond the graduates of its courses.

This issue's articles address a wide range of permacultural concerns, from social permaculture to hugelkultur methods, and (mostly) that middle ground where human and nature, social organization and ecological living skills, people care and earth care, intersect. We hope you find them both instructive and inspiring.



At the risk of veering into unauthorized permacultural territory, or of offering obvious, common-sense advice (feel free to skip what follows, if you've learned these lessons already), I do have a few thoughts to add, based on my own permacultural experiences...

Attending to Zone Zero

“Do not burn yourselves out. Be as I am—a reluctant enthusiast....a part-time crusader, a half-hearted fanatic. Save the other half of yourselves and your lives for pleasure and adventure.”—Edward Abbey

“Please secure your own oxygen mask first before helping others.”—Natalie

Permaculture books and courses deal extensively with Zones One (the house and its immediate surroundings) through Five (the “wildlands”). However, after decades focusing on those outer zones, I've come to believe that the very most important zone is Zone Zero, our inner selves and our own bodies, upon which our interactions with those other zones utterly depend.

My exposure to permaculture began 25 years ago, and has continued almost unabated since, in several permaculturally-oriented communities and teaching centers in which I've lived and worked. During most of that time, I coordinated or co-coordinated the annual vegetable gardens—a curious, paradoxical role. Incorporating *some* permacultural techniques, these gardens focused on relatively conventional crops and often used very labor-intensive methods—a far cry from the image of the permaculturalist lying in a forest garden letting perennial food crops drop into his or her mouth.

This work of “cranking out vegetables”—while apparently necessary in order to feed homegrown food to the large populations in these settings—did not always harmonize in spirit with permaculture's principles and values, and often encouraged and reinforced attitudes in me that were less than sustainable. Permaculture itself is partly an attempt to counter the deeply-ingrained cultural mindset behind agriculture—which, in its attempts to control and dominate, to assert human will in ways that work against nature, has largely exhausted its own resource base and brought the human species a host of problems in how we treat the world, one another, and ourselves.

Many of us come to organic gardening/farming or permaculture with a zeal to change the world and do things differently. Unfortunately, seeking salvation from an unsustainable culture of origin by throwing ourselves into these new endeavors is much easier than figuring out how to live a balanced life while doing so—one that will allow us to endure for the long haul. We bring our personal and cultural baggage with us as we

attempt to enter the permaculture paradigm. Too often, it's that baggage that is running us, even as we “do” permaculture.

My more than two decades of frequently workaholic gardening (during which I often paid much more attention to the garden than to my own well-being) seem to have derived at least as much from “old paradigm” attitudes as new. Those years have led me to knee problems that recently have prevented me from gardening at all, while affecting many other areas of my life too. While I am grateful for all the lessons I'm now learning (about patellas, inflammation, electrical muscle stimulation, and deer antler spray)—as well as the many people who have helped me through this transition—this is not what I bargained for when I decided to live in harmony with the earth through food-growing.

Permaculture's basic principles (see previous page) can apply not only to design of landscapes, dwellings, and economic and social structures, but also to the human self, to how we each live. However, their wording doesn't always make this self-evident. So, at the insistence of several avian neighbors, I'm including here some additional guidelines—seemingly simple common sense—which too many of us may have ignored because of the power of our conditioning:



1. Don't try to save the world.

It can't be saved. It can only evolve. We can make the journey a little better for ourselves and others, and contribute to a healthier future, but usually not through desperate individual measures. A community of healers can achieve much more than a cadre of martyrs.



2. Don't try to compensate for the world's imbalance.

A sustainable world would require many more people to be involved in growing their own food, living closer to the land, pushing their bodies further and harder to provide for their own needs. This doesn't mean that gardeners, farmers, and permaculturalists need to make up for all the people who aren't living that way by doing many times their share of those things. As fossil fuels become much less available, our bodies become more needed. Taking the world upon our shoulders now could mean we are unable to shoulder anything later.



3. Make friends with your survival instinct.

In our zeal to live in right relationship with the rest of the world, some of us may believe that our own survival doesn't matter to us as much as living (or dying) in what we believe to be integrity—misunderstood

as having no impact on other creatures or the earth. More than a few principled people have said to themselves, “I would rather die than take the innocent life of another sentient being”—only to realize, once the reality of physical decline sets in, that they actually *do* want to be healthy and survive, that life feeds life, that transformation is the name of the game, and that their lives are blessings, if they can treat them that way.



4. Don't try to please, and don't try to be perfect.

The more we base our actions on trying to please others (or our own inner slave-drivers), the more we may sabotage our own well-being. Perfection is impossible. Our gardens will never be weed-free. If our sense of self-worth depends on living up to unattainable

standards (someone else's or, more dangerous, our own), we will be miserable much of the time. We may be admired and even praised for pushing ourselves so hard, but that can't last. Better to stop and ask ourselves: If we were still children, in touch with what mattered to us then, would we be doing this?



5. Row your boat gently. (Don't panic and don't stress.)

Very few things are as time-critical or important as we may think they are. If we habitually make unessential goals or issues so important that they impede our ability to keep ourselves healthy and safe, we may eventually hurt ourselves in ways we

can't reverse. Life is but a dream—but it can be a good one or a “bad” one depending on how we navigate it. If the rowing seems frantic or stressful rather than merry, we are not doing permaculture.



6. Remember that you will age.

Each of us will, no matter how much we wish otherwise or remain in denial. The more we try to prove that aging won't happen to us, the farther the “fall” will be when it happens. Though it may not be easy, it behooves us to listen to those who encourage us to take care of our bodies better, before they wear out.



7. Respect your knees.

They might work fine now. They may not always (see above). The temporary ability to pound them by running on pavement, or to bend them and stress them as most others can't, doesn't make it a good idea. Our knees almost certainly weren't designed by God, though they might feel that way for several decades. Studying the anatomy of our knees, and

looking up exercises and self-care tips *before* we injure them, is never a waste of time. Injured knees and other body parts need immediate attention—and physical therapists often know more than doctors. Avoiding injury is the best approach.



8. Don't take anything for granted.

The fact that we have bodies that function at all, and the ability to meet our basic needs (if we are fortunate enough to), is something to be supremely grateful for. Yet we get caught up in personal turmoil, interpersonal dramas, and various things that would seem absolutely unimportant if any of the major

pillars of our physical lives were taken away. How many of us imagine what it would be like to not be able to walk, or see, or hear? It could happen, sooner than we expect, to any of us. We increase the danger by failing to care for Zone Zero.



9. Apply self-regulation and accept feedback.

(This one should sound familiar.) We increase our personal sustainability by assessing what is working in our lives and what isn't, and making adjustments that will allow us to be healthier and happier. We benefit by listening to others who give us

feedback, even if it is hard to hear. They may have something valuable to tell us, and that feedback has much less capacity to hurt us than we ourselves have, by ignoring it.



10. Make friends with the void.

Filling up every available moment with “doing” leaves little time for “being”—and leads to taking “being” for granted. We won't be able to “do” forever. If we “do” too fervently, we just might disable ourselves from further “doing.” Then “being” will be significantly more difficult. And “not being”

will be even more troubling, if we've never seriously appreciated it as the foil for “being.”



11. Deal with your emotional distress.

Unaddressed emotional distress will eventually find an outlet, a manifestation that can't be denied. Far better to confront emotional pain head-on, instead of running from it until it catches up with us in ways that may no longer be resolvable

through emotional processing. If, instead, we make friends with ourselves—including the scared, scarred parts—the world will become a lot less scary, a place primarily of healing rather than hurt.



12. Look around you, and allow beauty in.

The old story: Stop. Breathe. Listen. Observe. Experience. It's important—at least as important as work. Actually, it's more important.

I am hoping that the above advice will seem self-evident and silly to as many readers as possible. I'm encouraged to meet so many younger permaculturalists who already know and live in accordance with most of these guidelines. But for those of us who've been caught most seriously in the clash of old and new paradigms, I hope they offer some reinforcement so that we, too, can make it for the long haul into a more permacultural future. 🐦

Chris Roth is editor of COMMUNITIES (communities.ic.org), former editor of Talking Leaves (www.lostvalley.org/talkingleaves), and a resident of Lost Valley Educational Center (www.lostvalley.org). Contact him at editor@ic.org.



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Social Permaculture

By Starhawk

Patrick Whitefield calls permaculture “the art of designing beneficial relationships.” Most permaculturalists are expert at understanding the relationships between land forms and water harvesting, or between soil micro-organisms and plant health. But when it comes to our human relationships, we often founder. Nurturing the vegetables in the garden is a lot easier than nurturing our connections to the people who decide where to plant the vegetables and who will water them. Meeting the needs of chickens or goats is far easier than meeting the needs of your fellow farmers. Many permaculture groups, like many intentional communities, start up with the highest ideals, only to come apart in painful discord and strife.

Diana Leafe Christian, who studied successful ecovillages and intentional communities, found that “No matter how visionary and inspired the founders, only about one out of ten new communities actually get built. The other 90 per cent seemed to go nowhere, occasionally because of lack of money or not finding the right land, but mostly because of conflict. And usually, conflict accompanied by heartbreak. And sometimes, conflict, heartbreak and lawsuits.”¹

Our human relationships are our biggest constraining factor in the work of transforming society. So, is there a way to do them better?

I’ve been working in collaborative and collective groups of many sorts for more than four decades now, and this question has always been in the forefront of my mind. I’ve been through many painful learning experiences of my own, and observed many groups struggle with conflict. I’ve founded one organization, Reclaiming², an extended network focused on earth-based spirituality, that is now more than 30 years old. I’ve worked in hundreds of other groups and facilitated thousands of meetings. I teach permaculture courses called Earth Activist Trainings³ that include group dynamics and decision-making along with a grounding in spirit and a focus on organizing. Over the last few years I’ve taught a number of social permaculture courses, several in collaboration with Bill Aal and the late Margo Adair of Tools for Change. I’ve compiled much of my own learning into a new book, *The Empowerment Manual: A Guide for Collaborative Groups*



Volunteer day at the Adam Rogers community garden in Bayview Hunters Point, San Francisco.



Starhawk

(New Society Publishers, October 2011).

My practice of permaculture informs my approach to group social design and conflict, and my understanding of group dynamics informs my practice of permaculture. Permaculture principles can be translated into guidelines and approaches that will help us to work together more effectively and joyfully as we strive to change the world. Here are a few of my Social Permaculture Principles:

1) Abundance springs from relationships:

True abundance, whether that's measured in garden produce or ecstatic experiences, has little to do with how much stuff we have, but rather, how rich we are in relationships. So—cherish your relationships. Value them. Give them time and attention. Nurture and maintain them. When conflict arises, don't simply discard people, but learn the skills and tools to work things through. Nurture your relationship to your inner self and spirit, as well. As you face your own shadows and develop your own strengths, your relationships with others will be enriched and deepened.

2) Recognize and work with patterns:

Permaculture teaches us to look for patterns in nature and apply that knowledge to our designs. We can also look for social patterns. Hierarchy is a pattern we're all familiar with, but when we try to work collaboratively, outside of a command and control structure, we encounter different challenges. Recognizing them can help us structure our groups more effectively. Collaborative structures differ from hierarchies in many ways:

- *Communication is more complex:* In a hierarchy, we generally know to whom we report and where we are on the chain of command. A collaborative group, however, is more like a web, with many possible pathways for any message to follow to get from person A to person B. People get left out of the loop, often unintentionally, because the loop becomes a knot or a snarl. In a well-run top-down structure, we know who is responsible for carrying out decisions. In a circular structure, we may make a decision but each person in the circle may assume someone else is going to carry it out.

So, pay rigorous attention to communication. Whenever a decision is made, ask, "Who else needs to know about this?" "Who will inform them?" "How will the rest of us know this is done?" When a plan is made, ask "Who will be responsible for making sure this is carried out?" Doing so can forestall much conflict and hurt feelings

- *Mom can't make the kids behave:* In a hierarchy, generally someone at the top can say, "Okay, you two stop fighting and make up." In a collaborative group, there's no Mom, no Dad, but we carry over our family patterns and expect that someone, somehow, can step in and sort things out for us. When they don't, groups often fall apart because they have no way to move conflict out of the system or resolve it.

So, build in conflict resolution systems, mediation, and clear agreements. Develop skills in conflict transformation, and devote group time and resources to training in communication and mediation. Conflict will always arise in groups. Just as you put an overflow on a pond to handle the hundred-year storm, design an "overflow" for group conflict so that it doesn't erode trust and enthusiasm or burst the dam and flood the production fields.

3) Feed what you want to grow:

Industrial agriculture works on the principle: "Kill the pests!" If bugs attack a field, nuke them with chemicals! Organic farmers know that attacking pests with power-

ful toxins only breeds resistance. Instead, we create healthy soil that provides what our plants need to repel pests. We plant flowers that attract beneficial insects that keep the chompers in check. We look at insect damage as information—something is out of balance.

In our social relations, too often we revert to "Kill the pests!" Instead of attacking the people whose behavior offends us or trying to drive them out

**Conflict in the group is information.
Somehow we've created a habitat that
allows destructive behavior to thrive.**

of the group, we can look at conflict as information. Something in the group is out of balance. Somehow we've created a habitat that allows destructive behavior to thrive. How do we give a competitive edge to the behaviors that we want?

When we fear conflict, we may resort to gossip and backbiting. Instead of directly confronting Scabiosa Sue when she hurts my feelings, I complain about her to Lennie Legume or post a scathing denunciation on the listserv that goes out to a hundred people around the world, most of whom don't know either of us. The result is a toxic miasma of resentment, rumors, and malicious tattling.

We can clear the air by creating a group culture of direct engagement. When we learn to embrace conflict, to openly argue for our ideas or values without resorting to personal attack, we create an atmosphere that discourages malicious gossip and scapegoating and encourages respect. We can train our group members to respond to a bid for a trash-fest by saying, "How can I support you, Starhawk, in talking directly to Scabiosa about your feelings?" Or perhaps, "Can I be of service to you in helping arrange a mediation?" When one of our friends opens a conversation by saying "I really shouldn't tell you this..." we can learn

to say “I’m so glad you recognize that! Now, about that other topic...”

4) Value diversity:

In nature, diversity gives an ecosystem resilience. In groups, a diversity of opinion, backgrounds, ages, ethnic and class backgrounds, and experiences can broaden our perspective and let us see multiple facets of an issue. If we want a diverse group, we must make the extra effort to bring people in who represent that diversity, and to do it in a meaningful way, not as tokens: early in our process so that a wide range of people help form the group and participate in the creative aspects of the project. We can build alliances with diverse communities not just by inviting them to support our work but by sharing information and resources, educating ourselves about their history and current struggles, and showing up in support of their issues.

5) Develop a culture of respect, kindness, and trust:

Trust is built in many ways: by creating opportunities to share something of our lives and feelings, by encouraging people to argue passionately for their ideas and positions while still respecting their opponents’ right to differ, by meeting responsibilities and building a track record of dependability, and by sharing risks together.

Kindness, respect, compassion, and encouragement are the compost tea of relationships—they feed all the beneficial impulses. When we respect one another’s ideas, think well of one another’s motives, and support one another’s visions, we create a high-energy atmosphere in which creativity flourishes.

These five principles are merely a sketch of how we might begin to look at our human groups as ecologies. As I said, I’ve just written a book on the subject—and that is only a bare beginning. Social permaculture is an emerging discipline, and the study of human behavior, in groups and outside of them, is a lifelong pursuit. But as we become more skillful at nurturing our human relations, we will become more effective in every aspect of our work. At this crucial time for the earth, we need the power of creative, effective, loving, and joyful groups to move us forward. When we can be as skillful in our human interactions as we are in our garden designs, we’ll become an invincible force of healing for our communities and our earth. 🌱

Starhawk is the author of 11 books on Goddess religion, earth-based spirituality, and activism, including The Spiral Dance; her picture book for young children, The Last Wild Witch; and The Earth Path, which weaves together permaculture and spirituality. Her twelfth book, The Empowerment Manual: A Guide for Collaborative Groups was

published in Fall of 2011. She also directs Earth Activist Trainings, offering permaculture design courses with a grounding in spirit and a focus on organizing, and collaborates with community organizations to bring permaculture to the inner city (www.earthactivisttraining.org). Together with director Donna Read Cooper, she created the documentary Permaculture: The Growing Edge, released in Fall of 2010 (belili.org). She is currently working with Yerba Buena Films to produce a feature film from her novel, The Fifth Sacred Thing, and to build earth-centered ethics and permaculture principles into the production itself (fifthsacredthing.com).

Starhawk is one of the founders of the Pagan spiritual network Reclaiming, www.reclaiming.org. She has lived collectively and worked collaboratively in many settings for more than three decades. She blogs at www.starhawk-blog.org and her website is www.starhawk.org.



Young gardeners taste wild radish pods in Bayview Hunters Point, San Francisco.

Starhawk

1. Diana Leafe Christian, *Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities*, New Society, Gabriola Island, BC, 2003, p. 5.
2. www.reclaiming.org
3. www.earthactivisttraining.org

LESSONS IN BUILDING RESILIENT NEIGHBORHOODS: Reflections on the PROUT Institute Community SEED Program

By Ryan Dubas

To the common passer-by, River Road in Eugene, Oregon looks like typical 1950s-1960s suburban development. Traveling north on the five-lane arterial road, tucked amidst the stately Douglas Fir trees, one encounters many hallmarks of modern industrial-consumer culture: heavy motor traffic, convenience stores, a gun shop, a Wells Fargo bank, and an intersection pock-marked with chain eateries such as Hardees, Wendy's, and Domino's Pizza. But if one observes carefully, off the beaten path, only a few blocks west of this thoroughfare, a different type of development is being realized.

Scattered throughout this quiet neighborhood, residents are working together to manifest a vision of a sustainable community inspired by permaculture design principles, localized economics, and respect for all living beings. Their neighborhood resiliency project is focused on developing a network of properties producing basic necessities, particularly food, and fostering an ethic of compassion and resource sharing. In addition to sharing healthy organic food, tools, materials, and know-how, the community also offers social events, education in permaculture and local economic planning, and instruction in yogic practices and philosophy. The established touchstone properties include the beginnings of a food jungle, several small gardens, an evolving village for volunteers and interns, and a spiritual and social center. This network of small suburban farms, none bigger than one

acre, demonstrates how small sites and connected people can carve a viable niche in the shadows of an outmoded paradigm.

This past summer, members of this River Road community extended their influence and shared their vision with roughly a dozen interns participating in the Community Sustainable Economics and Ecological Design (SEED) Program, sponsored by the PROUT Institute. A diverse group of young and curious minds from locations spanning the country—Maine, Vermont, South Carolina, Louisiana, Missouri, Ohio, Michigan, Nebraska, Montana, California, and Oregon—congregated for the program. Living in community at the Dharmalaya Center for Human Development, home of the PROUT Institute, interns studied yogic philosophy while offering 25 hours of labor per week developing neighborhood infrastructure, which, in turn, taught them useful lessons in permaculture, gardening, natural building, and community development.

The interns' work this summer focused on a dramatic transformation of a single acre back yard from a litter-riddled, blackberry-infested, and largely unproductive lot into the beginnings of a food-producing village. Interns helped clean the property, fell a 20-year-old Douglas Fir tree, raise and plant garden beds, construct a greenhouse, clear and set camping spaces, deconstruct and remodel a garage, erect a strawbale kitchen/bathhouse, create adobe bricks with local



Neighbors and interns share food from the garden at a potluck.

Photos courtesy of Ryan Dubas

soil, build an adobe wood-fired barrel oven and adobe canning stove, design and construct a composting toilet out-house, and more. The property will be used to house volunteers and interns in the future, perhaps becoming the center for a neighborhood food cooperative.

I signed up for the internship program with only a vague conception of what I was to learn. Emerging from four years of teaching English at midwestern colleges, I was eager to immerse myself in physical work and purge my consciousness of hastily-written essays conveyed through small typeface on flattened wood pulp. And being raised in a household where my connection to food production had been obscured, I wanted to experience the magic of growing and consuming local food. I knew that the material world was more than keyboards, paper, pens, restaurants, and markets but I wanted to feel that truth. So, when I discovered the PROUT Institute internship, the ideas—construction, organic gardening, and yoga—were enough to inspire my participation. The experience of living in this community has been far deeper and more complex than I anticipated. It has been flavored with challenges, discoveries, and successes.



a moment of silence. “New people are arriving, more will be joining. A sort of flow will be developed. You see, large organizations are looking more and more to chaos theory to inform their organizational structure. They adopt certain minimum specifications—core values—as their guidelines. Instead of enforcing a rigid top-down systems management, they instill a cultural ethic in all members. This allows for a certain flexibility and empowerment for individuals in groups. Keep this in mind as more people arrive. It is perhaps analogous to a flock of birds. As more members of the flock join the flight, the formation takes shape.”

The tone of ambiguity in this speech set the stage (or skyscape) for the summer program. Paradoxically, this was one of the most difficult yet fulfilling aspects of the program. While there was guidance from staff members, the interns were given the space to figure out logistics of community living (such as the food system and cleaning schedule) on their own. In a group of 12 people, many of them living in community

for the first time, having access to varying levels of financial support, and being exposed to a new Sattvic diet (vegetarian, no onions, garlic, or mushrooms), this was not always simple. Interns were tested with the demands of figuring out, together, how to make perhaps the most essential and nourishing elements of communal living—food—work for the whole group. Lacking explicit top-down

I was struck by the apparent intention in all things, ranging from garden design to words spoken.

When I arrived in mid-May, the program was not yet in full swing. I was one of five people in a flock that would eventually grow to 12. Immediately, I could see that I was entering into something both intentional and flexible, something still very much in process. Indeed, at the first morning check-in meeting, PROUT Institute Executive Director Ravi Logan launched into a brief aside about chaos theory.

“We are entering a new phase,” he said after tuning into the meeting with

instruction, importantly there was space provided for open communication amongst interns and staff. Successful systems were eventually developed, unfortunately some not until later in the program, yet it was valuable for interns to feel both the tension and resolution of collective decision making. In fact, the whole exercise was empowering because throughout it all, sincere respect was given to individual voices.

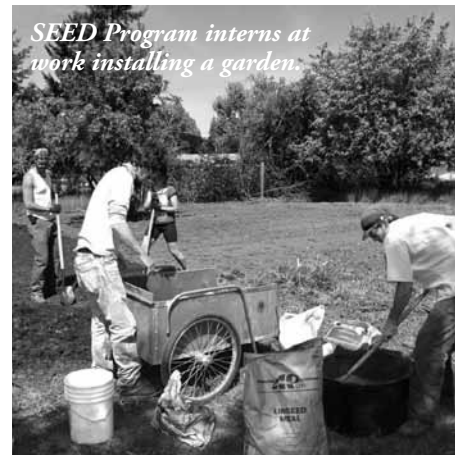
This respect for all voices is one of the minimum specifications, part of the cultural ethic shaping the systems at the PROUT Institute and in the broader River Road community. In the same way that each neighbor contributes to the community according to her or his skills and abilities, and each species contributes to the ecosystems in these permaculture-inspired gardens, each individual person offers a valued perspective and voice. Probably this is why upon my arrival I was struck immediately by the apparent intention in all things, ranging from the garden design to the words spoken. Everybody



Author Ryan Dubas at work in the garden.



SEED Program interns learn how to make cob.



SEED Program interns at work installing a garden.

seemed to speak slowly, and with attempted precision; and all others listened through long pauses—patiently. My mind was accustomed to less thoughtful, knee-jerk phonic projections. For a moment, I considered the communication too sensitive, but quickly I softened into it and appreciated the respect paid to all speech and the sense of empowerment it provided for speakers. Empowerment, not coincidentally, is one of the critical imperatives of the PROUT paradigm of development.

PROUT is an acronym for the Progressive Utilization Theory, a new paradigm of socioeconomic development and political organization based on the fundamental assumption that all people have potentiality in the physical, mental, and spiritual spheres, and should be given opportunity to develop and express their potentialities. PROUT is a comprehensive approach, with its own foundational values and planning principles, economic and political structures, and social and cultural systems. All of these are designed to work in synergy to meet everyone's basic needs and to promote the progressive enhancement of people's potentialities at the individual level, within the collective society, and in balance with the more-than-human world that sustains all life. PROUT offers hope, vision, empowerment, and a solution-oriented approach to people and communities that are seeking a viable, life-affirming alternative to global capitalism and the various contradictions and crises inherent to it (see www.proutinstitute.org for more information).

The summer internship program is a part of a larger effort by the PROUT Institute to create a PROUTist model on a neighborhood level. Indeed, as the internship program ramped up, I began to see in practical terms how the values of PROUT informed the work we were doing. For example, to imagine the idea of "progressive utilization," consider the manner in which goods and services are exchanged in this community development project. Neighbors know that they are in an exchange, but the exchange isn't defined, so each person can contribute—money, food, labor, construction materials, expertise, social connections—according to his/her own skills or resources. An artist in the community might paint a mural to enhance the aesthetic beauty of a building in exchange for labor deconstructing a patio. Or a gardener falling behind on weeding might exchange some of his/her harvest for labor. Tools circulate as needed, knowledge is shared, seeds are spread. It is a sort of cooperative economics, more or less informal at this stage but certainly the foundation of different kind of approach that, over time, will become more structured. Individuals don't depend entirely on this cooperative system, but having it there connected to and supplementing the individual home economies makes life easier.

For me, learning from and observing the more collective mentality of this community was the most profoundly educational aspect of the internship. To see a vital community in action was not only inspiring, but a lesson in information exchange. With every week of participation, I was introduced to new community members, each with vital and intriguing knowledge to share. Interns were sometimes dispatched to other properties in the neighborhood in the spirit of community service, allowing them to learn from a variety of designs and ideas. The information and skills shared through this network in this way—face-to-face, feet-to-earth, hands-to-tool—was exceptionally deep and enriching, especially for one coming from a desk-centered, indoor career path. It was like surfing the internet, but more focused, multi-sensory, and without advertisements. However, I couldn't have learned all that I did with keyword searches for construction, organic gardening, and yoga; I did it by helping plant a literal and figurative community SEED and nurture it from the ground up. ☺

Ryan Dubas was born in Colorado Springs, Colorado and raised in central Nebraska. He studied English and Cultural Studies and taught as an English Instructor at Hastings College and Kansas State University. He now lives in Eugene, Oregon and is pursuing interests in natural building and energy management. Contact him with questions or comments: ryandubas@yahoo.com.

Sociocracy:

A Permaculture Approach to Community Evolution

By Melanie Rios

In 2008 Lost Valley took decision-making power away from its consensus-based intentional community and transformed into a hierarchical business. The organization (a 501(c)3 nonprofit operating an 87-acre permaculture education and conference center outside Dexter, Oregon) hoped to become more economically solvent through this change, but it continued to struggle financially.

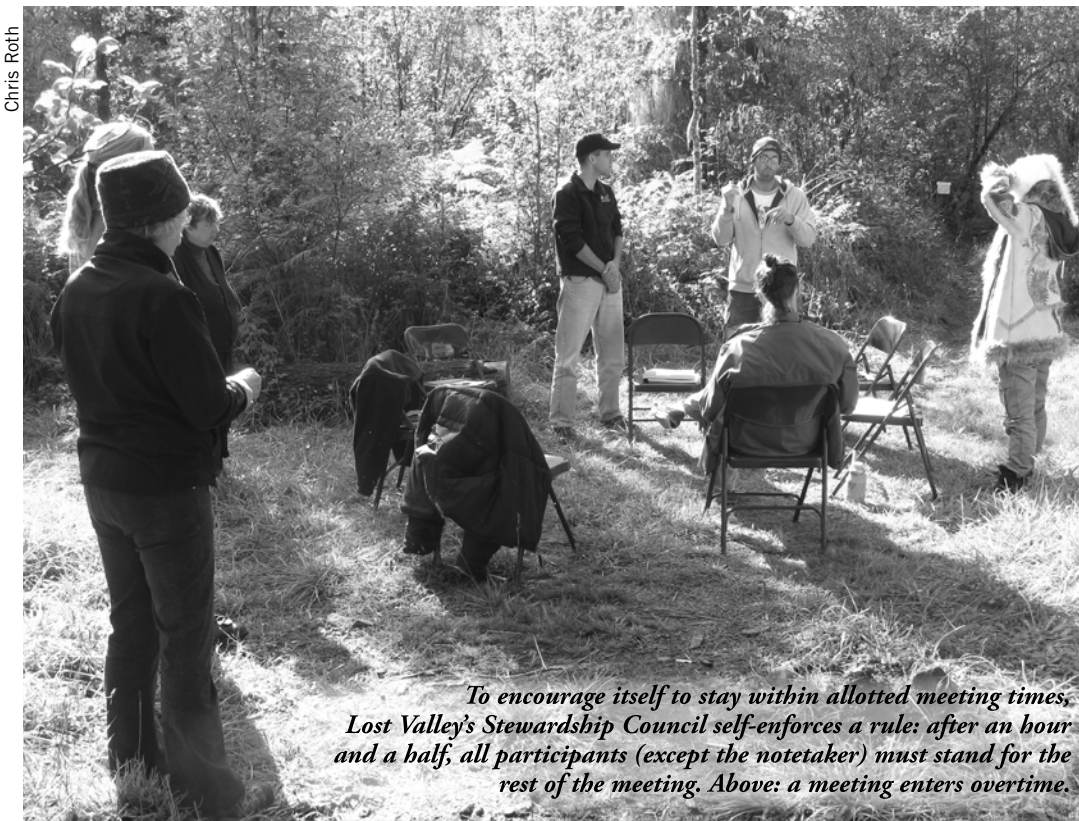
Two years later, in dire economic straits, we began integrating top-down and flat-hierarchical governance systems by adopting a system called *sociocracy*, which I learned about at a workshop by John Schinnerer at the Northwest Permaculture Convergence. Here is how our conversion to a sociocratic governance system at Lost Valley can be viewed as a form of social permaculture that has helped our 21-year-old community thrive both socially and economically.

Observe First, then Interpret and Interact

The first principle of permaculture is observation. In the visible world, for example, we are advised to observe flows of water and other characteristics of a newly acquired property for a full year before taking steps to change what is there. I have been observing Lost Valley for a decade, first as a visitor and a student, then as a guest permaculture teacher, and now in the role of Executive Director. I see the succession

of governance systems at Lost Valley as a natural progression from what the spiral dynamics folk call the *green vmeme* to the *yellow vmeme*.

The Lost Valley that I first entered 10 years ago came straight out of the *green vmeme*. The community valued cooperation over competition, process over product, equality in decision-making, and expressions of affection more than economic profit. There were many wonderful aspects to this way of being. Hugs and empathy were plentiful, and folks knew how to talk about and support each other having feelings. People felt



To encourage itself to stay within allotted meeting times, Lost Valley's Stewardship Council self-enforces a rule: after an hour and a half, all participants (except the notetaker) must stand for the rest of the meeting. Above: a meeting enters overtime.

Chris Roth

included and empowered to participate in making decisions that affected them. Lost Valley folk lived simply and frugally while helping our planet and living in close connection with each other.

But there were shadow sides to this way of being. Long meetings with few decisions eventually discouraged members with initiative from pursuing their dreams at Lost Valley. The whole group often had difficulty achieving consensus on a given proposal, and so individuals who wanted to accomplish things in the world moved away. Others left because decisions were mediocre; someone who knew nothing about fire safety would have as much power to make a decision on that topic as someone who was an expert. These departures of high-powered, competent members contributed to economic stagnation. The community was barely scraping by, with mounting deferred maintenance on buildings and a high turnover of community members.

About three years ago, Lost Valley made a transition intended to call in the *yellow vmeme* values of effectiveness, ease, and excellence. A few folks stood up at a meeting and said they were all leaving the community if the consensus-based governance structure weren't changed to give more power to those who were more competent and responsibly engaged in supporting the business side of the community. After discussion, the community agreed to the changes they proposed, and a newly invigorated nonprofit board of directors assumed leadership of the community, creating a hierarchical structure of governance. The board hired an executive director and managers to accomplish the work of Lost Valley's nonprofit organization, including hosting permaculture educational programs and conferences.

I enjoyed many of the changes that came out of this transition. Staff meetings were less likely to be derailed by a long detour into exploring someone's feelings. The organization established systems of accountability and defined tasks and roles, while staff management learned how to write and follow budgets. These changes set the stage for moving the community forward.

But there were shadow sides to this transition, taking the community on a detour back to the *orange vmeme*, which values hierarchical decision-making, product over process, and profit over heart-centered goals. Volunteers and staff were afraid of speaking truthfully to those above them in the hierarchy for fear of being asked to leave. Managers made autonomous decisions without the input or knowledge of those who were affected by these decisions, and gossip and resentments ran rampant. Community morale was low, which negatively affected the experience of our students in addition to those who lived here. In September 2010 word arrived from the chairman of the board that the community would run out of funds in December, and that unlike other similar challenging moments in previous years, no one had energy or ideas for borrowing funds to make it through the winter.

Upon hearing this news, I thought of the many people who have enjoyed and contributed to Lost Valley's land and mission, and the many more who would like to do so. I felt sad to think that our planet's ecological movement might lose the zoning of this land, which allows us to live collectively, to host educational programs and conferences, and even to build more homes in an ecovillage cluster rather than on a grid. Saving Lost Valley as a nonprofit dedicated to environmental education felt like a project that was both doable and sufficiently challenging to be of interest. So I stepped up to invest funds and other forms of energy to help keep Lost Valley alive, and I invited others to join me in this project. Our challenge was to figure out what we could do to help Lost Valley finally make the transition to the *yellow vmeme*, a

place of both joy and effectiveness.

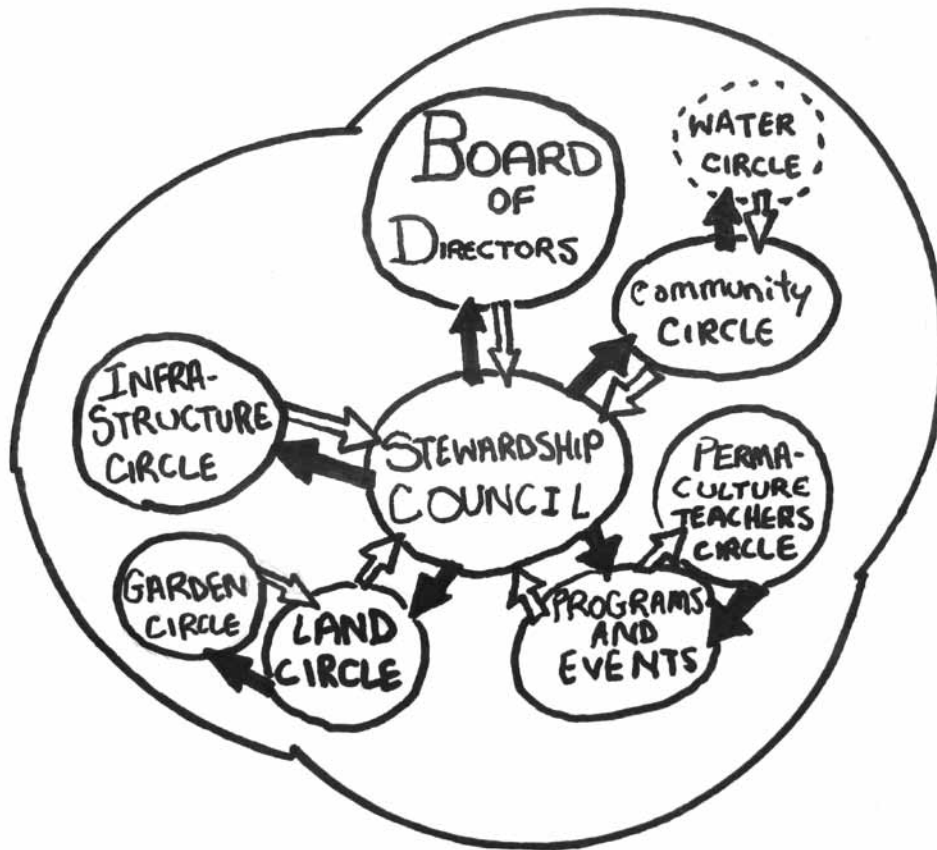
Small and Slow Solutions

The permaculture principle "use small and slow solutions" helped us at this stage. Applied to our homesteads, for example, this principle suggests that we make changes to our land starting at our doorstep, and only slowly implement more sustainable elements of our design as time and funds allow. I saw that Lost Valley was a microcosm containing the world's challenges, and that I may or may not be able to help solve these problems. Wisdom from an Eckert Tolle book steadied me for the journey ahead: "Whatever is born of stillness, the outcome will be good." It wouldn't do any good to give up my meditation practice and run around exuding anxiety about the dire straits we were in. I could move

**It wouldn't do any good to give up
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we were in.**

slowly, one step at a time, practicing non-attachment to outcome, finding satisfaction in simply doing my best.

Out of this awareness, a "Positive Action Team" was born at Lost Valley. The seven members of this team were folks I felt closest to at the time, and we began by each choosing one small action to implement unilaterally at Lost Valley. One person decided to tell folks she met during the course of her day what she appreciated about them. Another chose to clean up messes he didn't make. Another decided to build beautiful altars out of natural objects. These individual small actions had a rapid effect on morale at Lost Valley. We felt more connected and hopeful within the first week of beginning this experiment, and within two weeks it appeared that others who weren't yet part of us were



Partial diagram of sociocratic organizational structure at Lost Valley Center. The water circle was a temporary circle that has since disbanded. The arrows stand for people who are representatives of one circle to the other circle.

feeling better as well.

Our next step was to study and practice sociocracy, a governance system based on a pattern of inter-linked decision-making circles that each contains a small number of people. Meeting together in small groups is more engaging than larger ones because there is more space for each participant to actively participate in the conversational flow. And small groups of five to 10 members are more effective than larger ones at making good decisions quickly.

The Positive Action Team became the first sociocratic circle at Lost Valley, and it would later give birth to other circles above and below it in the governance hierarchy before finally disbanding. Rather than have circles expand to include lots of new members, a new sociocratic circle arises when an existing circle elects a representative to start another circle with a mission to focus on a defined aspect of the organization. That representative becomes the voice of the original group to the new group, and selects people to serve on the new group. The new group then elects a representative to the original group. The circles thus become “double-linked,” as shown in the diagram of Lost Valley’s current governance structure.

For example, Colin, our representative from the stewardship circle to the community circle, shares decisions that the stewardship circle has made that impact the community. Justin, elected to represent the community circle on the stewardship circle, keeps the stewardship circle informed about what’s happening in the community, and advocates on the community’s behalf. This allows information to flow both ways in the hierarchy of circles, with folks in the lower circles sending information about proposals and decisions to the circles above, and vice versa.

Apply Self-Regulation and Accept Feedback

These double-linked circles facilitate the feedback referred to in the permaculture principle “apply self-regulation and accept feedback.” An example of this principle in the visible world is placing electric meters at the entrance to one’s house, rather

than behind some bushes in an obscure corner outside the house. That way residents can see how much power is being used as they leave home, and respond to this feedback by regulating how many appliances they leave plugged in.

A sociocratic example of this flow of feedback was when someone informed the community circle that some people were getting ill, and they thought it might be due to problems with our well water. The community circle formed a temporary circle called the “water circle,” tasked with researching the issue and coming up with a proposed solution. The water circle reported back their suggested course of action to the community circle, who liked it enough to refer it up to the stewardship circle, who liked it enough to refer it up to the Board of Directors. The folks in the water circle presented their ideas in each of these circles, and in the space of just a few weeks, the Board approved their suggestions for funding.

The “apply self-regulation and

accept feedback” principle benefits from transparency, one of sociocracy’s core values. Sociocratic governance calls for open, honest communication about everything from financial books to feelings people hold about each other. With this value in mind, I met with the chairman of the board when the Positive Action Team was just starting up to request access to economic information about Lost Valley so that we could make informed backup plans in case Lost Valley ran out of funds.

Sociocracy also encourages groups to apply self-regulation and accept feedback by requiring three steps of those charged with accomplishing tasks: planning, implementation, and evaluation. Before electing someone to do something, the circle clearly defines the nature of the task, establishes a timetable, and creates a plan for evaluating the results. Sociocratic circles consist of folks with expertise and/or strong stakes in the task at hand, and they receive creative latitude to accomplish their task as they deem best without being micromanaged by the circle above them in the hierarchy. The higher circle can intervene, however, if the circle charged with a task goes sufficiently off track or doesn’t get the job done on schedule. When tasks or meetings are finished, we take time to evaluate both the process and product so that the group can learn to do things better in the future.

Sociocratic elections encourage people to give positive feedback to each other by asking members of circles to talk openly about why they want to elect someone for a task. The Positive Action Team employed a sociocratic election to create a financial circle charged with learning about the economic situation at Lost Valley. To elect the Positive Action Team’s representative to this financial circle, we passed around slips of paper upon which each person wrote their name and the name of the person they wanted to head up this new circle. Then a facilitator asked each person why they nominated the person they chose.

During a second go-round, people were allowed to change their nominations based on the reasons they had heard from others. The facilitator then suggested someone to head up the circle based not strictly on the number of nominations, but rather on the strength of the reasons, and asked each person whether they had any “reasoned and paramount objections” to this suggested person. In other words, a person would have to have a good and strong reason to block someone’s election, not simply that he or she would prefer someone else. Once someone is elected, he or she is asked if they want to accept the job.

This sociocratic nominating method resembles the consensus decision-making process, but the wording “Do you have any reasoned or paramount objections?” encourages even untrained people to use a block well. If someone does have an objection, or if the person who is elected doesn’t want to serve, then the facilitator suggests someone else. We’ve found in practice that objections have been rare and fairly easy to respond to, and that almost everyone who is asked to serve chooses to do so. The mood of a group after elections is often one of connection and trust because we’ve taken time to tell each other why we love and respect each other. The person who is charged with creating a new circle and executing the assigned tasks knows he or she is supported by the group, and can act with well-earned authority. In this way, sociocracy is both participatory, in that each person in a circle has an equal voice in selecting someone to do the work, and effective, in that those who are selected to do the work are given the power to act.

Creatively Use and Respond to Change

This permaculture principle keeps us light on our feet, looking for the good in even challenging situations. The local and organic food movements, for example, are creative responses to the toxicity and increasing expense of using petroleum products for growing food. Sociocracy is also known by another name, *dynamic governance*, because it is especially useful in times of rapid change. In the year since we formed our first sociocratic circle at Lost Valley, much has improved here in our morale, our facilities, and our quality of life. From a community that had dwindled to just a handful of folks over the winter, we now have 40 people living here and a couple of new businesses to provide employment for them. We’ve renovated many buildings, cleaned and de-cluttered everywhere else, and upgraded our water systems. Several households plan to build their own homes on the land,

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so that we will no longer be a community exclusively of renters. Our cash flow has been positive since the beginning of this year, even through the winter when Lost Valley has typically lost money. I feel grateful for the sociocratic governance methods that have facilitated this joyful and effective progress. 🐦

Melanie Rios is a permaculture teacher and Executive Director at Lost Valley Center (www.lostvalley.org). She is also an activist, gardener, and musician, and has lived in intentional community for 35 years. Contact her at melanie@lostvalley.org with questions about Lost Valley or sociocracy.

Permaculture at The Farm: Climate Prophylaxis

By Albert Bates

For the past 10 years or so, the land management decisions of The Farm (a 40-year-old intentional community on 1750 acres in rural Tennessee, pop. ~200) have been informed by permaculture. Permaculture was influential in the design and early curricula of The Farm's Ecovillage Training Center in 1994, and since many, if not all, of the community's residents have now been exposed to it, it is not surprising to learn that a number of people serving on various village committees, as well some in public office in the surrounding county, have Permaculture Design certificates.

Our relationship with permaculture traces back to our connection to Bill Mollison, one of permaculture's founders, who received the Right Livelihood Award, sometimes called the "Alternative Nobel Prize," in the year after we did. RLA winners are a gregarious lot and gather from time to time to swap tales, so we have been fortunate to share such meetings with Bill over the past 30 years. We are also fortunate to have had the influence of an erstwhile neighbor, Peter Bane, who for many years published the quarterly *Permaculture Activist* from his former home in Primm Springs, Tennessee.

Today, as a permaculture instructor, I travel to many of the convergences of the movement and have come to know many practitioners. Our Farm team has taught permaculture courses on six continents and in 27 countries now, so it would only be surprising if The Farm did *not* have permaculture going on.

A few years ago our Land Use Committee, which was redrafting The Farm's land management plan, began getting interested in preparing for climate change in the coming century. Of course there is really no preparing for what is now unfolding, other than to become more nimble, or perhaps to begin moving underground.

In 1990, my book, *Climate in Crisis: The Greenhouse Effect and What You Can Do*, painted two very different pathways forward. One was the way blazed by signatories to the Montreal Protocol: international cooperation; hard reduction targets; firm dates. The other was political impasse and social apathy, or even antipathy, auguring 500 to 600 ppm of CO₂-equivalent concentrations to the atmosphere, two to seven degrees of warming, and passing several known tipping points and likely some unknown ones. That second course risks Earth becoming as lifeless as Venus or Mars.

Sadly, we have not retraced our steps and turned up the path to safety for 20 years,

Photos by Albert Bates



now, making the Biblical quote on the frontispiece of my book especially poignant: “They have sown the wind; and they shall reap the whirlwind.” That the food riots precipitating the Tunisian Spring and the Egyptian uprising of 2011 were the result of a fried wheat crop in Russia in 2010 seems still to elude most people.

Our generation doesn't need to beat itself up too much over its apathy. It is possible that what was already in the pipeline from the preceding 150 years of coal, oil, and gas is inexorably taking our species to extinction. If we have any cause for shame, it would only be because our generation has not done more to avert that uncertain demise while it is yet uncertain.

Two terms generally bandied about by climate negotiators, “mitigation” and “adaptation,” are losing a lot of their luster now, as we come to recognize that if the worst comes, neither of those choices will be available to us. While many who write about climate change still offer long-odds solutions like carbon farming and tree-planting (including my own recent book, *The Biochar Solution*), we know that cultural inertia is not on our side. The Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and '60s had strong allies in the church and Northern media. Today the church is allied with advocates of unfettered population and the media has been subsumed into the climate-denier corporate world.

The Civil Rights movement also held the advantage of knowing, as an abiding article of faith, that in the end it would prevail. While the arc of the moral universe may be long and bend towards justice, as Martin Luther King said, climate scientists are quick to remind us that the arc of the physical universe is short and bends towards heat.

The goal of The Farm's Land Use Committee is to avoid the mistakes of the past, such as planting heirloom tree species from earlier centuries while climate isotherms are migrating poleward 70 miles per decade. We'd like to provide as much comfort for our coming generations, and those of our brethren species, as might reasonably be salvaged. Thinking about putting more ponds, lakes, and aquifer-recharge zones into our 4000-acre landholding, we asked Australian Darren Doherty for advice.

“Don't put in the dams until you've keylined the place,” he said. So in 2009, we invited Darren and a group of distinguished co-teachers to give the first carbon-farming course in North America. We brought in Kurt Gadzia and Joel Salatin to teach holistic management, Brad Lancaster to teach water capture, Eric Toensmeyer to teach agroforestry, and Elaine Ingham to teach soil microbiology. I chipped in

a segment on biochar and terra preta soils and Darren himself demonstrated keyline plowing.

The keyline method was developed by Australian stockman P.A. Yeomans in the 1950s. By studying the lay of the land, Yeomans noticed that in the usual flow of things, gravity takes water downhill by the shortest route, carrying water, topsoil, and soluble minerals from the ridges and concentrating rich deposits in the valleys. What is really needed is the opposite—to distribute soil moisture from the wetter valleys or field indentations out towards the drier ridgelines, and to cover the largest possible area with migrating minerals when it rains.

Yeomans' Keyline® Plow, a \$55,000 piece of equipment made only in Australia, has a plow that resembles the secret

**We asked Australian
Darren Doherty for advice.
“Don't put in the dams until you've
keylined the place,” he said.**

“winged” keel shape that helped *Australia II* dethrone the USA in the America's Cup sailing regatta of 1983. Operating like a hydrofoil, it has “terro”dynamic horizontal fins at the subsoil bottom of a vertical shaft. Three to five of these rigid shanks are mounted on a heavy steel frame and dragged along behind



Left to right: 1. Keyline Cowboy at The Farm, keylining with Ford Tractor. 2. Former stockbroker Brian Bankston now calls himself the “Keyline Cowboy” after a carbon farming course at The Farm's Ecovillage Training Center transformed his life. He quit his job, bought a keyline plow and compost tea brewer, and moved to The Farm. 3. Nine months pregnant, Ann Marie Bankston lays out the contours for keylining, using a GSI laser level. 4. The Farm scene. 5. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack with author, at first North American Biochar Conference, 2009.

Permaculture is the only way we can imagine our children still living here in another 50 or 75 years.



Scenes from The Farm.

the tractor. A coulter disc precedes the shanks, slicing open the upper soil layer to minimize surface disturbance and reduce the energy required to pull the device. The angle of action at the shares' leading edge is very slight—only eight percent compared to typically 25 percent in chisel plows and subsoilers.

During cultivation, the soil is gently raised and loosened without turning a furrow. Rain and air enter the soil and release the minerals that chelate and loosely attach themselves to clay particles and humic acid. The released minerals are not water-soluble and are readily available to roots. Immediate results are dramatic and magical. Water moves from valleys to ridges.

Every piece of land is unique and will be influenced by how water passes through it, irrespective of where the farm, cattle ranch, shopping mall, or four-lane highway gets put. By directing that water from valley to ridge, gravity and rain make the life of the farmer and rancher much easier. Keyline design combines cultivation, irrigation, and stock management techniques to greatly speed up the natural process of soil formation, and results of 400 to 600 tons of topsoil per acre each year are possible. Keylining can annually deepen topsoil four to six inches, and darken it a meter deep in less than a decade.

One of the students in our class was a former securities trader named Brian Bankston. He was so impressed with the keyline method that he went out and bought a keyline plow and took it to his farm in Arkansas. A year later, he relocated to The Farm and became one of the strongest weapons in our Land Use Committee's arsenal. Each year he has been reclaiming more and more of the pastures and croplands of The Farm, using a combination of keyline method, compost tea slurry application, rock dust, and biochar.

As Darren Doherty had told us when we first asked him, keylining is doing more to hold water in the landscape of The Farm and to protect its fields and forests than any number of dams could have. It is recharging both our aquifers and the water-retaining capacity of our soils. As The Farm gradually becomes more tropical, with just two seasons instead of the once-usual four, this capacity will be critical for keeping the rain that falls in the wet times of year, making water available for crops and animals when it is dry and temperatures climb well above 100°F.

Permaculture is the only way we can imagine our children still living here in another 50 or 75 years. Or the trees in our forests, the squirrels, and the butterflies, for that matter. ♡

Albert Bates is author of The Financial Collapse Survival Guide and Cookbook and 14 other books on energy, environment, and history, including Climate in Crisis (1990) and The Post-Petroleum Survival Guide and Cookbook (2006). A former environmental and civil rights lawyer, he has argued before the US Supreme Court and written a number of legislative acts. A cofounder and past president of the Global Ecovillage Network, he is presently GEN's representative to the UN climate talks. When not inventing fuel wringers for algae or pyrolyzing cookstoves, he teaches permaculture, village design, and natural building, and is a special advisor for Gaia University. He wrote the chapter on agriculture for State of the World 2010. His latest book is The Biochar Solution: Carbon Farming and Climate Change (New Society 2010).

E-COOL VILLAGES

FORTY PERCENT OF THE LAND AREA OF JAPAN IS CALLED **SATOYAMA**, THE AREA BETWEEN HUMAN HABITAT, FIELDS AND WILDERNESS. IT IS A MOSAIC OF MINIMAL INTERVENTION, WHERE FARMERS, FORAGERS, HUNTERS, AND OTHERS FORAY, TAKE A LITTLE OUT, THEN LEAVE IT ALONE TO REGROW.

..PAPA, COME QUICKLY! THE WILD BOARS ARE IN THE RICE!

IF WE CUT THE BAMBOO, THE BOARS WILL STOP REPRODUCING AND STAY OUT OF OUR RICE!

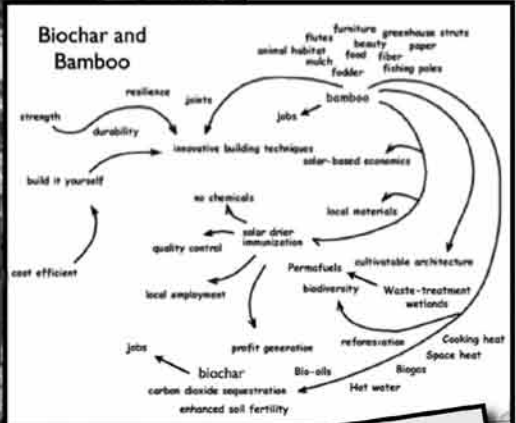
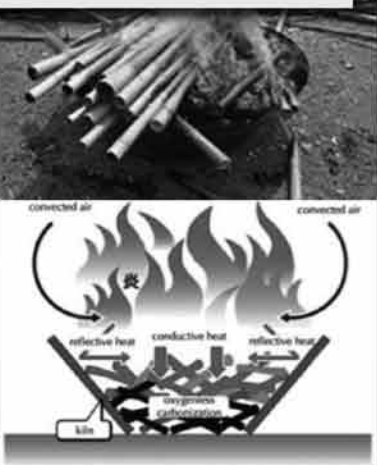
IN 2009, THE HOZU FARMERS COOP CAME UP WITH A NEW IDEA...

IN RECENT YEARS THE EXODUS OF PEOPLE FROM THE RURAL AREAS HAS ALLOWED THE SATOYAMA TO FALL INTO NEGLECT, RESULTING IN LOSS OF CULTURAL AND BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY.

WORKING WITH KAMEOKA CITY GROCERIES, THEY STARTED GROWING CABBAGES IN BIOCHAR MADE FROM SATOYAMA BAMBOO AND BRANDING "COOL VEGETABLES"

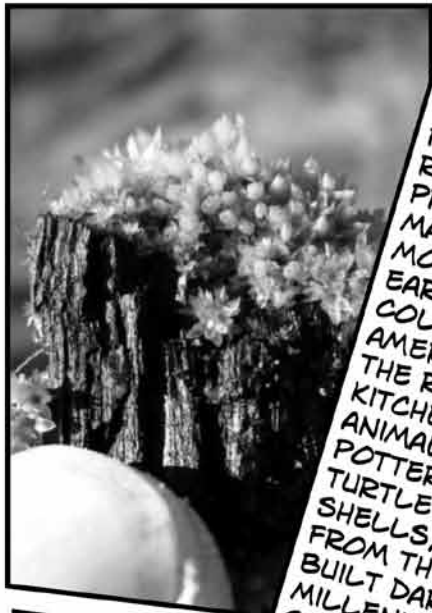
NO CHEMICALS + BIOCHAR = COOL FOOD

COOL VEGETABLES WERE A GREAT SUCCESS! PEOPLE LIKED THE IDEA OF BUYING HEALTHY FOOD THAT COOLED THE PLANET!



by Albert Bates, Akira Shibata, Steven R. McGreevy, Frank Michael, Ronal W. Larson, Erich Knight, Jeffery Wallin, Nathaniel Mulcahy, Jonathan Dawson, and Rob Wheeler.

WHAT IS BIOCHAR?



THE ORIGIN OF THE COOL FOODS REVOLUTION WAS NOT IN THE BAMBOO FORESTS OF JAPAN, BUT RATHER FROM THE PRACTICES OF SOIL MANAGEMENT DISCOVERED EARLIER. IN PRE-COLUMBIAN TIMES, AMERICAN PEOPLES TOOK THE REFUSE FROM THEIR KITCHENS - FISH AND ANIMAL BONES, BROKEN POTTERY, NUT HUSKS, TURTLE AND OYSTER SHELLS, AND CINDERS FROM THEIR FIRES - AND BUILT DARK EARTHS. MILLENNIA LATER, THOSE SOILS PROVIDE TRIPLE "PARENT" SOILS ONLY METERS AWAY.

Micropores --
1g. = 1000 m³



A SIMPLE CLAY STOVE, MADE IN KENYA, MAKES BIOCHAR WHILE COOKING SUPPER.

mean soil residence time of normal carbon = 12-15 years

mean soil residence time of biochar = 1000 years

BIOCHAR COOLS THE PLANET BY MOVING CARBON FROM ATMOSPHERE TO EARTH

1/2 Biochar
1/2 potting soil

Turnip

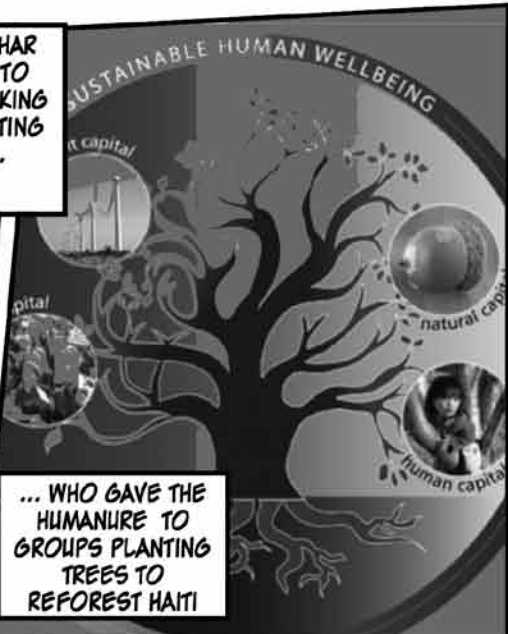
Potting soil only

AFTER THE HAITIAN EARTHQUAKE, AID GROUPS MADE BIOCHAR COOKING STOVES FOR REFUGEE CAMPS



Nathaniel Mulcahy showing designs that metal workers added to the stove wind screens. The metal workers say that trees and birds will return to Haiti when soil is rebuilt with biochar. Photo Credit: World Stove

... THE BIOCHAR WAS GIVEN TO GROUPS WORKING ON COMPOSTING TOILETS...



... WHO GAVE THE HUMANURE TO GROUPS PLANTING TREES TO REFOREST HAITI

ECOVILLAGES LATCHED ONTO BIOCHAR AND CARBON FARMING AS WAYS TO MAKE THEMSELVES CARBON-NEGATIVE.

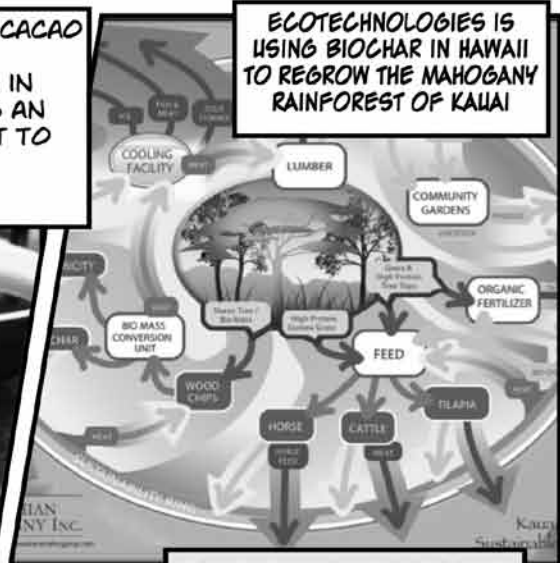


AUROVILLE IN INDIA DEVELOPED THE ADAM RETORT TO TURN COCONUT HUSKS INTO BIOCHAR

THE TOLEDO CACAO GROWERS ASSOCIATION IN BELIZE USES AN ADAM RETORT TO GROW COOL CHOCOLATE



ECOTECHNOLOGIES IS USING BIOCHAR IN HAWAII TO REGROW THE MAHOGANY RAINFOREST OF KAUAI

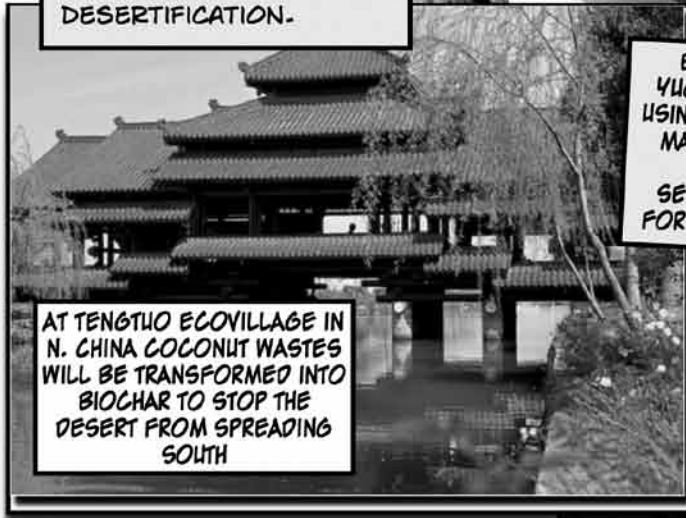
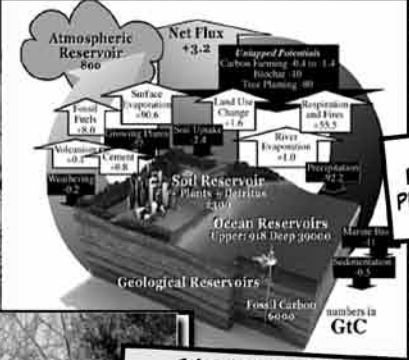


THE FARM IN TENNESSEE APPLIES BIOCHAR AND COMPOST TEA WITH A KEYLINE PLOW TO REINVIGORATE THE SOIL AND OFFSET THE WHOLE ECOVILLAGE'S CARBON FOOTPRINT, DROUGHTPROOFING THE SOIL AT THE SAME TIME.

TODAY ANCIENT FARMING TECHNIQUES ARE BEING RECONSTRUCTED BY ECOVILLAGES AND 'TRANSITION TOWNS'. THE GLOBAL ECOVILLAGE NETWORK IS WORKING WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF SENEGAL AND THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL FACILITY TO CONVERT 28,000 VILLAGES TO ECOVILLAGES AND, BY EMPLOYING YOUTH NETWORKS, PLANTING COOL FORESTS ALL THE WAY ACROSS AFRICA TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION.



SOLHEIMER ECOVILLAGE, POWERED BY RENEWABLES, IS PLANTING MILLIONS OF TREES TO REFOREST ICELAND



AT TENG TUO ECOVILLAGE IN N. CHINA COCONUT WASTES WILL BE TRANSFORMED INTO BIOCHAR TO STOP THE DESERT FROM SPREADING SOUTH

ECOVILLAGES IN THE YUCATAN PENINSULA ARE USING BIOCHAR TO REBUILD MAYAN SOILS INTO RICH BLACK EARTHS, SEQUESTERING CARBON FOR THE NEXT 1000 YEARS



... COOL FOOD, COOL LIVING, IN ECOOVILLAGES!

Hugelkultur on the Prairie, or Learning from Our Mistakes

By Alyson Ewald

I'm a sheet-mulching, swale-digging, perennial-planting lunatic like most permies, but no matter what I do I can never seem to get enough organic matter down into our solid clay subsoil. So when I heard about hugelkultur—burying logs in the ground beneath your plants—I was instantly sold.

I began shopping around our homestead at Red Earth Farms in rural Missouri as if it were a vast open-air hugelkultur store. My partner was thrilled with my sudden interest in all his piles of wooden detritus, too rotten to become firewood or construction materials. It seemed like every bit of degraded slope on our place was crying out for trenches filled with old sticks. I roamed around with a shovel and a deranged glint in my eye until I found two perfect spots. My only question was what to plant.

Hugelkultur, German for “mound culture,” may have roots in an ancient form of Eastern European sheet mulching. It has come to refer to a practice used by Austrian farmer Sepp Holzer and spread across the internet by permaculture maven Paul Wheaton and other bloggers. The idea is to build a raised bed by first digging a deep trench or pit and then filling it with woody stuff, adding some nitrogen-rich compost materials like grass clippings or manure if you have them, piling the soil back on top, mulching, and leaving it to break down. You can plant into it immediately or wait a while. You can also do it without the pit—just pile any soil or compost on top of a stack of logs.

The wood acts like a sponge, holding a tremendous amount of water and nutrients and feeding them

slowly to your plants. The decomposing wood attracts earthworms deep into your subsoil, extends your growing season by adding warmth, creates air pockets for your plants' roots to enter, and encourages mycelia to join the party. Sounded like a win-win-win to me.

I'd read that potatoes and cucurbits had been shown to do well in hugelkultur beds, but I had already planted those in other places. I'd also heard that the moist, decomposing logs could tie up nitrogen and lower soil pH, like a bog. I wanted to experiment with hugelkultur on a crop that I knew would enjoy the low pH. Like...blueberries!

Shockingly, the internet turned up exactly zero people who had tried blueberries in a hugelkultur bed. Clearly someone would have to launch this experiment. Then I received two things: a strong-armed intern, and a phone call from a neighbor offering me as many mature blueberry plants as I wanted. The universe was sending me a message. So we began to dig.

In the sites I had chosen, the soil was already quite acidic (pH 5.1). We dug a trench a few feet wide and about a foot and a half deep and laid the sodden, already crumbling logs and sticks in the bottom. Then we piled the subsoil and topsoil around the logs, stuck in some 10-year-old blueberry plants that were still holding soil around their roots, and mulched them like crazy with mown hay from our fields.

The plants initially thrived in our moist springtime. Although they had been completely neglected and unpruned in their old home, they stood proudly atop their hugels and set a fair amount of large, sweet fruit. Our



First fruit ripens in hugelkultur bed closest to pond.

daughter rejoiced in the berries and we celebrated our success.

Then came the drought. Two of the seven plants suddenly blackened and turned brittle. And I realized I had failed to heed fully two great tenets of permaculture: that we must put things in the right place, and that important functions should be performed by multiple elements.

“Place the elements of your design in ways that create useful relationships and time-saving connections among all parts,” says Toby Hemenway, author of *Gai’a’s Garden*. Well, of course I was aiming for a placement that would create those connections. That’s why I’d planted them along a frequently traveled path, where my community members and I could observe and tend (and harvest) easily. And that’s why I had chosen them to extend the “edge” of our orchard, where scything and leaf-fall would generate sufficient mulch nearby. I had placed them uphill of the rest of the orchard, so that any excess nutrients would run down to the fruit trees, and so that liming



Intern Teresa Rutton covers logs with soil to create a hugelkultur bed.



Author Alyson Ewald with mature blueberry plants in her new hugelkultur bed.

Photos courtesy of Alyson Ewald

only source of water—our pond. This was not a useful relationship or a time-saving connection. There was no element serving the all-important function of providing adequate water to saturate the logs, encourage them to compost, and fill the cavities between them and the soil. The poor plants were left literally high and dry, and I had little patience for hauling buckets of water up the hill in a cart.

The saving grace turned out to be community. Thank God I do not live alone out here on the prairie.

the orchard would not raise the pH of the blueberry bed. I was stacking functions—the logs would hold water and build organic matter and soil health, the perennial plants would hold soil and provide food, wildlife cover, beauty, and mulch, and the mound and hedge as a whole would help buffer the orchard against prevailing winds. I was turning a problem (acidic soil, unsightly log piles) into a solution (tasty berries). I had even placed the mounds along a slope so they would catch and store water, reducing runoff and protecting against erosion. What had I done wrong?

As the hot, dry July days continued, the answer became painfully clear: I had placed them far uphill from the

death of the five remaining plants. Spring will tell whether the hugelkultur experiment has succeeded.

Interestingly, the blueberries closest to our house have shown no difficulty at all. I suspect they have received more attention, mulch, urine, and water than those farther away. Which reminds me of another principle I forgot—start close to home and work slowly outward. A friend just gave me a couple more young blueberry plants, which I’m planning to put near the surviving ones closest to the house (and pond).

Sometimes I think I learn more from my failures than from my successes. Hey, guess what? That’s Toby Hemenway’s Permaculture Principle #14: “Mistakes are tools for learning.” At least there’s one principle I’m following. I’m considering building my next hugelkultur beds right here below the house, downhill from the pond. I think I’ll put in potatoes. 🍌

Alyson Ewald is an organizer, fundraiser, baker, and founding member of Red Earth Farms, a 76-acre community land trust in Missouri. She and her partner Mark experiment with permaculture, natural building, and child-raising together, with varying degrees of success.

The Future of Water

Halting desertification, restoring ecosystems, and nourishing communities

By Jeff Anderson

In sharp contrast to the paradisiacal beauty of our planet Earth pictured from afar—blue, green, and white in its wealth of life-giving water—a growing proportion of the world’s inhabitants face the harsh reality of water scarcity. The world faces a crisis concerning one of the most basic elements of life, with humanitarian and ecological consequences far beyond the economic shocks likely to result from the diminishing fossil energy supply.

In answer to this crisis and to the threat of desertification, the Tamera Peace Research Centre, an intentional community located on 331 acres in southern Portugal, has been establishing a permacultural water landscape on its land. Readers may recall the article “Water Is Life!” (COMMUNITIES #143, Summer 2009), which described the development of

Tamera’s water landscape since the vision was first presented to the community in 2007 by “Rebel Farmer” and permaculture expert Sepp Holzer. Within only two years, Tamera already seemed to have been transformed into a land blessed with an abundance of water—even at the height of its long, hot, and dry summers—providing a glimpse into an entirely different possibility for the dry landscape that stretches hundreds of miles east across the entire Iberian Peninsula.

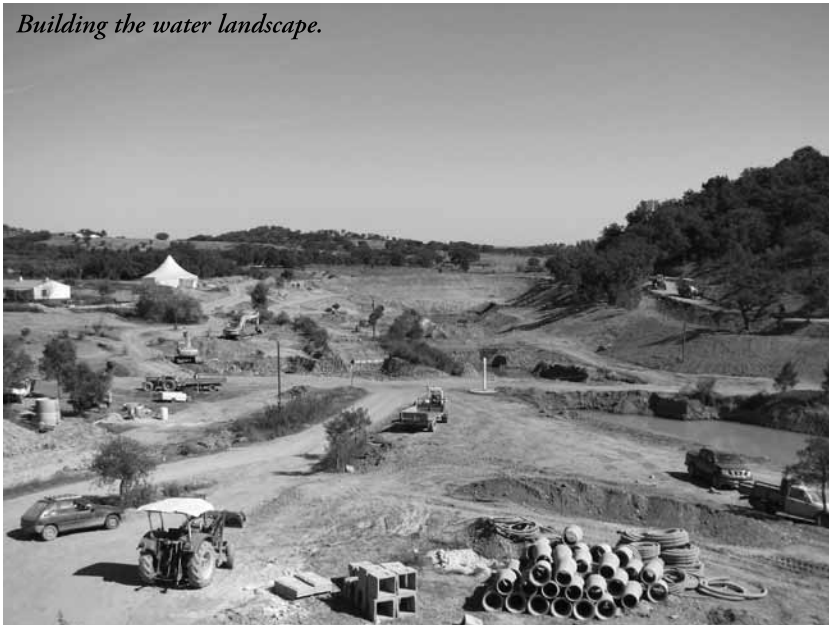
Last year, another large water retention space was added, and after last winter’s exceptionally high rainfall, all of Tamera’s many lakes and ponds were filled to capacity. Maddy Harland, editor of the UK-based *Permaculture Magazine*, described her astonishment during a visit earlier this year, saying “It is almost unbelievable that in such an arid landscape, so much water can be collected.” However, the existing retention spaces are still not sufficient to hold back all of the winter rains.

This summer, work began on what will become Tamera’s largest retention space, enabling the land to retain the entire rainfall of an average winter—a true *Water Retention Landscape*. Bernd Müller, coordinator for Tamera’s water landscape, describes how the only water then leaving the land will be fresh, clear, and vitalised spring-water. From this new retention space situated on the highest part of Tamera’s land, water will flow continuously throughout the year. It will then also be possible to maintain the water level of all the other retention spaces, and the whole land can be irrigated (as long as still necessary) without needing any additional energy for pumping.

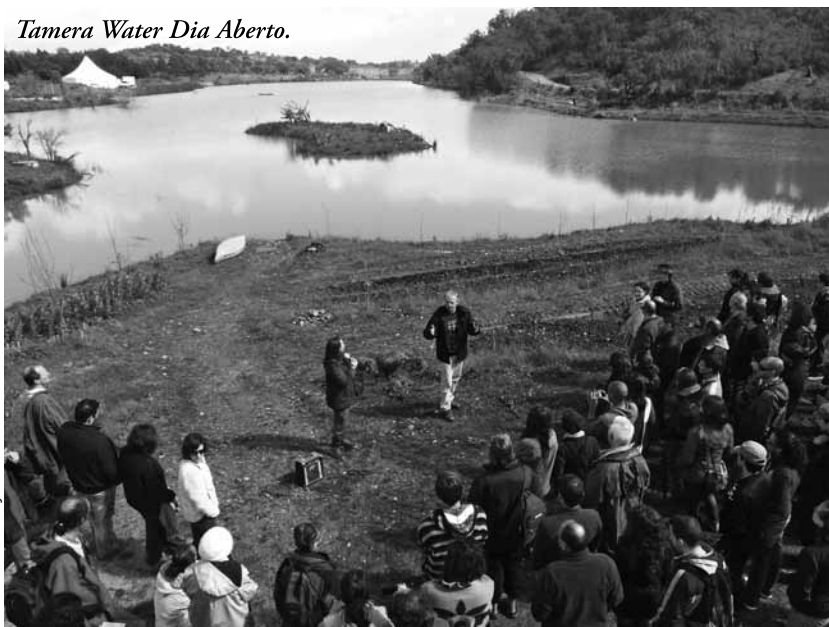
The fertility of the land is being restored by bringing back moisture to the earth-body, and

(continued on p. 74)

Building the water landscape.



Tamera Water Dia Aberto.



Permaculture on Low to No Budget

By Elizabeth Barrette

Permaculture as a horticultural approach creates a densely planted landscape with rich connections linking all its parts together. Books and courses on permaculture tend to view a landscape as a whole, which can imply a need to begin the whole permaculture all at once. This may work for people with a large landscaping budget, but many communities have less to work with in that regard. Happily, permaculture draws its inspiration from nature, and nature is the ultimate expert at making do.

You don't need large amounts of money to start practicing permaculture, although having at least a little will help. You also don't need to plan out the whole thing in advance. If you're new to permaculture, there are advantages to starting small, such as with a single rain garden to manage a soggy place or with a butterfly garden to attract beneficial insects. Many aspects of permaculture also lend themselves well to saving money.

Basic Principles

Permaculture looks quite different from conventional agriculture or landscaping; it looks more like wilderness. Yet permaculture is a system of order, not chaos. It grows out of a set of principles derived from careful observations of nature. Applying these principles creates a beautiful, functional, and frugal habitat. Below are just a handful of the fundamental ideas.

Start where you are; use what you have. Nature started with a dead bare rock and made the biosphere of the Earth. No matter how depleted your local environment may seem, you actually have quite a lot to build on. Identify the resources you have and take advantage of those before buying anything else. You may be surprised how much potential a close look reveals. Also, it is not necessary to landscape an entire area all at once. You can start small and grow from there.

Everything is connected. A natural ecosystem forms a dense web of resources and processes. Nothing is ever really wasted or lost. Permaculture uses that as inspiration to create tightly interlocking communities of plants and animals that suit human desires. One example is a "guild" of plants chosen to meet each other's needs. Closing the loop conserves resources and minimizes what you need to import.

Trees sweat so you don't have to. Nature does tremendous amounts of work all the time. Let it. Trees cool the air and retain moisture, reducing the need for air conditioning and supplemental watering. Miner plants ("dynamic accumulators") such as chicory draw trace elements from the subsoil so you don't need to add them. Nitrogen-fixing plants such as clover filter fertilizer out of the air, alleviating the need to buy it. Permaculture maximizes the work that nature does, reducing the need for human labor and extra materials.

Nature produces bounty. Everything

has uses; learn what they are. Identify what you want and need from a landscape, then design your permaculture to provide that. Stack functions so that a single plant provides multiple benefits; for instance, an apple tree provides shade, fruit, wildlife habitat, and nice wood for carving or burning. By studying what different parts of the ecosystem do, you can fit them together snugly in ways that benefit both humans and nature.

Get out of the way. Far more environmental problems come from humans than from nature. Earth's biosphere is well prepared to repair damage. If you don't know how to fix a problem, and it came from human interference—such as clearcutting or stripping off the topsoil—then often the best approach is to watch how nature responds and look for ways to assist that process. Similarly, try to avoid causing problems; in a permaculture system, think in the long term and resist the temptation to micromanage. "Don't just do something, stand there."



Clover attracts butterflies and other beneficial insects to Fieldhaven's prairie garden.

Photos by Elizabeth Barrette

Ways to Save Money

Because permaculture draws much of its structure from nature, rather than human economic systems, it lends itself well to frugality. Some of these techniques overlap with related models, such as organic gardening, while others relate more closely to permaculture in particular. Look at your community's budget for gardening, landscaping, etc. and see if you can think of more ways to conserve funds.

Get seeds or plants for free. Many options exist for this. Join a seed swap or plant swap to gain new varieties. Choose open-pollinated heirloom cultivars that breed true, so that you can save seeds for replanting in the spring. Watch for opportunities to gather native plants or seeds—sometimes a nature reserve will have a seed-gathering day or a developer will let people dig up native plants prior to a construction project. To establish a row of brush and trees attractive to local birds, till up a line of soil and then string a wire above it. Birds perching on the wire will deposit seeds in their droppings. The Bradley method of habitat restoration involves, at its core, starting with a patch that includes some native plants and simply clearing out all the exotic competitors so that the natives can spread.

Divide and conquer. Many plants, both natives and desirable exotics, spread themselves by clumping, runners, or other nonsexual means. Spring and fall are good times to divide dense patches and move some of the plants to a new area. Instead of buying a large number of expensive plants, you can buy a smaller number and propagate them yourself to cover the desired area. Learn which plants multiply and divide well, and when to divide each plant.

Choose native species that need minimum support. Many garden flowers and vegetables are exotics that require lots of extra water, weeding, fertilizer, and fussing to stay alive. Native plants may need a little extra care when first introduced, but once established they can largely take care of themselves. Explore your local environment to discover what edible, decorative, or otherwise useful plants live nearby and how they fit themselves together. This doesn't mean you have to do without all your favorite cultivated plants, just that replacing some domesticated varieties with natives can save you both money and effort.

Favor perennials over annuals. Perennial plants return year after year, saving both time and money. Annuals require that you obtain new seeds or plants each spring. Some annuals, however, reseed themselves well enough that they function more like perennials in a permaculture context. You can still grow your favorite annuals, but the more perennials you can use, the better.

Buy just the right plants. Start by using free methods, as described above, to obtain as many plants or seeds as possible. Then fill in the gaps by buying the varieties you need to fill specific roles in your permaculture. You'll get better results by paying for a few ideal plants than by settling for something free that doesn't fit well or doing without. Look in heirloom seed catalogs or conservation catalogs for reasonably priced plants suited to permaculture. Ordinary gardening catalogs tend to stock mostly hybrids and exotics that are less useful for this purpose.

Harvest materials from the landscape for its own maintenance. For instance, when trimming excess brush out of a wooded area, save some branches for staking peas or tomatoes. Soaking comfrey leaves in water makes a good fertilizer spray. Wormwood, rue, pyrethrum, and pennyroyal are just a few herbs that produce insect repellent.

Keep a compost pile. This allows you to process not only dead weeds and other plant refuse from your permaculture project, but also kitchen scraps. A compost pile produces abundant amounts of

dark, fluffy organic matter that enriches your soil and aids water retention. It's one more thing you don't have to buy.

Lower water bills with water conservation. Fill soggy areas with a rain garden. In dry areas, bury rotten logs or a quantity of wood chips to absorb and hold water underground. On slopes, dig swales (shallow ditches) to catch runoff. Use mulch around trees and between plants both for catching water as it arrives and preventing its loss via evaporation. Also, water is one area where a modest investment can really pay off: buy one or more rain barrels to catch the free water that falls on your roof. A hose or tap in the barrel makes it easy to water nearby plants directly from the rain barrel. Alternatively, you can route downspout water to a rain garden or water garden.

Close the money loop. Remember that permaculture is a cyclic system. When you buy plants, tools, or materials for it that means money flowing out. Find ways to make money flow in. Permaculture generates many useful—and marketable—resources including food, cut flowers, craft materials, and firewood. A well-planned

Fieldhaven's wildflower garden includes purple coneflower and gray-headed coneflower, blooming in early July.



permaculture can thus support its own modest budget through sale of surplus materials.

Permaculture in Community

Permaculture resembles intentional community in many ways. Its underlying structure creates stability and consistency over the long term. Within that context, things grow and change, allowing for diversity and adaptability. This helps make permaculture a good fit for the community context.

First, consider your human resources. The more members your community involves in its permaculture projects, the higher the chance of success. Encourage people to participate in all the stages—brainstorming, planning, planting, tending, and harvesting. Different folks might find that their talents apply to different stages or projects, and that's okay. In permaculture there are ways for everyone to contribute, depending on their interests and abilities.

Also, think about your community members and their needs. Look at your land with an eye toward its strengths and weaknesses. This will tell you what kind of permaculture projects might work best for you.

Do you have elderly and/or handicapped members in your community? They might appreciate wide, smooth walkways with comfortable resting places amidst a scenic garden filled with wildflowers and interesting shrubs.

Do you have active children and young adults? They may enjoy an “adventure garden” sturdy enough to withstand foot traffic as they learn about plants and animals. It also helps to keep a sizable patch of lawn—which most permaculture projects minimize—available as play space.

Are there many artists, writers, and other creative people? Consider designing some areas for inspiration, such as a flower garden for painting, a collection of plants that yield natural dyes, or tall grasses and willows for basket making.

Are people interested in environmental awareness? Plant a wildlife garden to attract birds, beneficial insects, and other animals. Include a restoration patch of plants native to your region. Grow plants that make fertilizers, insect repellents, cleansers, and other substances so that you need fewer chemicals.

Does your land include a barren patch that is too hot or cold, wet or dry, or somehow damaged to grow much of interest? Examine the “weeds” there and try to figure out what they're doing to survive and repair the earth. You can probably think of some native species that would suit the same conditions while also being more attractive and useful.

Does your community want to grow part or all of your own food? Permaculture offers many options such as a food forest, an orchard built from different fruit tree guilds, a vegetable polyculture, or a spiral garden full of herbs. You can enjoy many unusual flavors rarely found in supermarkets, such as mulberries, pawpaws, or elder-

flower fritters.

Do you entertain a lot of guests? A dooryard garden at the guest house or community center looks inviting and helps start conversations. If the lodging is spread out, you might prefer a focal garden at your community entrance or some other highly visible location.

Ideally, permaculture is a long-term project. You might start with just one or two pieces, then connect them, and

**Permaculture is a lot like
intentional community—
many individuals living together
for mutual benefit.**

gradually expand to cover more area. As new people move into your community, the permaculture plan can grow and change accordingly to accommodate new interests. Connecting with other people or communities interested in permaculture can also give you fresh ideas. Over time, the increasing variety of plants will attract more types of birds, insects, and other wildlife for you to enjoy. Just remember that permaculture is a lot like intentional community—many individuals living together for mutual benefit. So get to know your plant neighbors. You'll be glad you did. 🌿

Elizabeth Barrette writes and edits non-fiction, fiction, and poetry in diverse fields including speculative fiction, green living, community, and politics. Visit her blog [The Wordsmith's Forge](http://TheWordsmithsForge.com) (ysabetwordsmith.livejournal.com).

Recommended Resources

The Basics of Permaculture Design by Ross Mars. Permanent Publications, 2005. Introduces theory and design principles of permaculture.

The Food Forest—A permaculture farm offering classes and information: www.foodforest.com.au.

Gaia's Garden: A Guide to Home-Scale Permaculture by Toby Hemenway. Chelsea Green Publishing, 2009. Explains the basic principles of permaculture and how to practice it in small to medium areas, with many practical examples.

Getting Started In Permaculture: 50 Practical Projects to Build and Design Productive Gardens by Ross Mars and Jenny Mars. Permanent Publications, 2007. Sample gardens designed on permaculture principles.

The Permaculture Institute—Website with information about permaculture classes, a blog, and articles on permaculture topics: www.permaculture.org.



Nature's Friends Wait for Human Companionship

By Rev. Marjani Dele

When writing about the struggles one has with a garden, people often list soil conditions and the various pests that attack the effort. Likewise, when initiating permaculture efforts, we need to discuss the soil of the human mind, as well as the amendments necessary to make the effort successful. These reflections hint at some of the amendments necessary to make our neighborhoods safe for sustainability...

I was first exposed to permaculture during my Katrina response work in New Orleans. My independent ministry had just completed radio town hall meetings in Houston and now we had secured a house in New Orleans to offer counseling and trauma support. The 30 Common Ground volunteers who came to remediate the soil in the front yard brought permaculture and vibrant communal practices with them. We talked about how the yard would embrace the youth I wanted to serve there. It was a very natural progression from using medicinal herbs, gardening, and environmental activism.

Every morning the volunteers arrived with tools and the earth supplies for the day. One day it was sunflowers to absorb the heavy metals, one day it was mushrooms to absorb the oil, and one day they brought food scraps and hay to sheet mulch the areas that didn't have transforming agents. Throughout the day I served lemonade or watermelon; around noon and 4 PM their food arrived from the Common Ground kitchen and they went into a serving and sharing routine. There was always a lot of laughter and fun.

My efforts to establish permaculture in south central Virginia have not been as pleasant, even though the 13 acres of mature woodlands and pasture land are gorgeous and emit much peace.

I was introduced to this town by someone who operated a free camp for youth. My week-long coming-of-age camp for middle school-aged boys was so successful, I wanted to do all of my ministry with youth and adults in nature. Instead the owner suddenly died right as I was moving into town. So I was moving into a town made up of generations of families and mine was hundreds of miles away. To make matters worse, I was a solitary Black woman sporting dreadlocks and African attire, moving into what I now know is a highly racially segregated culture. All of the other Blacks, rich and poor, live on the other side of the railroad tracks in town. The fact that my son, a former pro football player, bought the house was a well-known fact before I even moved in. People felt secure in their expectation that I would maintain a 1 1/2 inch lawn at all times anywhere there were not trees or the ubiquitous day lilies or crepe myrtles. They had no idea that I was a seasoned activist—and an environmental one at that. I named the property after the camp that closed—Nature's Friends.

My lawn's approximately four acres of open pasture had been carefully beaten into a nitrate-fed lawn compacted by tractors. The resulting monoculture crop has not seen more than 1 1/2 inches of growth for 50 years and would make any golf club owner proud. The clay soil has the consistency of terra cotta and would make any

potter proud. However the hardness of the soil has nothing on the minds of the people in this town of 1800 residents.

One neighbor stopped by after my first night in the house. She said she had moved to this neighborhood because her previous neighbors were drunks who harassed her. She threatened to move back to Michigan. My next-door neighbor called every elected official in the county to try to prevent my harvesting a small portion of my trees. The town manager came to talk to every person who worked in my yard from the surveyor to the logger. I thought this bordered on harassment but decided to bide my time in responding. Then this same neighbor who was afraid I was transgressing her property line had her lawn guy remove my property line stake because it interfered with the aesthetics in her front yard. I had the surveyor replace it with a steel fence post. The town manager told me she called to complain about that as well. Every month at my herb club meeting, a member who is also a leader in the NRA would comment about some feature in my front yard. I was dumbfounded at how she knew so much since she lives 45 minutes away. Come to find out, her husband drives by my house every Tuesday on the way to the country club down the street.

In an attempt to be neighborly, I participated in citizen clean-up efforts, helped clear the area for the railroad park, and helped build a float for the annual Christmas parade. When I began to allow certain native plants to grow, so did a string of complaints. I realized that these people did not see themselves living in a sleepy country town. In their minds we were living in a gated suburban community. A yard that doesn't have straight lines of pruned greenery is out of order and in need of discipline. The commonwealth attorney's family estate is across the street from me. We don't see the woods that lie behind the four houses which are close to the road. Those yards, as well as the 10 acres surrounding two ponds, stay mowed 1 1/2 inches year round. No plant—especially not grass—should be seen in its mature state. It reminds me of our distaste for human aging. When monoculture enslaves the land, our eyes are trained to see conformity as beautiful and diversity as threatening—on a lot of levels.

Following the complaints, I went to the town council meeting to get a variance so I could do what was already listed on the town books as an appropriate use of land 100 feet back from the road. My area was 400 feet back. I told them I had a nature project and had newspaper articles about my working with youth to prove it. I told them I specifically moved out of the city to the country to do nature-based ministry. I reminded them of the unusual “welcoming tactics” I had to deal when I first moved in. One council member said I could continue if I was willing to consider a privacy fence so they wouldn't have to see it. Another wanted to see a plan to make sure I was

growing the right kind of plants. The mayor said okay just as long as you don't make any money. I chuckled. Considering the plight of today's farmers, that shouldn't be hard. I also was amused by the irony that efforts aren't sustainable if you can't earn money in the process. Anyway they humored me, maybe because I had led a very successful Praise Service during the town's Centennial celebration. The next day the town manager and chief of police visited me to mark off the intended “nature area” so that town folks would not be offended. This was also to avoid trying to explain permaculture to the elderly members on council. They extolled the virtues of Roundup even though I impressed upon them my desire for an organic, sustainable demonstration project.

In permaculture we imitate the way Nature creates curved edges to increase productivity and spawn new life. Humans make linear boundaries to control productivity and divide “mine” from “yours.” What if we looked at property lines as places to gather and cross-pollinate ideas instead?

My father was an officer in the Air Force and so I grew up being a pollinator whether I wanted to or not. I am now a purposeful pollinator and continued to cross-pollinate permaculture to anyone who would listen. I expected the 4-H groups and Girl Scouts to be allies since both have environmental programs with badges and other incentives. I did not expect it would take me two years of cultivation to get them to participate in one permaculture Earth Day activity which lasted four hours—and turned out to be full of laughter. Then I began to recall that all of the plants I have tried to grow also require two years before thriving. This experience shifted my concepts of reciprocity and balance in relationships. This is when I began

Humans make linear boundaries to divide “mine” from “yours.” What if we looked at property lines as places to gather and cross-pollinate ideas instead?

to believe that inner voice which was telling me that the soil within the human is reflected in the earth, and vice versa.

Before moving to Victoria, Virginia, I thought my social activist buddies would come to help work the land. During my 12 years in DC there had been much talk about securing some land and sharing our time in spiritual restoration. I have learned that those who want to restore themselves don't always want to spend some time restoring Mother Nature in return. Permaculture separates the spectators from the participators. A few times people have actually driven down or ridden the train. While we are in the front yard, locals will slowly drive by in cars and stop in the middle of the road to watch what we

(continued on p. 75)

Growing a Culture of Gratitude in Argentine Patagonia

A WWOOFer Experiences Community Living

By James Collector



Top to bottom:

- 1. Located in the Lakes District of Argentina, El Bolsón is host to many rainbows, such as this brilliant vignette over one of Wunjo's greenhouses.*
- 2. From left to right, Juliane, Gabriela, Camila, and Eric help dread Asa's hair while she sips maté in the community kitchen.*
- 3. Author James Collector.*

The blanket was crowded with little squares of cloth. Each held a handful of corn, quinoa, wheat, vegetables, herbs, fruit, nuts, or honey. Wild lupines, roses, and other flowers formed a vignette around the colorful spread. One by one, we began to throw it all in the fire.

I had traveled to South America to learn the basics of organic farming through a program called World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF). Now, in Argentine Patagonia, I had immersed myself in a culture of growing. As the smoke from our offerings drifted up into the canopy of coihue trees, the other volunteers and I exchanged confused looks. Our farm hosts, a young couple seated in the circle beside us, continued the summer solstice ceremony by passing around a seashell filled with smoldering incense. They asked us to voice our gratitude. Supermarkets were not among the things for which I said thanks.

WWOOF is a program for which anyone interested in an affordable cultural experience can be thankful. The format is simple: volunteers work in exchange for meals and a place to stay. In 1971, the program was started in England to provide access to the countryside. Today almost 100 nations accept WWOOF volunteers in North America, Latin America, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and throughout Asia. At the WWOOF website, one can buy an inexpensive membership (I paid \$45) which includes a current list of all the farms accepting volunteers in the chosen country. I picked Argentina.

In early December, I hopped off a bus outside of El Bolsón, a small town in the Rio Negro province of Argentina, with my long-time friend, Asa. We stood with our backpacks in the cloud of dust from the departing bus and stared at the wooden sign. Wunjo, the farm was called. We had sent volunteer requests to over 20 farms and Wunjo was the only one that responded. From a few email correspondences with a woman named Gabriela, we knew that the people here needed help gardening and building a house, that we would sleep in tents and eat a vegetarian diet for the next month.

Inside the gate, a cat was dozing in the grass just outside the perimeter of a sprinkler. A few minutes passed until a shirtless man walked up and introduced himself in *Castellano*—Castilian Spanish—as Luigi. He led us down a dirt path and through a grove of cherry and plum trees to a small adobe building. There we met Gabriela and the handful of other permanent residents of the farm. They were placing the last tiles into the mosaic floor of the newly constructed community kitchen. Wunjo had only begun accepting volunteers one year before, in 2009. Except for one German girl, we were the earliest volunteers to arrive that summer.

Anxious to demonstrate our work ethic, Asa and I offered to help, but Gabriela handed us plates of potato salad and, in broken English, suggested we relax. Sitting beneath racks of drying herbs, we ate in silence, acutely conscious of the language barrier. After we finished, Luigi showed us where we could pitch our tent, and how to use the bathroom, a dry outhouse designed to turn human feces into fertilizer by mixing it with wood shavings.

The learning curve was steep. But within a week, our *Castellano* had improved and we settled into a routine. Each morning, the 8 AM breakfast was announced with the blowing of a conch shell. We ate meals together in the community kitchen—a hubbub of playing children, begging dogs, the grandmother's dream interpretations, unexpected guests, and maté-fueled discussions about the daily agenda. Then, we worked. Our efforts were split halfway between gardening and building a house of almost entirely natural materials.

More volunteers arrived to help, among them Eric Ferrer, 29, from Bordeaux, France.

Ferrer had previous experience working on WWOOF farms in Europe and India before he traveled to Argentina.

“As a carpenter, I wanted to learn about natural construction more than anything else,” Ferrer wrote via email after staying an extra month at Wunjo. “I feel like I learned some good things. I realized that we can build our houses with a lot of energy and just a little knowledge—more or less—and that everything doesn’t have to be square and straight to have a good-looking little house.”

Though it has not received much press outside of Argentina, El Bolsón is the setting for a natural construction movement. The house we helped build reflected the—for lack of a better word—hippie ethos of the Wunjo. The house blueprints were chalk sketches by its soon-to-be inhabitants, a single mother, Brisa, and her two young sons. The support and crossbeams were all roughly hewn tree branches and trunks. As a result, there was hardly a right angle in the whole house. Following Brisa’s vague directions, we used wire and nails to install glass panes and wine bottles as windows. For insulation, we poured a mixture of water and clay over piles of straw, then stuffed it by the handful into networks of baling wire in the walls. Once it was dry, we added a smooth layer of grey adobe. By lunchtime at 2 PM. each day, we were invariably smeared with clay from head to foot. Moreover, the disorganized work would aggravate our Western sense of efficiency.

Not until everyone at the farm sat down together to talk one day, did I begin to understand what I was learning. A few of the other volunteers, including Ferrer, expressed a sense of urgency to accomplish more in the garden and the construction of the house. Luigi, Wunjo’s head carpenter, listened until they had finished. Then, he put our lesson into words. He said the garden and the house should come second to personal work. I was stunned. As an American, no “boss” had ever said something like that to me.

In the following weeks, I started unlearning to worry. I began to enjoy

work and, as a result, accomplish more. The strawberry patches were soon completely weeded. In less than a week, we insulated all the remaining walls in the house.

In addition, I began to understand the people and how their views on modern culture had compelled them to start a sustainable community. I was progressing in a different kind of education.

Other volunteers also experienced unexpected growth. Juliane Damm, 22, from Chemnitz in Saxony, Germany encountered a culture at Wunjo that made her rethink how people live in Western society.

“The respect between people at Wunjo was good to see,” Damm wrote via email. “I always wanted that to be the ideal way for people to interact, but at the same time thought that it wasn’t possible. After some weeks at Wunjo, I got a kind of quietness within me that told me that it could be possible.”

Granted, we did exchange modern worries for more rustic ones. The earthworms that occasionally flopped out of the faucet in the kitchen sink still disturbed me. When

**Not only was my “common sense”
continually challenged, but a part of
my heart, like the oven door, had
unexpectedly fallen open.**

Brisa’s four-year-old son would bring us maté during work, I found it difficult to trust that he would make it up the rickety wooden ladder barefoot holding a thermos of hot water. The oven door, it seemed, needed hinges. Not only was my “common sense” continually challenged, but a part of my heart, like the oven door, had unexpectedly fallen open.

The greatest challenge snuck up on me in my last week at Wunjo: I realized I was in love with this place and I didn’t want to leave. I had never before lived in such an intimate community. My childhood neighborhood was a suburban maze of strangers. Sadness washed over me to think of returning to the default world. I found myself unable to explain these melancholy feelings even to myself, much less other people.

I went into the forest to meditate. The afternoon tree shadows had drifted into zig-zag shapes when suddenly I remembered that Gabriela had taught me that the word “Wunjo” comes from the Old English rune for “Joy.” Joy! I had tasted it and it would forever live inside me. Leaving Wunjo was not back-tracking into the default world. Rather, I would be venturing out to share the joy of community culture that I had experienced here. Now, I knew.

I returned from the forest determined to give back to these people who had given me so much. I volunteered to cook dinner. Cooking a vegetarian meal for 12 people using a wood fire and river water, all the while communicating in rapid-fire *Castellano*, is the kind of challenge I had traveled to Argentina to encounter. The dinner table is where culture and agriculture truly converge. Before we ate, it was a custom at Wunjo to say a prayer of thanks. That night, and every night since, I’ve felt grateful just to have been there. 🐾

For more information, see the Wunjo blog at www.lespaciodemagos.blogspot.com and the WWOOF website at www.wwoof.org.

Born in Boulder, Colorado, James Collector, 24, graduated from the University of Colorado with a degree in journalism. His quest is to answer the question: “How to be?” But he’s not dying for answers; the search is the life lesson.

Cultivating Hope: Using Permaculture to Feed the Orphaned Children in Kenya

Homa-Bay Equator Initiatives (HOBEI) is a Youth Ecovillage Network in Kenya using permaculture techniques to feed orphans and disadvantaged children.



Photos courtesy of Victor Omondi

Earth Care initiatives.

Homa-Bay County is home to more than 30,000 orphaned children whose parents have died mainly from HIV/AIDS-related complications. At a time when the HIV/AIDS prevalence nationally is stabilizing at seven percent, Homa-Bay has a prevalence of 21 percent. People hoped the extended family safety net would absorb the orphans and reintegrate them into other families to enable them to lead normal lives. But the situation is not that rosy, the safety net has been perforated, and poverty prevalence is as high as 74.4 percent.

HOBEI supports the grandmothers who are left with these children. The grandmothers are old and do not have any income to take care of the children. Because these children run greater risks of being malnourished and having stunted growth than children with capable parents, the organization also grows vegetables and fruits while applying permaculture techniques, and teaches the local communities about permaculture principles and ethics.

The project appreciates any financial and material support to implement its goals and activities. 🐦

Victor Omondi coordinates the Youth Ecovillage Kenya Network; contact him at youthecovillagekenya@yahoo.com.



Grandmother with orphans.



The Sharing Gardens

A unique and viable approach to establishing local food self-reliance while building stronger communities based on the principle of “giving without thought of receiving”

By Llyn Peabody

A *Sharing Garden* differs from the usual community garden in that it is one large plot, shared by all, instead of many separate ones rented by individuals. All materials and labor are donated. The food we grow is shared amongst those who have need, whether or not they have contributed time, materials, or labor. All surplus is donated to our local food bank and other charities. No one is ever charged money for the food that is grown. This model is easily replicated anywhere there are vacant lots and people with enough gardening experience to oversee the project, and does not require a large input of money to make it work. It can also be adapted to many different scales of gardening, from a few families who live and garden on the same block to a multi-acre production farm.

My husband Chris Burns and I started the first Sharing Garden in the small rural town of Alpine, Oregon, in April of 2009. Located about midway between Corvallis and Eugene, Alpine is a “blink and you miss it” town; the only commercial establishment, a small tavern. The garden is 100 ft. by 80 ft. and was established on a converted lawn, in a park that was created by local residents in the 1960s. Chris and I used to take daily walks through the park and were dismayed by the vandalism to the park’s picnic pavilion and benches. There was little sense of coherent community in the town and we wanted to grow more food than was possible in our tiny home-plot where we were renters. So we approached the committee that oversees the park, and a local nonprofit agency to see if they would become our fiscal agent and, with very little effort or resistance, the Alpine Sharing Garden was born.



Top to bottom:

1. Kaitlynn and Kyra help with the harvest.
2. The “mulching team” spreading donated hay.
3. A weeding party.

That first year, we created and maintained the gardens mostly by ourselves. Volunteers did help on occasion—farmers with big equipment tilled the soil and dug fence post holes; sometimes we had help with planting, weeding, and mulching. But we didn’t make an effort to recruit much help as it was easier to work alone, developing our systems and techniques (our relationship was only 18 months old and, though Chris has over 40 years of gardening experience, I was coming to it new). Had we had the complexity of adding other people’s energy and input into the project at that time, it might have been a bit chaotic or overwhelming, leaving everyone frustrated with the experience.

That spring, we moved from a two-bedroom house, where we paid \$750/month in rent, to a 1950s, park-model (plumbing hooked up to septic), 8 ft. by 40 ft. travel trailer. With work exchange of just 20 hours/month and \$50 for utilities, we were able to greatly reduce our expenses. June of 2009 is when gas prices and unemployment began to rise sharply. Paying work, in our rural valley, became very hard to come by. Chris and I had some savings to carry us for a little while, and with the \$1,250 we raised for the gardens through donations, we were able to devote our full-time energy to growing the garden and developing the model. By mid-summer we were harvesting our first fresh vegetables, with enough surplus to take a wheelbarrow full to the food bank each week, and were able to inspire other local gardeners to begin donating their surplus there as well.

In year two (2010), things began to grow exponentially. Chris noticed an empty lot behind the local food bank. We approached the owner of the property about starting a second garden, and, without a moment’s hesitation, he cast his full support behind the project, paying for a new pump to be put in the well and covering the cost of the electricity to run it. We have a year-to-year agreement with him and he lets us use the land for free. The only caveat is that he has the property for sale and, if it sells, we will only be able to garden until the end of the season, at which point we will have to find a new site.

This second Sharing Garden is located about five miles from Alpine in the town of Monroe. Though still quite small (population 680), Monroe has a dozen or so businesses, the local high school and grade school (within sight of the Sharing Garden), a city council and mayor. With its proximity to the food bank, we are able to literally wheelbarrow the just-picked vegetables straight to our main recipients. Kids walk by the gardens on their way home from school and often visit with us and help us to grow food which they happily take home to share with their families.

In 2010 we began to grow the volunteer program in earnest. We established regular volunteer times at both garden sites and created an email list of interested people so we could remind them weekly of where and when we’d be meeting. Though we had over 20 people on our list, our core group numbered more like five to eight. These were the people who came week after week to participate in the fun and camaraderie that began to develop.

Some of my best memories of that year were on harvest days. We’d get started in the cool of the morning, empty harvest boxes piled by the gate, with the sound of bird calls, and a light mist and dew hovering on the garden. Volunteers would arrive and Chris would direct them to areas ready for harvest. Some people liked to pair up in the bean patch, slowly moving down the rows, comfortably scooting along on the thick, dry straw we mulch the paths with. Bean picking is most conducive to conversation and you could hear the murmur of people catching up on their lives, occasionally punctuated by laughter as they filled buckets and boxes with beans.

Tomato picking is for people who like the hunt. We had about 200 plants in the Monroe garden! No time to build cages that year so the vines sprawled on a bed of straw and pickers had to crawl between them to find their precious fruit. We did a pre-sort right there in the field: ripe tomatoes that had begun to split were boxed separately to be taken home and canned. (For many volunteers this was their first experience at canning and preserving food, inspired by the cornucopia of fresh produce.) As the boxes and buckets were filled, volunteers brought them to the weigher/record-keeper who kept track of the harvest. After it was recorded, it was brought to the food bank about 50 yards away, and made available to the 30-50 families/per week (up to 200/month) who receive support.

There is a beautiful “hum” in the gardens on harvest days. I think this comes from the fact that people know they are doing meaningful service. Food is such a fundamental need—truly “common ground.” The Earth gives to us freely—no price tag on the sun, the air, soil, or water. When we are able to participate in this “gift economy,” giving without thought of receiving, I believe it touches something ancient and true and feeds us far beyond the nutrients and calories we receive from the food itself.

One of our greatest problems in 2010 was what to do with the tremendous surplus we grew! At the end of the food bank session, Chris and I would stand with literally boxes of beans, tomatoes, squash, and cucumbers, encouraging volunteers and food bank stragglers to, “Please, take more home!” We grew and gave away about 5,000 pounds of vegetables, including 270 bunches of kale and heads of lettuce (a local market value of approximately \$9,950). In 2011, we established a connection with a second food bank and a bi-weekly lunch program for seniors to pick up our surplus produce each week and distribute to other people in need, thereby eliminating this problem.

I think one of the concerns that comes up for people when they consider starting any project that involves sharing (especially without a specific system of accounting), whether it’s in a garden, or creating a tool bank, etc., is “Will I get enough? Will my needs be met? Will it feel *fair*?” In terms of gardening, perhaps you have a favorite vegetable, or you want to preserve some of the harvest and want to have enough at any one time to make your canning project worthwhile. Here is how we address these concerns: We have focused on growing foods that are popular, rather than growing specialty items that will be unfamiliar to the average food bank recipient or garden volunteer. We also devote a considerable amount of garden space to growing storage crops such as potatoes and winter squash so the gardens continue to feed people through the winter. But we also have started smaller patches of less familiar vegetables: arugula, tomatillos, and fava beans, to name a few. These satisfy the pallet of our more sophisticated recipients and help expose others to new taste sensations. As for having enough to preserve, this has varied significantly in our two main harvest years: 2010 and 2011. When we have had enough surplus, the volunteers took home copious amounts for their own home canning.

Another “fairness” issue that we have had to face involves how much time each person volunteers: “If I helped in the garden twice as much as the other guy, how come he’s taking home the same amount of produce?” Our model is meant to help people develop the practice of giving without thought of return; without specifically accounting in a buy/sell or even bartering state of mind. We encourage volunteers to “give what they can” and “receive what they need.” It is interesting to me that the volunteers always seem concerned that they are taking too much. It is the people who are receiving the food for free at the food bank who sometimes get into a “hoarder” mentality. Through

Top to bottom:
1. Now that’s a lot of coleslaw!
2. Harvesting potatoes with a broadfork.
3. Ricardo helps to feed his family.



Photos courtesy of Lynn Peabody

his 14+ years of communal living, sharing “all things common,” Chris has had first-hand experience of the tremendous prosperity, health, and well-being that is possible through this kind of model. And while the Sharing Gardens are only a small-scale effort to re-infect our culture with this beneficial concept, we see evidence with most people our project touches that the seed of sharing lies dormant in us all and needs only a bit of nurturing for it to bloom and bear fruit.

Many community gardens of the standard variety run into problems of stealing and vandalism. They have to put high fences around their gardens and a lock on the gate so that they can be sure to reap the harvest from their efforts. Any time you have a situation of “haves” and “have-nots,” it can set up a dynamic conducive to theft. Growing enough to share, while making it easily available, seems to diffuse this potential problem. Stealing and vandalism have not been issues for us. Our presence in Alpine’s park seems to have eliminated the vandalism they were experiencing before we came. Our gardens grow such an abundance of food that there is plenty to share. In fact, each garden has a rural-style mailbox at the gate, with a harvest knife and clean, recycled plastic bags for people to harvest the bounty. So far, no one has ever taken advantage of the gardens’ generosity.

Our project gives a new definition to the term “community

**We envision a world where
sharing is the norm;
a world beyond buying and selling
and private ownership.**

garden.” Likewise, we see it offering a new model of “community-supported agriculture” (CSA). The typical CSA is a small-scale farm, local to the city that it serves, providing a subscription to fresh, organic produce. While some CSAs offer the opportunity for subscribers to assist in the growing of their own food, this is not the norm. Nor do they have a full-circle, reciprocal relationship with their participants, where surplus or “waste” materials from the city-folk are channeled back to the farms that feed them. The Sharing Gardens are truly “community-supported” agriculture. Donations of time and materials come directly from those who will benefit from the harvest. Without the community support, the gardens will not thrive. While many progressive towns and cities have curbside pick-up for kitchen scraps and yard waste, most do not. Sharing Gardens provide a local place for people to bring their organic material. Lumber, fencing, and other building materials can always find new life in a Sharing Garden—also an outlet for empty five-gallon buckets, pots and flats (not recyclable in most places), and other household waste, most likely to go to the landfill.

Another term that we are redefining is “eating local.” It is important to look closely at what this means for *all* aspects of food production, not just the *shipment* of food (a modest fraction of the total food “footprint”). Farming, as it is practiced even by small-scale, organic farmers, often requires large inputs of fertilizers that must be shipped long distances, and the purchase of seeds developed by seed companies in entirely different bioregions. The extraction and processing of many soil amendments can take a real toll on the environment. Seaweed, dolomite, and other sources of minerals are not readily available to many farming areas. Blood and bone meal, while providing an outlet for these byproducts of the dairy and beef industries (thus reducing waste), are also not necessarily a local resource and, for the vegetarians among us, their use can be distasteful. The Sharing Gardens use a deep-mulching method of gardening. (We added approximately 10 tons of hay, straw, leaves, and grass clippings to the half-acre we had in cultivation in 2010.) The mulch provides tremendous habitat for worms, fungi, bacteria, and other beneficial organisms—our “micro-livestock”—to establish a healthy ecosystem conducive to growing vibrant, abundant produce. The worm castings and other byproducts of their life-cycles fertilize and contribute to the tilth of the soil in profound ways. Each year we have significantly reduced our use of commercial fertilizer and manure from “macro-livestock” (cows, rabbits, etc.) to model a method of growing food that is more truly local at all levels of production.

Another way we are “localizing” is by saving our own seeds and participating in seed swaps with other local gardeners. This has reduced our dependence on commercial seed producers, thus insuring we can always plant next year’s garden, should supply chains falter. Over time, saving seed also develops strains that are better suited to one’s micro-climate; day length, temperatures, and rainfall.

My husband Chris and I envision a world where sharing is the norm; a world beyond buying and selling and private ownership. We would like to see a healthy balance return in our relationship with the natural world and our sisters and brothers in the human and non-human families; everyone having their basic needs met and plenty of time for creative expression, exploration, and deepening union with the great mystery that is the source of all life. We share a deep desire to live in community; to live with others of like mind, sharing “all things common.” For a while we felt disheartened because we couldn’t find others who wanted to live as we do. The Sharing Gardens, though not the same as living in residential community, do provide an ongoing experience of the joys and power of sharing and have the added benefit of exposing our ideals and perspective to a broad audience. Instead of being isolated in our own utopia, we are bringing a taste of these ideals right

into the mainstream.

They say that the definition of insanity is to keep doing the same thing expecting different results. Metaphorically speaking, we humans keep rebuilding our homes and businesses in the flood plains of life. We are trying to solve the problems at the same level they were created which, as Einstein asserts, will not work! A thriving permanent culture cannot be built using the established models based on greed, profit, and putting personal needs first. An economy based on growth is not sustainable because nature, upon which all life depends, runs in cycles. Indefinite growth is another name for cancer. It may seem naive but we feel that the only viable way out of the crises we are facing is to abandon the old model of private ownership and shift to a model of sharing. As long as we continue to harbor vestiges of the old system, we give a basis for the cancer to reestablish itself.

Though our gardens are only one branch on the vine of the human food system, we feel hopeful from our experience. We are helping people add new dimensions to the concepts and practices of the Permaculture, Transition Town, and Sustainability movements. And, beyond the specific skills gained through participating in the Sharing Gardens, we are building lasting friendships and creating a more resilient network amongst people that can be called upon as new economic and environmental crises inevitably present themselves. 🐦

To find out about our vision for community based on the principles of unity and radical sharing, search for the Full Circle Family Church in the online Communities Directory at www.ic.org. To find out more about the Sharing Gardens, follow the link from that listing.

The Sharing Gardens are an ever-evolving ministry and creative synthesis of the skills and experience of Llyn Peabody and Chris Burns. Llyn's background is in education, communication, and organizing of all kinds: volunteers, personal and work spaces, and systems efficiency. Chris has 40+ years of organic gardening and 14 years of communal experience—sharing all things common. You may contact them at shareinjoy@gmail.com.



Benefits of a Sharing Garden

Growing the food in one large plot, instead of separately rented plots (as in most community gardens), has many benefits:

Sharing Gardens:

- **Water more efficiently:** Plants can be grouped together with similar watering requirements and placed so shorter plants are not blocked from receiving water.
- **Grow the maximum amount of food:** With fewer pathways between garden rows, and greater flexibility for plant placement and rotation, the garden can be grown more efficiently.
- **Manage weeds and pests more easily:** In a typical community garden setting, the lack of weed and pest-management in one plot can lead to the spread of offending bugs and weed seeds. In a Sharing Garden, if pests/weeds appear, they can be managed cooperatively and more efficiently.
- **Save pure seeds:** Many plants will “cross,” or *hybridize*. This means that, in a typical community garden, neighboring gardeners would need to coordinate to keep their seed-stocks pure. In a Sharing Garden, you can plan your crops to keep strains from crossing and save enough seed to last for a few years, at which point you can replenish your stock.
- **Keep materials out of the landfill:** In our gardens, we use salvaged and recycled material whenever possible. This keeps these materials out of burn piles and the landfill while providing new life for tools and building supplies. Leaves, grass clippings, and other organic material contribute to the fertility of the soil instead of being burned or filling up landfill space.
- **Build community:** Though some community gardens have regular work parties and social gatherings, the emphasis is on each gardener doing his or her own thing. In a Sharing Garden, the focus is on cooperation and sharing a common goal. Having a meaningful shared purpose builds great camaraderie and relationships that can be called on in times of crisis.

Doing It, or Are We?

By Tracy Matfin with Dona Willoughby

The corners of my mouth curl up in a contented smile and the warmth that started in my heart spreads throughout my body. I am lying in bed with my napping three-year-old listening to chomping and rustling sounds outside my window. Getting up, looking out, I see two small wild pigs. They're foraging for food in the purple sweet potatoes we use as ground cover. I am reminded of my wild pet pigs, Bear and Summer—among the many experiments that comprise my current life living in a permaculture community on the Big Island of Hawaii.

My life here is conscious participation in myriad experiments—some of which I am aware of right now and others which will be revealed as time moves on. This constant education program is evidence to me that we are “Doing it.” Permaculture is the harmonious integration of landscape and people providing their food, shelter, energy, and other material and non-material needs in a sustainable way. On a daily basis, we immerse ourselves in the questions and actions it takes to need fewer and fewer inputs from the outside world.

Heart of palm salad, stewed wild boar with taro and beyjool seeds, baked orange squash, an enormous leafy green salad with

kale, topped off with a banana cassava cake, scrumptiously fill stomachs with a local dinner. Food, a primary focus of our sustainability efforts, averages about 70 percent from our land. The leafy greens and the annual vegetables come from an organic garden with raised beds. The remainder comes from food forests which mimic natural ecosystems. Tall palm trees coexist with shorter fruit and nut trees and bananas, interplanted with spindly cassava plants, berry bushes, kava, coffee, and cacao. Vanilla orchids and air potatoes climb up the trees. Squash grows around the edge of the food forest.

Six years have passed since La'akea changed hands and became an intentional community. During this time, many of the members have taken and presented permaculture classes. We've obtained, planted, and given away plant cuttings, observed them for their possible applications, developed recipes.

Three years ago, several members dedicated a month to eating 100 percent locally, from the big island. While they were successful, one challenge was getting enough starch. What to eat if not rice, wheat, or other grains? Grains do not grow well in the tropics. So the fourth year we opened our eyes to alternative starches. We already had taro, and to this we added cassava, peach palm fruit, air potatoes, squash, and beyjool seeds. Year five, two of us went 100 percent local again. The diet nurtured us psychically and physically, producing very little non-compostable waste. After six years, we have enough food to survive. The land is not lacking. It is our taste buds and preferences for what is familiar that need to change. Harvesting and preparing foods from the land requires labor. Efficiency could be greatly increased if more members, including myself, were ready to make the switch.

Our members are a group of people who do not come from a sustainable culture. Most of us weren't breast-fed. We've been surrounded by plastics and disposable commodities for significant portions of our lives, and have had access to fossil fuels since birth. Difficulties arise as we challenge norms and habits acquired from our past. We encourage feelings to come to the surface. Repressed anger may give birth to loud voices and tears. Our local Kilauea volcano provides an excellent example of the benefits of not holding back. By constantly releasing small amounts of hot red lava, it avoids tumultuous explosions. Sitting together, every Thursday evening, sharing, listening, touching,



Tracy Matfin

La'akea main house with taro.



John Schimmerer

Chickens in the compost.

at our “heart shares,” we create space for emotional expression. Clearing the slate, through periodic emotional release, simplifies communication with oneself, other people, and other species. The often-neglected zone zero (emotional health), the home of personal growth, is vitally important to our permaculture system.

In addition to our heart shares, we have found a variety of “tools” to assist each other in creating a supportive environment. These include Compassionate Communication (NVC), Peer Counseling, Huna, parental support meetings, and daily check-ins. Every morning we meet to share 10 to 20 minutes over breakfast. During this time, individuals share their present emotional condition as well as their hopes for the day. This serves us both logistically and socially. At this time anyone may express a need or desire for additional support, whether it be with a physical activity or an emotional process. This daily meeting is not mandatory. We attend most of the time knowing how beneficial it is to our functioning as a cohesive family.

We all have areas of life for which we feel passion and that give us purpose. These passions bring forth individual talents which are offered to the community, and move us further toward sustainability. The use of our talents makes us better stewards of our piece of the Aina (land) and moves us toward more loving intimate relationships.

For instance, some of us are chicken folks. We have an 81-year-old and a three-year-old member who both seem to have a special affinity for those wonderful birds. The chickens keep our compost pile turned and produce eggs/fritatas aplenty for community members.

Several of our members are now sheep specialists. When we arrived at La’akea, the jungle was higher than the fruit trees in our orchards. Foliage in a rain forest grows very fast. Saws and weed whackers were wasteful and intensive not only of fossil fuel, but of human energy. So we partnered with sheep to keep the orchards mowed and fertilized, and the nitrogen-fixing trees under control. Maintaining just the right number of sheep so

pastures are not overgrazed is a talent that one of our members has developed. This member also developed the spiritual and emotional capacity to part with beloved sheep, butcher them, and serve them to La’akea meat eaters.

Other talents required are repairing and construction. We could have continued living in the huts and several buildings available at La’akea when purchased. However, moldy clothing after a week of daily rain, sharing your hut with a rat (also seeking dryness), and getting into moist blankets at night all get old. We now live in spaces that can be kept dry when it’s rainy, and rat-free. One such space is a beautiful octagon building recycled from a nearby subdivision. It was moved to La’akea piece by

We have enough food to survive. The land is not lacking. It is our taste buds and preferences for what is familiar that need to change.

piece and reassembled by members and work traders, instead of ending up in landfill. Four other dry homes were constructed, some using rocks and trees off our land. Our homes are really just bedroom cabins, since the kitchen, office, yoga room, living spaces, shower, and toilets are communal.

So are we doing it? What is the measure of sustainability? If we look at the five garbage cans headed for the dump, or the contents of the recycling center, one could easily say we are not there yet.

It may be said that if we want to change our future we have to change the substrates of our culture—the food, the entertainment, the tools, the art, and much else. This is a process, one experiment after another, one small step after another. In this sense we are doing it.

While we do not have a common vision for where we are going, we are all clear that we want to be less dependent on non-sustainable, non-local products. While there is no clear structure for getting from here to there, we want to help one another be more conscious about what is going on—within ourselves, within our group, within the larger world—and support one another.

By the way, did you wonder how the pet pig experiment, mentioned in the first paragraph, ended? The plan was for them to be living rototillers. After their third break-in and rooting destruction of the garden beds in our greenhouse, we relocated them to Green Lake, a beautiful wild area. I missed giving them coconut oil massages, but my partner Biko and I created a beautiful human baby to nurture and love. 🐷

Tracy Matfin and coauthor Dona Willoughby live, learn, teach, and grow at La’akea Community, currently comprised of nine adults and two children on 23 acres on Hawaii’s Big Island (permaculture-hawaii.com).



Amara Karuna

Inside a greenhouse.

Farming with Horses...Not Tractors

A La'akea member reminisces about growing up on a 75 hectare (185 acre) farm in northern Germany

By Bernd Riechelmann

When I was eight years old, in 1938, my father bought a tractor. Until that time, we had been doing our farming with horses only. We had four teams of horses. Sometimes we referred to a horse as "Hafermotor," a motor that runs on oats. Our only fossil fuel usage was kerosene, for lanterns. (Before kerosene became available, candles made from tallow were used for lighting, I was told.) For heating, we used firewood that came from a nearby forest. Foresters farmed the forest for maximum firewood production. During the winter we cut the trees by hand, with axes and two-man cross cut saws. There were no chain saws. When we ran short of firewood, we also burned lignite (brown coal) or lignite briquettes. Lignite was mined at a nearby quarry.

Our main crops were wheat, sugar beets, and potatoes. We also grew oats for the horses, alfalfa for the dairy cattle, plus some barley and rapeseed.

For livestock we had cows for dairy, sheep for wool, pigs for meat, chickens for meat and eggs. We also had a few ducks, geese, and pigeons for meat. Down feathers from the geese filled the comforters that kept our beds warm during cold winter nights.

Other than meat and cheese, our food came from a large vegetable garden and orchard. The orchard produced apples, pears, cherries, and plums.

We preserved food for the long German winters in a number of ways. There was no refrigeration. My mother canned fruits and vegetables. She made jams and jellies. We turned raw cabbage into sauerkraut. In the cellar we stored raw potatoes, cabbage, carrots, apples, and pears. An itinerant butcher came twice in the fall to help us slaughter a pig. We made sausage and pickled hams in brine. The butcher brought a meat grinder and sausage-making equipment. We smoked sausages, ham, and bacon in a smoke chamber. The smoke chamber was in the attic of our house.

We lived in a large and comfortable farm house. During the winter we heated only the living room. The kitchen was kept warm by the cook stove. Bedrooms were never heated. Ice sometimes formed in the portable wash basins in my parents' bedroom. When

I was five years old, in 1935, my father had an electric pump installed in the house. Before that, water for the bathroom had to be pumped up with a manual pump in the basement. Operating the pump filled a tank in the attic. The attic tank then supplied water to the bathroom on the floor below. For the kitchen and for washing, we hauled buckets of water from either one of the two well pumps in the yard. The bathroom had a flush toilet, but its drain pipe usually froze up in the winter. Most of the time we used a two-hole toilet in the barn. It collected poop in a large box. When the box was full, it was dragged out and dumped on the large manure pile in the farm yard.

In our town of Dobbeln, population 300, we had a blacksmith, a wheelwright, and a carpenter. They built and repaired our horse-drawn farm wagons and other farm machinery. The wagons had sturdy wheels, made of wood and banded by iron tires which rumbled over the cobblestone pavement. The town also had a shoemaker, a baker, and a beer tavern. Attached to the tavern was a variety store, called "Colony Products Store." This store offered exotic products from overseas, such as coffee, tobacco, rice, spices, and tea. There were also two grain mills that produced flour. The mills were located outside of town, along streams that powered the water wheels to drive the millstones.

Once a week the wife of the carpenter would make a supply run to Schoeningen, a small city eight kilometers (five miles) away. She used a covered wagon, drawn by one horse. In Schoeningen she shopped for items that people from the village had requested.

In a neighboring town there was a saddler who repaired horse harnesses. In another town was a dairy. Every morning a truck from the dairy made rounds to all



Photos courtesy of Bernd Riechelmann



the dairy farms, to collect large tin barrels that were filled with milk. The truck left the empty barrels from the previous day, to be washed and used again. The milk had been milked on the previous day and stored in the metal barrels, letting it cool during the night. Some milk we kept for our own use. Some of the raw milk we sold to people who came to the farm. They brought their own reusable containers with them.

For travels of up to a day in duration we used a horse-drawn carriage. There was a choice of three stylish carriages, including a Landau convertible and a two-wheel, one-horse dogcart. Longer distances we traveled by train.

When we harvested the sugar beet, we first sliced off the beet tops before we dug up the beets. The beet tops were collected in a large pile at the end of the field. This pile was then covered with soil. This covering caused the beet tops to ferment into silage, which we fed to the cattle during the winter. The sugar beets were dug up with a forked plow and loaded into horse-drawn wagons, for transport to the sugar refinery in the next town. After extracting the sugar, the refinery returned the dried remains to the farmers for livestock feed.

On our farm we employed 20 men. When we needed additional help, such as for weeding in the spring and harvesting in the fall, we also employed teams of women. I can still picture the colorful headscarves that the women wore while they were hoeing weeds in the fields.

The grain was harvested with a binder, drawn by a team of four horses. The bundles of grain that the binder dropped were picked

up by hand and stacked upright for drying. When dry, they were loaded onto wagons, for transport to the threshing machine or to the barn for threshing later, during the winter. The threshing machine was powered by electricity that came from a distant, lignite-fired power plant. Before there was electricity, threshing machines had been powered by steam engines. Before there was steam power, mechanical power came from a horse mill, or the grain was threshed by making animals walk over it.

For fertilizer we collected manure from the animals. The cows also produced significant quantities of liquid manure. We carted everything to the fields and plowed it under. The only non-local fertilizer we used was potash.

Today the fields of farms of this size have been combined into large factory farming lots. They are managed with big machines and few employees. These factory farms use any quantities of herbicides, pesticides, fertilizer. And it is fossil fuel, a limited resource unfortunately, that is indispensable for such factory farms. Fossil fuel powers the machines and fossil fuel is the raw material for the chemicals.

Because factory farming has little use for the buildings of the original family farms, many farm buildings in Germany are now unused and falling into disrepair. ☹️

Having come full circle back to human-scale, community-based interdependence, Bernd Riechelmann is an 81-year-old member of Lāakea Permaculture Community on Hawaii's Big Island (permaculture-hawaii.com).

Permaculture as a Tool for Ecological Community Design

By *Ethan Hirsch-Tauber*

At the moment, I feel pretty well-fed, physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. I've just spent the past three weeks at Sirius Community near Amherst in western Massachusetts, where I attended a Permaculture Design Certification course.¹ The program was organized by Living Routes, an educational nonprofit, which partners with the University of Massachusetts Amherst to offer college-level programs based in “ecovillages” around the world.²

Living in an intentional, ecologically-focused community while studying permaculture presented a double whammy of a learning opportunity: I was able to observe the same permaculture principles and techniques and concepts as they were put into practice at Sirius, and we utilized our new skills by working in the community. These activities ranged from manual labor projects, such as sheet-mulching a new garden, making a new pond, and lime-plastering a cob bench, to completing a permaculture site analysis and design process for a family's yard in the community. While I don't know what it's like to study permaculture in a standard classroom setting, I can't see how it could be any more holistic and integrative as a learning experience.

I've had exposure to various permaculture concepts and practices over the past few years, but I still consider myself in “beginner's mind” in this field of study. I went into the class with a very basic understanding of permaculture. What I learned was an entirely new, and in my opinion, brilliant lens with which to look at the world.

Permaculture as an ecological approach has evolved quite a bit over the past 30-plus years since it was first articulated by Australian ecologists Bill Mollison and David Holmgren in the '70s. Though commonly misperceived as merely a method for sustainable land and resource use, permaculture has a broader scope than just creating permanent *agriculture*; it works towards creating permanent *culture*, which

includes agriculture, but also other facets of human habitation on the planet. “Permanent” in this context does not mean creating human settlements that are rigidly set in their structures and ways, but rather adaptable human settlements as dynamic and changeable as the world in which they exist.

What does permaculture tell us about existing communities, as well as how to create new ones? Ecovillages and other intentional communities with similar ecological worldviews are, by their very nature, adaptable. Over the past several years, I've been on an inspiring journey to visit



Dawn bonfire for Auroville's 40th birthday celebration.

Abbey Schoenfeld

and experience communities around the world that are loci of positive social and environmental change. I've seen how much diversity exists among these communities and have also noted that they tend to follow a set of ethics and principles modeled after those seen in nature.

Permaculture too holds at its core a set of guiding principles that model nature and generate adaptability. With my new permaculture hat on, I am able to see how much similarity lies between the goals and missions of ecovillages and those of permaculture. I am sure this is no accident. There has been a vast exchange of knowledge between these two movements over the years. Many communities even directly incorporate permaculture into their projects. But since I am just now realizing how deep this connection goes, I will consider just a few of these key permaculture principles and describe how they relate to the dynamic, regenerative communities many of us seek to create. The principles I reference here come primarily from David Holmgren, who outlines 12, though I have also integrated several concepts from other permaculturists, including Bill Mollison.

Observe and Interact; Make Small and Slow Solutions (Holmgren)

Observation, possibly the most important lesson of permaculture, can apply to virtually every aspect of life. When observation becomes an intentional aspect of planning, nature can more readily become the teacher, and inform decisions for community development. One of the major differences I have observed between intentional communities and other communities in the world is that the former often develop much more slowly, starting small, only gradually increasing in population size and land usage. While many factors may contribute to this, it seems that many ecologically-minded communities spend a great deal of time observing the environments in which they exist, and considering the potential impacts of their actions. This might not be said of many human settle-



Abbey Schoenfeld

ments in the world today, where rapid development is paramount.

I also notice this concept within intentional methods of communication, which are increasingly used in community settings. Compassionate communication and other similar styles of interaction require first observing one's own thoughts and emotions in a conversation, prior to responding to another individual.³ This simple step added to a heated discussion or other challenging social interaction can give the space to fully experience and understand one's reactions and then proceed without having a knee-jerk response that may cause more harm than good. Observation of communication can also add to the joy and gratitude within a community, as people create more space for these experiences to arise and be acknowledged.

"The Problem Is the Solution" (Mollison)

One of the most commonly quoted permaculture ideas during my course, this also seems to me one of the most crucial. As we enter an age where tremendous forces of change are spreading rapidly throughout the world—a transitional period which ecological philosopher Joanna Macy has titled "The Great Turning"—it is vital that we step back from the perceived "problems" that we face and reexamine them from a different angle (Macy). If we can learn to do so effectively, we will be able to view perceived negatives as opportunities. A great example is reuse of a perceived "waste" stream, like cardboard or newspaper, as a source for creating healthy soil through sheet mulching.

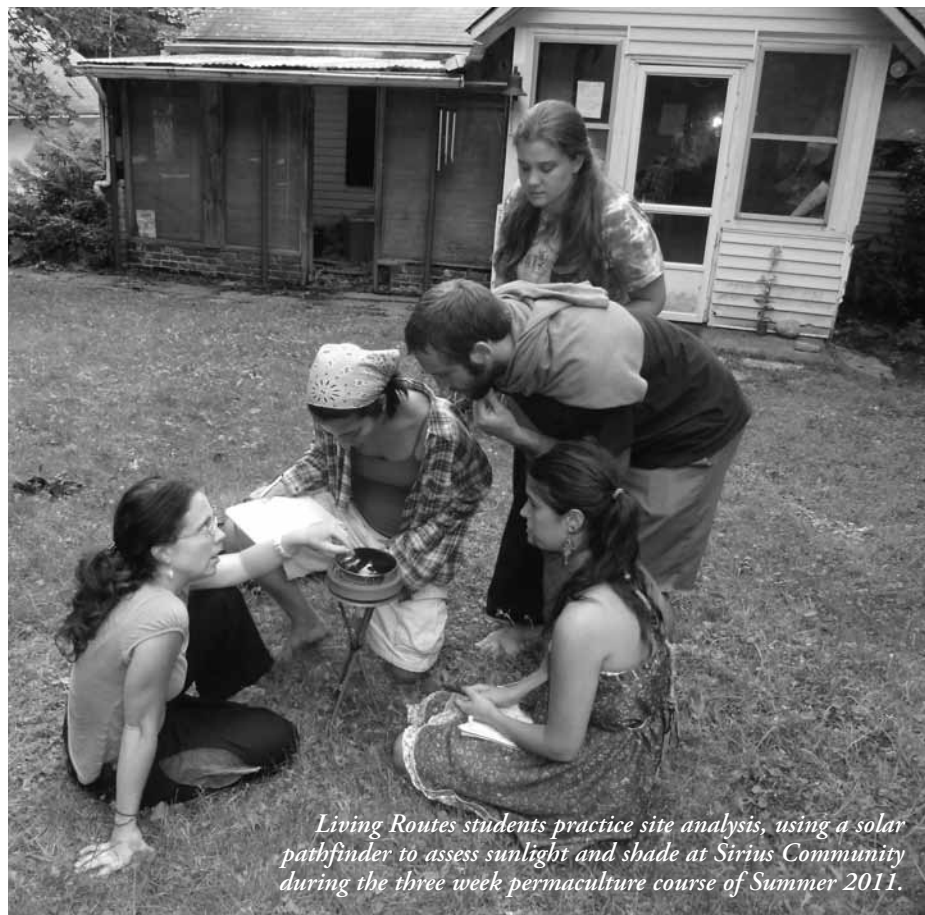
In Auroville, an international spiritual community in India where I have spent much of the past few years, this concept has been put into practice as Aurovilians have come into conflict with traditional Tamil villages over reforestation work, villager land use, and livestock grazing rights.⁴ Previously-deforested land has been replanted over the last 40 years, allowing ecosystem restoration, including indigenous plant species with medicinal properties, to benefit everyone in the region. However, in the early years of the reforestation project, the Aurovilians' need to protect the young trees clashed with the needs of poor villagers who wanted to graze livestock and collect firewood. These confrontations occasionally even led to violence.

Over time, as the forests matured, there was enough dead wood for the villagers to

use as fuel, and enough common land for cows and goats to graze on. The mature forest ecosystem could also withstand the effects of grazing far better than barren land. By solving the problem of environmental degradation through reforestation, both communities benefited. On other occasions, clashes were resolved through dialogue and creative thinking about sharing and dividing land, to the benefit of both sides. The perceived problem that both groups wanted to use the same land actually became a tool for strengthening relationships between the people of these very different communities, while allowing for regeneration of the bioregion. This process, clearly quite difficult, requires thought outside the box, and use of our inherent, though sometimes latent ingenuity, but the potential for shifting from a negative to a positive perspective is truly staggering.

Use and Value Diversity (Holmgren); Plan for Redundancy

In non-human ecosystems, diversity creates stability as a larger variety of organisms are able to fill various niches. Permaculture seeks to model this by increasing the diversity of biota through ecosystem design. It also seeks to create redundancy in meeting each essential need in a system in multiple ways. I have seen these ideas present in communities too: Findhorn Foundation in Scotland, for example, encourages members to gain experience in a variety of different jobs and types of work.⁵ This not only allows for a greater sense of freedom for individuals, but also provides a stronger network of people with multiple skills to suit the various needs of the community.



Living Routes students practice site analysis, using a solar pathfinder to assess sunlight and shade at Sirius Community during the three week permaculture course of Summer 2011.

Katherine Policy

On a larger scale, if we look at the diversity of intentional human settlements that exist throughout the world, the range of form and function of these communities—from urban ecovillages to traditional indigenous villages to rural homesteads—is also amazing. As we move into the Great Turning, this diversity can only provide a stronger web of support for one another.

Use Edges and Value the Marginal (Holmgren)

The edges between different ecosystems hold great potential for nutrient and energy exchange. For this reason, permaculturists frequently use zig-zag patterns and crenelated edges to maximize space and increase productivity. Emphasizing the marginal can help not only in growing ecosystems, but people in community too. In my experience of social interaction and group dynamics, the fringe and marginalized voices are also the most easily overlooked or ignored. However, these individuals are those who can most readily help a community learn and grow, as they tend to challenge the status quo and can encourage alternative solutions to group problems. This is why many communities

1. More information about Sirius Community can be found at www.siriuscommunity.org.
 2. More information about Living Routes can be found at www.livingroutes.org. For information specifically about the Permaculture program at Sirius, go to www.livingroutes.org/programs/p_sirius.htm. And for course teacher contacts, refer to Sowing Solutions Permaculture Design and Education, Kay Cafasso, sowingsolutions.net, and Natalie Krueger, greenvoices@gmail.com.
 3. More information on Compassionate and Nonviolent Communication can be found at www.cnvc.org.
 4. More information about Auroville can be found at www.auroville.org.
 5. More information about Findhorn Foundation can be found at www.findhorn.org.
 6. More information about Tamera can be found at www.tamera.org.
 7. As an example, the number 150, identified as “Dunbar’s number,” has been theorized as the “cognitive limit to the number of people with whom one can maintain stable social relationships.” Of course the patterns of human social interaction are far more complex than just one number, and multiple other ranges exist. For more on these ideas go to en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunbar's_number and an interesting blog, www.lifewithalacrity.com/2004/03/the_dunbar_numb.html.

use consensus or similar decision-making models; at least in theory, these create space for marginal and edge voices, though in practice they can sometimes still be overlooked. Some communities, like Tamera in Portugal, use specific communication tools such as Forum, a creative, artistic form of communication used by groups to generate trust between members, to gain the most from all representative voices.⁶

Design from Patterns to Details (Holmgren)

Certain patterns found in nature have evolved and been selected for over possibly millions of years. Human design can and should utilize these patterns whenever possible, as they contain inherent wisdom for maximized functionality. Maximizing garden bed edge space using geometrical patterns, such as in spirals based on the Fibonacci sequence, is a good example of incorporating patterns into design. The principle of designing from patterns to details, however, builds even more on this idea: it suggests that we look at the bigger picture before planning out the finer details in a system. Thus, if we model the whole system based on observed natural patterns, it should be more functional and effective when individual elements are worked out.

In group dynamics, certain numbers of individuals and formations of organization seem to be the most effective for reaching decisions and living harmoniously.⁷ Communities can design their living spaces and social organization to account for these seeming inherent patterns of human interaction. I've noticed that many intentional communities are building their living environments to account for these numbers. When numbers and social structures exceed these limits (as in Auroville, which at present has about 2,000 members), challenges come up in working out complex community dynamics. Auroville has at least partially addressed this issue by creating working groups which deal with specific areas such as forests, farming, new membership, or housing.

Expanding on the Principles

The above principles are just a few of the many seeds of wisdom contained within permaculture. Some others that deserve mention here are the concept of relative location (components of a system should be placed within logical relation to one another); functional interconnection (components in a system have mutually beneficial products); and catching and storing energy and resources (energy in a system should be circulated as many times as possible). All of these ideas could equally apply to communities. I believe one of the greatest strengths of permaculture is that it clearly defines and lays out these principles as critical pieces for creating functional sustainable systems. Many communities today may have some or even all of these principles as part of their mission statements or at work within their daily functioning. However, stating them clearly and directly, and thereby understanding in richer detail how they are being applied, is an important step in planning for the future.

Permaculture contains the seeds not just for ecosystem planning, but for a complete

societal overhaul towards finding a regenerative human habitation on this planet. While this may be some way off for the behemoth of Western consumer culture, it merges quite readily with the ecovillage movement and can inform decisions made by those of us living in these communities around the world. And while the going may be slow, our communities can act as role models for mainstream society in the coming years of predicted flux, manifesting permaculture principles of dynamic adaptation. I am grateful and excited to have a deeper understanding of this excellent tool for ecological com-

Our communities can act as role models in the coming years of flux by manifesting permaculture principles of dynamic adaptation.

munities to work with in the world. 🌱

A self-titled "ecovillage educator," Ethan Hirsch-Tauber spent the past two years as a faculty member for the Living Routes Integral Sustainability semester in Auroville, India, and is on a mission to experience as many inspiring communities around the world as he can. His personal goal statement—distilled from the recent permaculture course—is: "I am connecting movements of inspired people to regenerate the world." He is grateful to everyone from his permaculture course, both the teachers (particularly Kay Cafasso and Natalie Krueger) and students, as well as to Living Routes and the whole of Sirius Community, for contributing so much to his learning. Contact him at ethan@livingroutes.org.

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How Permaculture Stole My Community!

By Arjuna da Silva

Permaculture stole my community—or perhaps just borrowed it.

To understand how that happened, you need to know the backstory...

Before Earthaven

Before joining the Earthaven founders in western North Carolina (where I now live with about 60 other members on 320 acres of land), I helped start several small, short-lived intentional communities around the country. Each one in its own way was a transformational social/spiritual/cultural endeavor. We lived closer to Earth than we had in our cities and suburbs, but we didn't make sustainability or food production our focus, and we'd never heard of permaculture. In each case we fell apart, mostly because we weren't supporting ourselves from the land and couldn't find jobs in our local rural areas.

Later, in Gainesville, Florida, I was part of an extended community made of up to 10 households, with several collective businesses to keep everyone afloat, and with a shared commitment to a spiritual path. It was here that I first encountered the term “permaculture,” and was intrigued, though I still knew nothing about it.

After the Gainesville group had scattered, I went land-searching with another group from that same spiritual path. Permaculture came up as the land use and design system we would need to put our social-cultural vision on the ground. By this time, it seemed to me that everyone knew about permaculture—unknown just a couple decades before, it had become the “happening thing” for communities, land-wise, just as consensus was the happening thing, governance-wise.

Earthaven: The Dream Evolves

When the dream of creating Earthaven first began, my two closest friends were involved. They kept me apprised of the visionary and land-search work going on, so a few years later when it came time for me to leave Florida, we showed up at the formal invitational meeting together. (The name Earthaven came later.)

That meeting and the subsequent first few years of Earthaven's existence (starting in 1994) were like magic. The people who gathered to take up the mission of establishing eco-spiritual community outside of Asheville, North Carolina became my best friends. It was also reassuring to discover that two of my cofounders were permaculture designers who would, from my perspective, be able to help us rubes



The main street through Earthaven Ecovillage is “Another Way.” Quite fitting.

Photos by Dave Wheitner

get some important things right.

Little did I know that permaculture was more than a design system—it's a movement for recreating society in a practical and ethical way. It is so enthralling in its breadth and accessibility that many other more ephemeral goals wind up in the back row while the huge learning curves in land-based living (for us: clearing land, utilizing timber, building homes, developing basic infrastructure, learning to farm, raise animals, raise children in the woods, etc.) seem to take up all the available focus a person can muster.

Okay, I'm exaggerating. We have not abandoned commensurate skill development in communication and social contracts, interpersonal and inner work, but it has mostly gotten the energy left over from all the other more primary endeavors. And lately it gets a lot more attention than ever. But that's after a few long years of what now seems to have been a terrible imbalance, years when I wondered where I'd come to and how I'd gotten abandoned here!

The first decade or so developing property on a shoestring budget requires enormous focus on support systems for living a moderately modern lifestyle. Whereas our first few years getting to know each other while sketching out our dreams and plans (and living for the most part in town) were deeply infused with what I'll call higher-vibe activities like meditation, dancing, singing, and ceremony, as we became immersed in the ordeals of infrastructure development and land use our focus subtly but inexorably shifted. We were teaching each other as well as folks from around the world how to apply permaculture to a forested habitat; there were certification courses turning out dozens of new "permies" every year; we were learning and teaching natural building methods, gathering courage to begin some serious land clearing for agriculture. Meanwhile, the higher-vibe activities slipped into the background, while rest and relaxation and a bit of good ol' community socializing seemed to be all we could really muster to balance out the workload.

Stranded in Permaculture Heaven

One day, several years into the unexpectedly solo project of building an earth-and-straw house, I caught myself wondering how I could have gotten to the place where I'd traded in my normal conversations about subpersonalities and form-and-emptiness for a daily litany of plant, soil, weather, and energy data. Wah! Where did everyone go? How come they left me here in permaculture heaven? (Almost every one of my friends from Earthaven's founding stage never made it to the level of pioneer, and I'm still waiting to share my building site with others.)

If I didn't love this land, if I didn't love this lifestyle, if I didn't love this house, if I didn't feel close to a small circle of friends here, if I hadn't learned to enjoy the satisfaction of being a homesteader—I'd go start me another community and make sure permaculture just stayed in its place! I'd know to get all the founders to sign promissory notes giving the community the next 10 years of their lives. (How to do that? How about



A small neighborhood farm.

a deposit refundable after 10 years?) I'd know to write down all the visionary and spiritually woo-woo things we'd say in the beginning, even if that new group also thought they were so obvious and "transparent" there wouldn't ever be a need to know "what the founders meant."

Moving Toward Balance

It may be that Earthaven Ecovillage is the right model in the right place at the right time to help folks in this lunatic culture get hold of a replicable example of sane living in obedience to natural laws. Hopefully, it will also come to pass that my discontent will settle out and I'll make a graceful peace with the world of land use and permaculture gridlock, and find myself focusing at long last again on life on the inside of reality.

Things could be changing. New folks have stepped up in leadership and are holding forth with a more powerful spiritual presence. Tools for stronger connection are being presented and some are taking hold. Lately folks I've given tours to seem spiritually and socially quite wise as well as savvy about alternative technologies. Maybe I've just been unnecessarily impatient. Maybe Spirit just let permaculture borrow my community so it could set itself up on a large enough scale in the US to be noticed. Maybe balance is right around the corner.

As we celebrate our 17th year on the community road together, despite or perhaps integral with all the surprises, disappointments, and losses, I have come to see that the container—the crucible—of community still has given me opportunities only it can provide to see myself as others might see me, to encounter my foibles and flaws in stark relief and plenty of empathy, and to quietly, sometimes uproariously, etch my way home to stillness and the internal balance that is yearning to be seen and felt on the outside. ☘

Arjuna da Silva is an inveterate optimist, certified alchemical hypnotherapist, group facilitator, and visionary. She'll be spending the next year settling into her gorgeous new home and landscape at Earthaven, while beginning several book-length projects about life in the 21st century. Arjuna can be reached at arjuna@earthaven.org.

UMass Amherst Permaculture: Leading by Example

Creating One of the First Permaculture Gardens on a Public University Campus

By Ryan Harb



Keith Toffling

High school can be a very difficult phase of life, and college, for some, may be even more complicated. Young adults are expected to find their passion and choose their lifelong job during this time. At 20 years old I had purchased a rental property with my parents and was a business student at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Despite some early college successes, I felt very lost, alone, uncomfortable, and anxious. I needed to clear my head. I went on a vacation to Florida with my father.

This is the first time I am publicly telling my story—how I went from a confused business student to being the first Chief Sustainability Specialist and Permaculturalist at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. It all started on that plane ride back from Florida when I almost lost my life.

Air Scare and the Promise

Turbulence. That is the last word you want to hear when seated on a plane that is 30,000 feet above solid ground. The plane shook, rattled, and fell. I gasped for air but my lungs wouldn't fill. Scenes from my life began flashing before my eyes. I was terrified. It occurred to me that I wasn't afraid of death, but rather, I was afraid to die without giving anything meaningful back to the world. I was 20 years old and my positive impact was minimal, at best.

"I promise if I make it off this flight, I will do everything in my power to help heal the planet." I repeated that phrase over and over until the plane landed. "I don't know how, but I will find a way."

Discovering Permaculture

Two years later I received my bachelors degree in business administration and I still had not found a way to make that giant positive impact on the world. I decided

to apply straight into graduate school; my interest in real estate led me to a new masters program at UMass Amherst called Green Building. I was accepted into the program but because it was so new, nobody else had even applied that first year. I was the guinea pig, it seemed, and once again I felt alone.

Unexpectedly, I was shown a video during my first week of graduate school that had an immense impact on me. "Greening the Desert" describes how an intentionally designed water harvesting system (bioswale) allowed for fruit trees and other food crops to grow successfully in the hyperarid desert climate of Jordan. I knew in my heart that I needed to learn more. I set out on a quest to do just that.

After taking my Permaculture Design Certification Course in 2009, I decided I had all the skills necessary to transform my 1/8 acre grass front lawn into a permaculture garden. The initial goals were to keep costs low, involve the local community, use no fossil fuels on-site, and make it easily replicable, highly visible, and exceptionally inspiring. We sheet mulched in the fall and planted in the spring. This was my graduate practicum project, "Lawns to Gardens: Growing Your Own Food for Economic and Environmental Savings."

In under one year, my home residence was transformed into a rental property for eco-conscious college students. I invited UMass students, faculty, and administration to take a tour of the front-yard garden, which I call a yarden. Students soon named the place the "Amherst Permaculture House." The director of Auxiliary Services, Ken Toong, loved the concept so much that he called a meet-

ing to discuss the possibility of hiring me to implement a similar project on the UMass Amherst campus.

In May, 2010 I graduated with the first M.S. in Green Building in the nation. Three months later I was organizing one of the largest permaculture installations on a public university campus to date—a quarter-acre grass lawn located adjacent to one of the campus dining commons. At this point I had to stop and ask myself, “Is this really happening? Have I actually created my dream job, working on a project that will reach tens of thousands of people in just a short amount of time?” I couldn’t help but think back to my experience on the plane four years earlier and how far my vision had come.

UMass Permaculture

I knew working alone was not an option; this was a campus-wide community project. The initial idea for a campus permaculture garden started as a student-led initiative in a sustainable agriculture class led by UMass Professor John Gerber. In September 2010 I began searching for approximately 12 passionate students who would serve on the first UMass Permaculture Committee and help build the movement needed to make this project a success.

Phase I

The UMass Permaculture Committee was composed of a dozen undergraduate students from a variety of disciplines. Eager to spread the word about its idea and gain support for the venture, the permaculture committee began developing a Facebook page and Wordpress blog to get the word out and encourage student involvement. When planning the phases of the garden, the permaculture committee searched for a way to create a closed-loop system for gathering the raw materials needed for the garden directly from other sources on campus, and they found solutions in the campus community. The compost came from their office of waste management, the recycled cardboard from dining services, the recycled newspapers from the campus news office, and the wood chips

from fallen trees and branches.

In October 2010, the committee, with help from student and local volunteers, embarked on the arduous mission to transform the otherwise unproductive grass lot in front of Franklin Dining Commons into a highly productive, aesthetically pleasing, educational, sustainable garden.

The committee members’ goal was ambitious; they had to move more than 250,000 pounds of organic matter—by hand, using no fossil fuels on-site—and complete the sheet mulching in less than one month’s time before the ground froze. While daunting, with the help of more than 150 volunteers from the campus and local area, including Amherst Regional High School and Big Brothers Big Sisters Organization, the first phase of the garden was completed in just 13 days.

Initial Challenges

Working within a bureaucracy is not easy and miscommunication happens frequently. I learned this the hard way on numerous occasions. For example, before our sheet mulching began, the campus landscaping team spread wood chips across our entire site rather than keeping them in a pile for us. We had to remove all of the wood chips by re-raking them into a pile, lay down the compost and cardboard, and then

Even the simple act of sheet mulching makes many people uneasy in the conventional agriculture field. For someone who doesn’t like controversy, I found myself getting involved in plenty of it.

move the wood chips back on top. Had the process been communicated beforehand, it would have saved us approximately 500 labor hours.

Second, there is an incredibly large number of stakeholders at a public university of this size. All have their own personalities and egos, some more difficult to deal with than others. I soon discovered that it is impossible to please everybody, despite the feel-good nature of this project. In every article that is written, every interview that is given, many people need to be thanked and acknowledged—or they may feel slighted. In addition, even the simple act of sheet mulching makes many people uneasy in the conventional agriculture field. For someone who doesn’t like controversy, I found myself getting involved in plenty of it without any malicious intent.

The last challenge is time. My advice for anyone who is considering a career in academia: do not expect anything to happen fast. If you want something in three months, you better ask now.

Phases II and III

Phases two and three of the garden included a campus design workshop and a community planting day. The goal of the design workshop was to encourage collaboration among students, faculty, administration, and outside community members and bring together diverse perspectives to continue the transformation of the quarter-acre lot into a model campus permaculture garden. The actual planting commenced in May 2011.

The garden is expected to have many short- and long-term benefits, ranging from serving as an educational site about sustainable efforts taking place on campus to eventually creating jobs and a surplus of food for the campus community.

(continued on p. 76)

Tasman Village, Australia

Parsons Bay from the deck of the cafe at Tasman Village



“**W**hat about cats and dogs?” At last the question that plagues so many intentional communities pops up. Why is it that this question can be so divisive? I look around and everyone in the room who has had any experience with intentional communities either smiles or groans or, in my case, both. People are starting to grapple with one of the key issues of intentional community, the need to regard those around us as community, almost extended family, rather than mere neighbours, so your pet is my business.

I am at the launch of Tasman Village, a fascinating hybrid cohousing/ecovillage project at Nubeena, in the state of Tasmania. I have been invited down by the developer, Ilan Arnon, and his assistant, Lynne Seddon. Two evenings back I addressed a public meeting in Hobart, Tasmania’s capital, in support of this project, and today people are meeting on-site to decide whether or not Tasman Village suits their either well-informed or blindly-naïve notions of what an intentional community could and should be.

Tasman Village is on a breathtakingly beautiful 10 hectare (23 acre) site overlooking and having direct access to the placid waters of Parsons Bay, and from there out to the wild waters of Storm Bay and the Southern Ocean where the cold waves and wild winds roll in from Antarctica.

Tasman Village already supports two businesses, a 19-unit motel and resort complex, with heated pool, tennis courts, recreation areas, etc., and a licensed and very popular licensed café, The Hub. Ilan purchased this run-down business several years ago and since then he has negotiated council approval for 65 small, circular blocks on which to build houses, and has strata-titled eight of the existing two-bedroom units, or apartments, all of which are now for sale. At the core of the developing intentional

community there is already a communal kitchen and dining room capable of feeding 50 or more people. Most of the core facilities for the intentional community are already in place and it needs only people to become reality.

Why are Ilan and Lynne doing this? There must be easier ways to earn a living? They tell me that they are motivated by social factors such as their desire to live in community, with people from a wide range of ages and outlooks. They want a community with “affordable, sensible, clever and creative homes,” on land that “offers abundant natural food,” with recreational options, in a strikingly beautiful area with a temperate climate. Sound utopian? Perhaps, but that is Tasman Village.

As with most cohousing projects, the private house sites are quite small, from 114 to 314 square meters (136 to 374 square yards), but this means that over 80 percent of the land will be left available for communal uses such as farmers’ market, gardening, reforestation, orchards, sports, or however residents wish to use the site. A small creek crosses the property; there are six dams, and space for several more. Rainwater will be collected from all roofs and reticulated back to houses, while all grey water will be collected and used to irrigate the existing olive groves and stone-fruit orchards as well as any future plantings.

Tasman Village’s rural location reminds one of an ecovillage, while the close proximity of houses and the core area with communal kitchen, dining, and recreation rooms is much more like a conventional cohousing project. Ilan deliberately set out to make use of the best features of both cohousing and

ecovillage and, in my humble opinion, he has created a remarkable blend. This hybrid cohousing/ecovillage model could be setting new standards of excellence in intentional community design.

The 30 or 40 interested people who have come to the Open Day at Tasman Village have a wide range of questions and concerns ranging from long-term financial returns (probably good) should they invest, and decision-making (hopefully consensus, perhaps with a default vote), to quality of water (very good!)—and, of course, that hoary, intractable problem of pets. In Australian intentional communities many members oppose domestic pets because they kill wildlife and, even if curtailed, their presence will mean that beautiful native animals such as wallabies will stay well away, and their free-range chickens and ducks could be threatened. Other people, however, are just as passionately devoted to their pet cats and dogs, thinking of them almost as family members, and cannot imagine living without them. Every intentional community has to deal with this problem and few manage to do so without a great deal of angst and awkward compromises. At Tasman Village, Ilan suggests allowing pets, under their owner's control, only in the areas outside the Village centre, as well as having strict rules so that the "quiet enjoyment of residents" is not compromised, and with a clear and well-understood warning/policing mechanism. While that is sensible, I doubt it will resolve matters.

Questions arise about employment prospects at Tasman Village. There are already two businesses, a café and motel, operating on site and there is no reason why other small, tourist-oriented businesses could not be developed using the buildings at the core of the complex. Also, within walking distance there are shops, a district hospital and school, and various other businesses, all of which could provide some employment. Tasman Peninsula has a very active tourism industry, largely focusing on the World Heritage site of the ruins of Port Arthur, one of the most elaborate and diabolical

parts of the early to mid 19th century British convict system in what was then called Van Diemen's Land. Surely, I think, people moving here who genuinely want work will be able to find or create it, but that takes some faith.

Ilan and Lynne's promotional material waxes lyrical: "The village centre consists of playgrounds, gathering spaces, holiday accommodation, cafe, recreation centre, indoor heated pool, tennis courts and workshop space for live music performances, creative arts and education. The coals are smouldering from last night's fire by the creek, the rhythm of the drums still pulsating in my head."

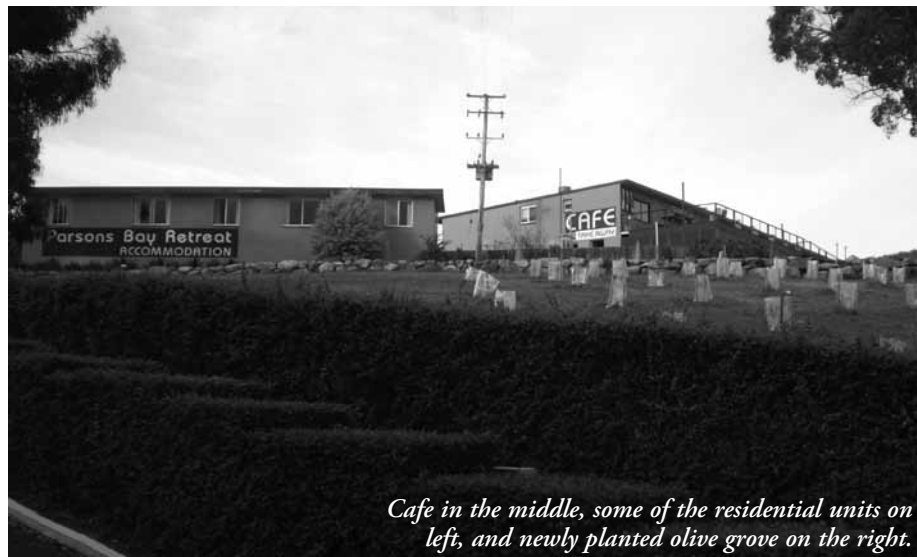
Have a look at the Tasman Village website (www.tasmanvillage.com.au/location.html) and you'll see what a lovely spot it is. At time of writing, shares are available for \$50,000 for a fully-serviced lot, \$140,000 for a two-bedroom unit, or \$188,000 for land and a house of your choice. This intentional community has been designed to be sustainable and I can see no reason why it will not succeed.

I'll closely follow the bright future of Tasman Village, a fascinating hybrid cohousing/ecovillage intentional community. ☺

Dr. Bill Metcalf, of Griffith University, Australia, is the author of numerous scholarly and popular articles, plus seven books, about intentional communities, the most recent being The Findhorn Book of Community Living. He is Past President of the International Communal Studies Association and has been COMMUNITIES magazine's International Correspondent for many years.

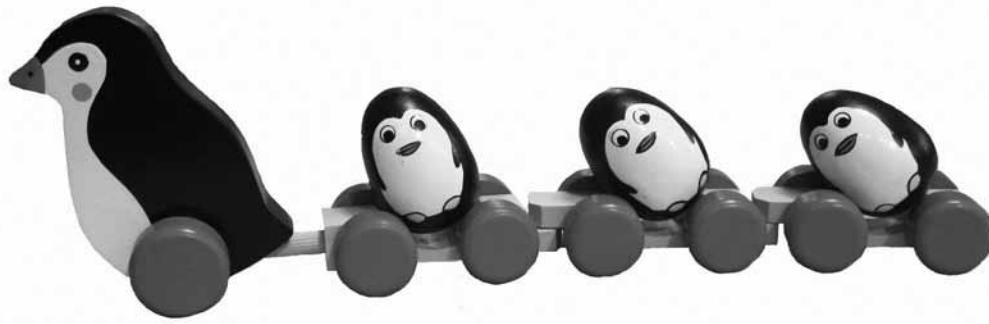


Looking away from the water, back over the rolling fields of and behind Tasman Village.



Cafe in the middle, some of the residential units on left, and newly planted olive grove on the right.

Photos courtesy of Bill Metcalf



Creating Family Where We Are Now

Building sustainable communities with the next generation

When I think about my most vivid memories growing up, two ideas spring immediately to mind. First, I recall times with my grandparents, who showed me how to plant and harvest a garden, gave us the space and tools to make tiny boats out of scraps of wood in the shop, and took a team of joyful kids to feed cattle with a horse-drawn sleigh. I am choosing to share these memories now because with a new little boy in my life, I'm embarrassed to admit that I hit a wall a few months ago. The good news is that I emerged on the other side with a new understanding of what it means to find ways in which to jump into community experiences with a child, and perhaps more important, to create a new way of being part of a community if you notice a gap. I was seeking a community to join that could include—but more than include, *embrace*—this new, very active member of our family, and to share the highs and challenges of child care. The immediate absence was a lack of part-time childcare.

In this article I share the challenges and lessons learned as I created childcare exchange with another mother and her son. I'll highlight the steps I took to start a shared childcare system, and illustrate the benefits of involving this young generation in local opportunities. I underscore the importance of creating family and community for the next generation by reflecting on how my own experiences growing up informed my commitment to building a vibrant community.

Rock Bottom

In conversations I've had with numerous parents now that I've started a childcare exchange, it's clear to me that there is a growing need for these community supports. If only I had known this—or had what my sister calls “faith in timing”—when I felt I was crashing. Maybe I'd have been able to envision a solution sooner, or known that I wasn't the only one facing these barriers when I sat in our vintage VW Jetta at the side of the road, listening to “Just a spoon full of sugar” while my toddler sobbed between breathless utterings of “all done, all done” in the back seat. I too fought back tears of frustration and what felt pretty close to desperation. “What am I going to do now?” This question was spurred after driving across town to pick up my one-year-old son from a dayhome that had graciously agreed to take him one day a week to help me out while I tried to find a longer-term solution. The young woman was a gentle and capable caregiver, but was trying to manage my scruffy little rag-tag of a boy who just wanted to be outside while supervising five other older children. The look in her eyes said it all, “He's a lovely boy, but there are just too many of them. I'm *done*.”

I felt like I was *all done*, too. After we'd remained on numerous waiting lists for a year, none of the daycare or dayhome options seemed to have space available any time soon, and it is especially challenging to find a part-time option of three days or less per week. Understandably, it is easier for the caregivers and the child to gain momentum and establish a routine with five days, and filling full-time spaces is a high priority. I'd joined a childcare cooperative when my son was four months old with some reservations about caring for another babe this young, but many of the women involved soon returned to work and had their children in daycare full-time, or had a family member who was available for care. The co-op that had been so thoughtfully created fizzled before it had a chance to take off. If it was an option, I'd have jumped at it now.

As a Ph.D. student, what I needed to find was care for two to three days per week, or full-time if that was the only option. I know now that many new parents face this same challenge, and the problem extends to other urban centers and rural communities. Although I'd committed to balancing family and work, and to working from home when I could, it seemed impossible to progress (or focus on professional responsibilities) with no viable childcare options in sight. Others echoed my frustration, and day-

care managers even voiced their concerns to me about the challenges of limited resources and growing waiting lists. I look back at this time now and find it hard to imagine the despair I felt at the time. A peek at my journal brings it back into focus.

Digging Out of the Hole, or So What?

Feeling like I needed to pull out all the stops and find respite for even one day a week, I recalled an email message from an acquaintance from a network for new mothers that I'd joined at a local health center. She was looking for an option to trade childcare two to three morning per week. The problem? I could not imagine taking care of two children—the same age—at the same time. Thinking back on my experiences babysitting as a teen, I could not even fathom how brave I'd been to take care of five young children when I was just 11 years old. What was I thinking? Had I no concept of the level of responsibility this required?

Despite my reservations and fears, I contacted the other woman, and proposed a one-month trial. In my mind I thought that this would allow us both to find other options if sharing care did not work out. Had I no faith? To be honest, this was the least confident I had felt about any aspect of my life in a long time. I'd known how to make and defend decisions in a professional environment, but taking care of our children felt like shakier territory, and more ambiguous to me in terms of “right” and “wrong” choices. I want to share with you what I wish I'd known then. It seems intuitive and pragmatic now that I know how well

it works—and when there is not the feeling of dread or debilitating sleep deprivation attached to it, with the little voice that sneaks in, “what if this doesn't work?”

The Surprise

What surprised me most, and what I eagerly share with anyone who will listen now, is that it is possible to successfully create this new form of community. Once I was open to trying it, the logistics flowed. I highlight here a few key lessons I learned:

1. Communication: Being able to communicate about scheduling and being somewhat flexible on occasion is the key. For example, the other mother will call and tell me if my son is still sleeping at 4:00 and say, “Why not come at 4:30?” Time to have a latte or visit the public library? Yes, please! I return the favor.

2. Strategy: Being ready for the day, and having some easy systems in place—favorite spots with a snack, or toys and music on arrival for transition; snack and change just before 10 AM; nap or walk/nap at 10/10:15; change and lunch at noon; playing and music, books, outside plucking at things in the garden; changing as needed, of course; change, snack, and nap or nap/walk again around 3:00/3:30; change and little snack or more playing and music around 4:00 before pick up. This rhythm also helps me to relax into our time together and maximize the joy of my time with my son on those days.

The other steps that really helped were to 1) Write out my ideas for a proposed plan, suggesting we get together for coffee and see how the boys did together at our homes for a few hours with us there together; 2) Write out a possible schedule—and a few ideas of how to try a few shorter days first; 3) Talk up front about their routines and how we might be able to work with them; 4) Decide on a trial—reserving judgement until the boys got settled, but trying it for a month with willingness to revisit if it was working on all sides; 5) Meet anyone else who was going to be implicated—our partners in this case, but I'd also introduce friends or anyone else who would pick him up.

Finally, I have found a drop-in community group on Wednesday mornings. The group is within my community, has about 20 child-adult pairs, and is welcoming and diverse. Around the snack table there are more than six languages spoken. It is a destination to go with the two boys, where they are happy and I feel supported and part of a vibrant community. I've shared my challenges and successes with starting a childcare exchange with others there, and it reinforced my intention to pass on to COMMUNITIES readers that it is not only possible, but might even exceed their expectations.

How to Evaluate Success

The bonus with this arrangement was that it doesn't require any more emotional energy than ensuring it's a match, and of course monitoring how you feel about the separation. Seeing our sons just jump right in and start playing assured me that they would be fine once they were settled. Another strategy for overcoming the challenge of anxiety was to say “Just give it some time—even a few weeks—to let everyone get

(continued on p. 77)



Gardening Two by Two

Four grubby little hands reach up and pick snap peas for a snack, their faces still wet with strawberries from their first ripe course. I grab a handful too and revel in the fresh green pods still warm with sunlight. It's a gritty, mucky affair, but the sheer joy in these simple acts is undeniable. As the pint-sized helpers threw seeds in the ground last spring in a colourful “heap” rather than in rows, I had my

doubts. Gardening with small children—especially two toddlers—requires flexibility and patience, but what better way to connect directly to our food? Hearing them rattle off the names of plants and show visitors around the garden fills me with hope, even if it means a few edibles yanked out unceremoniously, and weeds gleefully dug out and tossed together with sand. They call it “salad.”

Reunion Under the Redwoods



Chris Roth

On September 23-25, in the shade of a beautiful redwood grove in northern California, 250 people from all over the American West Coast and beyond—community seekers, folks hoping to start new communities, experienced communitarians, and community founders—met and talked about community. Hosted by the nonprofit Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC)—publishers of this magazine—the “Art of Community” conference took place north of the San Francisco Bay Area at Westminster Woods, a rural church camp on a curving, redwood-lined road a few miles from the tiny Sonoma County town of Occidental.

It was a weekend filled with laughter, learning, excitement, a serene setting and delicious meals, and lots of hugs as people made new friends and old friends discovered each other in the crowd.

Workshops touched on various aspects of starting, joining, or living in any kind of community. For example: decision-making; including consensus, Consensus-Oriented Decision-Making, and Sociocracy; self-governance and power dynamics; effective meetings; good facilitation skills; and helpful communication processes, including nonviolent communication.

And nuts-and-bolts advice on buying property; creating community where you live; choosing a legal entity for co-owning land, including co-ops and nonprofits; setting up internal community economics; organizing a community kitchen; living in a shared group household; and typical steps founders take to create a new community.

Plus workshops on elders in community, love relationships in community, sexuality in community, and songs and games for community. Not to mention panels on urban community, spirituality in community, and an “ask the experts” panel of community founders. Whew!

And we had authors! Janelle Orsi, co-author of the wonderful book on shared housing, *The Sharing Solution* (Nolo Press, 2009; www.sharingsolution.com); and Tim Hartnett, author of the newly published *Consensus-Oriented Decision-Making* (New Society Publishers, 2011; www.consensusbook.com), to name just two.

A highlight of the weekend was the screening of the soon-to-be-released new video, *Within Reach* (www.withinreach-movie.com). This video—long-awaited in the US communities movement—shows how two young community seekers, Ryan Mlynarczyk and Mandy Creighton, bicycled 6,500 miles across the US to visit 100 communities to find one to join. *Within Reach* premiered Saturday night to a packed and cheering crowd.

Another highlight was the keynote talk Friday night by Dr. Kevin Danaher, co-founder of Global Exchange, an international human rights organization (www.globalexchange.org). Kevin Danaher is also a founder and an executive producer of the US-based Green Festivals, and executive director of the Global Citizen Center. He showed how all of us at the grassroots level are co-creating an emerging economic system—worldwide, sustainable, and cooperative. We loved it!

One of my favorite workshops was Tree Bressen’s presentation of the “Pattern Language of Meetings,” similar to architect Christopher Alexander’s classic work, *A Pattern Language*. Over a three-year period, Tree (who has lived in several communities and co-founded Walnut Street Co-op in Eugene, Oregon) and a group of meeting facilitator colleagues uncovered 91 principles of well-functioning meetings. These will soon be published as a deck of large cards with photos depicting each principle (grouppatternlanguage.org). I’m looking forward to introducing the cards to groups I work with to highlight effective meeting behavior.

Another meeting-process workshop I enjoyed was “Inspired Collaboration” with Tim Hartnett, a cofounder of Sunshower Farm community near Santa Cruz, California and author of *Consensus-Oriented Decision-Making*. In his workshop, Tim combined principles from mediation, conflict resolution, and Marshall Rosen-

berg's nonviolent communication process.

There were workshops I didn't get to, but heard were just wonderful. My old friend Jeff Clearwater, who has lived at Sirius Community in Massachusetts, did a workshop on designing new-paradigm community economies. John Schinnerer presented an Open-Space workshop on Sociocracy, a decision-making and self-governance process. Jenny Leis, a cofounder of Tryon Life Community Farm in Portland, Oregon, did a workshop on using permaculture principles to design community. (Oh why oh why can't I bilocate!)

I also reconnected with Tim Richards, who spent a year on a post-grad Watson Fellowship visiting ecovillages worldwide—from Crystal Waters to Auroville to Findhorn, Damanhur, and Torri Superiore—and whom I'd first met at the GEN-Europe conference at Tamera (sustainablephilosopher.wordpress.com). And I passed out my cool new "Ambassador, GEN-Europe" business cards.

I did a Friday night slide show of some of my favorite ecovillages worldwide, most of which I just had the pleasure to visit last summer. I also hosted "The Ecovillage Timeline Game," where participants had the task to arrange cards along a series of long narrow tables to show the many steps of creating a new community, and another task—figuring out how they would decide this. I participated in the community founders panel, though as a researcher, not a founder.

In fact, I was impressed with the number of founders who attended the conference. They included West Coast folks: Lois Arkin, Los Angeles Eco-Village; Dave Henson and Adam Wolpert, Occidental Arts & Ecology Center (OAEC), Sonoma County, California; Tree Bressen; Hank Obermayer, Mariposa Grove, Oakland, California; Jenny Leis; Tim Hartnett; and Deena Plotkin, Sugar Shack, Los Angeles. And founders from much farther away: Tony Sirna, Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage, Missouri; Laird Schaub, Sandhill Farm, Missouri; and Harvey Baker, Dunmire Hollow, Tennessee.

In addition to founders, many veteran

communitarians that I know and got to see again presented workshops, moderated panels, or just attended the conference. These included Raines Cohen and Betsy Morris, Berkeley Cohousing, California; Craig Ragland, Songaia Cohousing, Seattle, Washington (and recent former president of the Cohousing Association of the US); Carol Swann, who grew up in New England CNVA, Connecticut; Bill Becker, formerly of Sunrise Ranch, Colorado; Jeff Clearwater; Marc Tobin, formerly of Lost Valley Educational Center, Oregon; Arty Kopecky, formerly of New Buffalo Commune in 1970s New Mexico; Ma'ikwe Schaub-Ludwig, Dancing Rabbit; Marty Klaif, Shannon Farm, Virginia; Margie Scott, formerly of Earthlands, Massachusetts; and about 15 different folks from the 43-year-old Morehouse communities, Oakland and Lafayette, California.

Eight of these founders and veteran communitarians were board members or key staff members of the host organization, the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC): Tony Sirna, Harvey Baker, Bill Becker, Laird Schaub, Ma'ikwe Schaub-Ludwig, Raines Cohen, Betsy Morris, and Marty Klaif.

And these FIC folks were busy! Tony, who manages the FIC's website, www.ic.org offered a workshop, "Legal Options for Intentional Communities," and participated in and moderated the "Urban Communities" and "Community Founder" panels, respectively. Harvey led "Guerrilla Community Building" and participated in the "Community Founders" panel. Laird, the organization's Executive Secretary, offered five workshops: "Conflict: Fight, Flight, or Opportunity," "Power Dynamics and Leadership in Cooperative Groups," "Consensus for Dummies," "Should You Start a Community or Join One?" and with Ma'ikwe, "The Essentials of Integral Facilitation: How to Get Through the Agenda and Build Energy at the Same Time." Ma'ikwe, who manages the FIC's Community Bookshelf mail order book service, led four: "Spiritual Activism," "Sustainable Kitchens for Cooperative Groups," "Overview of the Intentional Communities Movement: Historical and Living Communities," and "The Essentials of Integral Facilitation" with Laird. Raines and Betsy led "Cohousing 101" and facilitated the "Communities Unconference/Open Space" sessions; Betsy offered "Strong Suit—Fun and Games for Better Communities," "Faith Traditions and Community Building—The Case of Quakers," and moderated the "Spirituality in Community" panel. Marty moderated the "Community Founders" panel.

Late Sunday afternoon, when the Art of Community conference was over, we participants bicycled, drove, and car-pooled out from under the sheltering redwood trees to return to our daily lives—all of us all a little bit richer in our community dreams and skills. ☺

Diana Leafé Christian is author of Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities (which has been translated into French, Italian, Spanish, and Russian) and Finding Community: How to Join an Ecovillage or Intentional Community. She is editor and publisher of Ecovillages, a free online newsletter about ecovillages worldwide (www.EcovillageNews.org) and former editor of COMMUNITIES magazine. Her bimonthly column appears on the homepage of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) website (gen.ecovillage.org). Diana is a trainer of GEN's 30-day Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) course, and has taught EDE courses in Israel, the Philippines, and, as a guest instructor, in Germany. She contributed chapters for the GEN books Beyond You and Me and Gaian Economics. She speaks at conferences, offers consultations, and leads workshops internationally, and has recently been made a "GEN-Europe Ambassador," representing GEN-Europe in the US. Diana lives in an off-grid homesite at Earthen Ecovillage in North Carolina. Visit her website at www.DianaLeaféChristian.org.

This article also appears in slightly modified form in GEN-Europe's online newsletter (gen-europe.org/resources/econnection) and Diana's online newsletter, Ecovillages (www.EcovillageNews.org).

COMMUNITIES

All back issues are \$5 each.



#152 Right Livelihood
Work Less, Simplify More; Crowdfunding; Which Comes First, Community or Career?; The Lenox Place News; Recreational Therapy; The Gift of Compost; The Farm; Wrong Volunteerism; Income Sharing; Redefining Work; Remade in Edinburgh; Buddha Being, Buddha Doing (Fall '11)



#151 Intimacy
A Nomad Ponders Family and the Ecstasy of the Group; Internal Intimacy; Honesty and Intimacy; Bee Intimacy; The Solace of Friends in Community; Intimacy in the Village Setting; Twenty Years of Open Marriage; A Communitarian Conundrum; Love Is the Answer; Fascinating Selfhood (Summer '11)



#150 Mental Health: Challenges and Hope
Gifted, Mad, and Out of Control; Walking Wounded; Nurturing Healthy Minds; Rx for "Mental Illness"; Mental Illness as Spiritual Path; Crazy About Community; Peer Counseling in Community; Shadow Sides of NVC and Co-Counseling; Prescription Facebook; Gould Farm; Camphill Villages (Spring '11)



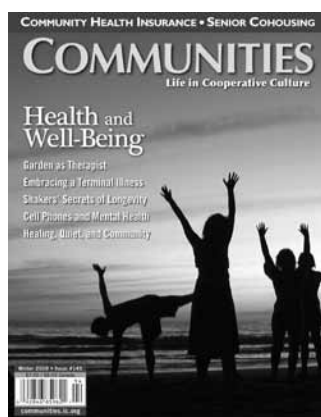
#149 Elders
It Takes a Community to Grow an Elder; Elderhood, In and Out of Community; Becoming Elders; A Legacy of Beauty; Remembering Jane Owen; Snapshots of Elders; Aging in Community; Green Houses; Perspectives from Sao Paolo; The Making of Senior Cohousing; Reinventing Retirement; And I Listen (Winter '10)

#148 Power and Empowerment
Being "Overthrown"; Balancing Powers; Leadership and Followership; Power and Disempowerment on the Ecobus; Pulling the Plug on Consensus; Dysfunction, Breakdown, and Vision; The Power of Process; Moon Valley; The Straw Poll that Broke the Camel's Back; Call in the Experts? (Fall '10)

#147 Education for Sustainability
Ecovillages and Academia; Teaching Hands-On Workshops in Community; Connecting Communities and Students; Leadership for Social Change; Hard Lessons; Olympic-Sized Community; How to Add Zest to Your Sustainability Education Program; Building for Health; Car-Reduced and Car-Free Communities. (Summer '10)

#146 Family
An Abundance of Dads; Second Family; When an Ecovillage is Raising Your Child; Parenting in Community; Exploring Family; Being Almost Two Years Old - Again; A Community Newcomer Finds Her Rhythm; Nudging at Boundaries; G8; Asperger's; Together and Apart; Family Dramas; Problem Solving in Community (Spring '10)

#145 Health and Well-Being
Earthen Culture; Health and Community; Embracing a Terminal Illness; Garden as Therapist and Community Organizer; Cell Phones, Education, Farming, and Mental Health; Gut Health; Shakers; Artabana; Healing Biotope; Asthma and Allergies; Senior Cohousing; High Wind; Health and Quiet; PEACH Health Care Plan; Bullies. (Winter '09)



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#153



REACH

REACH is our column for all your Classified needs. In addition to ads intended to help match people looking for communities with communities looking for people, Reach has ads for workshops, goods, services, books, conferences, products, and personals of interest to people interested in communities.

You may use the form on the last page of Reach to place an ad. **THE REACH DEADLINE FOR ISSUE #154/Spring 2012** (out in March) is January 22nd, 2012.

The special Reach rate is only \$.25 per word (up to 100 words, \$.50 per word thereafter for all ads) so why not use this opportunity to network with others interested in community? We offer discounts for multiple

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Please make check or money order payable to COMMUNITIES, and send it, plus your ad copy, word count, number of insertions and category to: Tanya Carwyn, Advertising Manager, COMMUNITIES Magazine, 7 Hut Terrace Black Mountain, NC 28711; email: ads@ic.org. (If you email an ad, please include your mailing address, phone number and be sure to send off the check at the same time.)

Intentional communities listing in the Reach section are invited to also visit our online Communities Directory at <http://directory.ic.org>. Listing on our web site is free.

ANNOUNCEMENTS & CALENDAR

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ENTROPY PAWSED. Entropy Pawsed is a nature-linked low energy living demonstration site in rural West Virginia. Visit: www.entropyawpsed.org.

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PERMACULTURE SYNERGIES. Permaculture Synergies is about people connecting or self organization in a time of separation. PS believes we can go beyond lifestyles of dependence on faltering institutions and the demise of the high tech visions of the "good life". Dependence has usually meant being beholden to impersonal, corporate entities and its' results of a few winners and many losers. Now production and jobs have moved to Asia and we are left to government, the Tea Party, crying in our beer, or more violent reactions. PS offers a PLACE FOR SELF AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, where self and community serve for mutual and reciprocal development. We offer a small, sustainable living community with private and common land for more independent and cooperative living. This will be a modest lifestyle to enhance self-reliance and shared work in the basics of food, shelter, and energy production that can be used to built relationships and, importantly, reveal interests that can lead to the pursuit of a wide range of additional cooperative activity.

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SIXTH EDITION

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MAPS

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CROSS-REFERENCE CHARTS

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ONLINE COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY

Don't miss the latest community listing information, available at directory.ic.org. All the data in our book and more. Browse our alphabetical list or search on a variety of characteristics to find the community of your dreams.

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We believe this kind of self-organization can naturally come about if the conditions are available, namely if affordability, time, space, access to each other, and a commitment to communication over the longer term are inherent parts of the new environment. Offering such a facilitative environment in the scenic hills of SE Ohio with good access to towns and colleges is Permaculture Synergies' goal. We invite interested people to complete and return our Skills and Interests Questionnaire. Once 3 or 4 people with shared work interests have been identified, we will schedule weekends for discussions at a SE Ohio country inn and conference center. We eagerly await your response. It is only for us to start talking about SERIOUS things that true change and improvement can happen. The folks at Permaculture Synergies. www.permaculturesynergies.com

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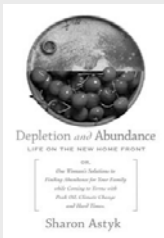


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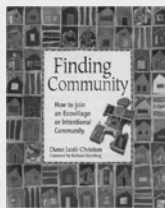
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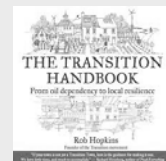
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Depletion and Abundance
288 pp, 2008. Great, non-strident guide to the personal in the peak oil transition.



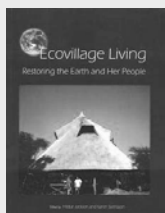
Finding Community: How to Join an Ecovillage or Intentional Community
2007; 256 pages. The must-read for serious community-seekers: practical, thorough and well-researched.



The Transition Handbook: From Oil Dependency to Oil Resiliency
2008; 240 pages. The book that is inspiring a worldwide movement to get our towns and cities ready for life after oil.



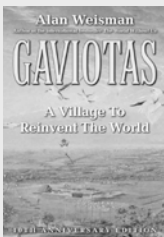
Local Money
192 pp, 2010. Your guide to getting local currency and a vibrant local economy off the ground wherever you are.



Ecovillage Living: Restoring the Earth and Her People
304 pp, 2007. Dave Wann's usual mix of stats, stories, and inspiration, turned this time to prosperity.



Communities Directory
512 pp, softcover, 2010. New edition of the FIC's guide to finding and connecting with communities, with over 1,000 listings.



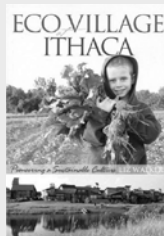
Gaviotas
256 pp, 2008. This updated edition tells over a decade of the Gaviotas story, an inspiring sustainable village experiment.



Plan C: Community Survival Strategies for Peak Oil and Climate Change
2008; 304 pages; paperback: Plan A? Ignore the problem. Plan B? Freak out. Plan C? Build community!



A New We (new: DVD) 120 minutes, 2010. Profiles of sustainability-focused communities in Europe. Great addition to your community video collection.



Ecovillage at Ithaca: Pioneering A Sustainable Culture
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Communal Studies Association

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HONOLULU INTENTIONAL OHANA PROJECT, HAWAII. We are currently meeting to explore possibilities for developing some form of co-operative living arrangement in or near the urban Honolulu area. All aspects of the project are still open for discussion. (Go to www.hiop.info for more information.) We are actively recruiting new members at this time. If you are able to attend our meetings on Oahu, please send your contact information to hiop@lava.net.

PEOPLE LOOKING

ANYONE OUT THERE STILL OPPOSED TO COMPUTERS? Also, still interested in intentional community living. To discuss either or both write: Link, 21 Old Profile Rd Marlow, NM 03456

PUBLICATIONS, BOOKS, WEB SITES

COHOUSING.ORG, the Cohousing Website, is filled with core resources for cohousing community – a thriving segment of the intentional communities movement. The site includes the Cohousing Directory, info on National Cohousing Conferences, Classified Ads, and FREE publications including Cohousing Articles, online Cohousing Books, In-the-News, Just-for-Fun, and much more. Its presented by Coho/US, the Cohousing Association of the United States - please visit us at cohousing.org.

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THE FUTURE OF WATER

(continued from p. 32)

also through a process described by Thomas Lüdert, lead engineer for Tamera's water landscape, as "erosion in reverse." Large volumes of topsoil, which had been eroded from the hillsides over the previous decades, are excavated from the valley where the earth dam will be built. This rich, fertile soil is taken back to the hillsides onto new terraces that will stay moist in summer and well drained throughout the rest of the year.

With an increasingly moist earth-body, and a richer, deeper topsoil, artificial irrigation can be reduced and eventually dispensed with altogether. Plants and especially trees can then thrive on vitalised water provided naturally from below, as they are encouraged to root deep into the ground rather than becoming addicted to water dripped onto the surface from plastic piping above.

In the "edible landscape" that is cultivated around the retention spaces, nutritious organic produce provides not only for human communities but for all the wild creatures of nature that also belong there. "Nature is like a mother: treat her right and she'll give you everything you need!" says Holzer, summing up this way of permaculture, oriented towards full contact and cooperation with nature.

Both Holzer and Bernd Müller wish to see the model applied worldwide. "The principle of decentralised water landscapes is valid across many climate zones," says Bernd. "Even in the desert it is possible to collect rainwater so that it has time to slowly enter the earth-body and create life." Water landscapes can also be adapted to the humid tropics, where they can prevent fatal landslides and act in place of the fragile topsoil that is often completely washed away in a single rainy season after the

clearance of the rainforests.

A world in which water—and consequently food—is freely available to all humankind is entirely feasible. Bringing this vision into reality, however, requires a revolutionary shift in human thinking. Instead of systems based on ideas of scarcity, mistrust, domination, and subjugation of nature, there must be a reorientation towards a life based on abundance, trust, mutual support, and cooperation with nature.

In this way, the new communities of the world can regain their healthy connection with the core power of life, and our hearts may open once again in the knowledge that we can heal the Earth. ♪

Jeff Anderson has been a permaculture trainee in the Tamera Peace Research Centre (founded 1995; current population about 200) since 2007.

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NATURE'S FRIENDS WAIT FOR HUMAN COMPANIONSHIP

(continued from p. 37)



are doing. When I wave or walk to their vehicle to truly engage them, they drive off. This is not quite the communal response I anticipated. A privacy fence may be necessary to prevent accidents on my narrow country town street.

I believe our worshipful relationship with sports has taught us to be a nation of spectators. Some people watched the horrifying events of Katrina on television and felt they had participated when they gathered in coffee shops to discuss it. I couldn't discuss it. An ancestral call deep within my soul catapulted me into full disaster-response mode. Little did I know that this call to rescue human souls would end in a call to include Mother Nature.

I remember a healing service held in Congo Square. After the prayers and messages, people were invited to get up and dance for their renewal. Instantly, four people with cameras in hand rose to take pictures. After that flutter of activity, two of the approximately 20 people present rose to dance. I immediately thought—when did photography become the first response to an invitation to dance? I stood to form a circle around the dancers in West African style where we take turns being held by the circle and holding the circle. Obviously those present had been to different dance classes because only a few more rose to participate in some manner.

In Victoria, I am also holding the beginning curves of the permaculture dance circle. My website first attracted kindred spirits from Louisiana and Missouri. Then came interested persons from northern Virginia, inside the DC beltway, three hours away. Then folks in the Charlottesville area two hours away began to respond. Two days before our permaculture certification course was scheduled to begin, the first local person signed up and actually wanted to pay. He was not too disappointed that we had to reschedule the class time due to no paid registrations. There were five registrations and one paid. Five spectators and one participator. In deference to my longing to experience permaculture as a communal activity, I have stopped hiring people to do the required work. It has dawned on me that as a pastor, one of my main purposes is to regenerate the waste of human lives through agriculture/nature, whereas most permaculturists are regenerating waste in the environment and the human lives restored are a byproduct.

I recently had a veteran of Iraq helping me at Nature's Friends. He was very skilled in recognizing tools, which in his mind always corresponded to a weapon, but when asked to pick up a stash of seeds, he couldn't find/see them. He poured out three days of rainwater that I was saving and was not the least bit remorseful when I explained why that disturbed me. He likes to mow and remove things and runs when it is time to mulch or plant anything. Even after three months of work, he doesn't see the difference between dumping grass clippings in the forest and piling them in a compost area so we can use them to build soil. In two years would that change if he stayed in the area?

Well, let's look at my two-year rule: I no longer receive a monthly evaluation from

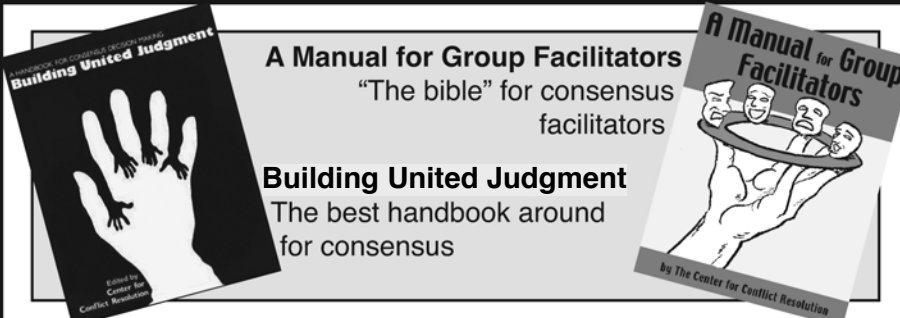
my herb club member. And last week my next-door neighbor called to ask me what was the name of that plant right next to the steel fence post. It is a seven foot tall spider-leg-looking thing with small yellow flowers at the ends of the stalks. I told her it was a Mexican sunflower given to me by my herb society friend. She wanted me to know that she has enjoyed watching it grow especially since she thought I was hearing unkind remarks from others. I recounted that this was the second year it has been there and that everything seemed to take a full two years to thrive in this soil. Somehow I had been spared listening to anyone else's opinion.

While I have actually lived here three years, it has taken two full years of work to see progress on any level. I'm not sure how to plan for joyful gatherings at Nature's Friends, so my thoughts go global: How long will it take for a critical mass of folks to raise children who ask how do I regenerate this, rather than where do I dump it? What amendments are necessary to child rearing to produce urban Black youth who don't cringe at sitting in the grass; and are not anxious being in open space? It would be wonderful if it took only two years. ☁



Rev. Marjani Dele, a Christian minister, is a fifth generation minister/activist who advocates the pursuit of inner peace as a means for world peace.

An entrepreneurial manager for 35 years, she has designed/developed agencies and nonprofits in four states. Her current roles include grandmother, minister, special education teacher, and social weaver. The mission of her property in central Virginia is to offer a meditative permaculture space which allows the transforming powers of nature to help enlighten adults and youth.



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UMASS AMHERST PERMACULTURE: LEADING BY EXAMPLE

(continued from p. 57)

For the UMass Amherst campus, the permaculture garden serves as a reminder of what one big idea, combined with a supportive community and a lot of recycled newspaper, cardboard, and food waste, can accomplish in an ongoing effort to make the Earth a more sustainable and healthier place to live.

Reflections

All of this started with a promise. I made a commitment in 2006 to positively impact the planet in some way, for the remainder of my life. It took years of searching to find my passion. It took many more years to gather the credentials needed to step into the position I am in now. I must admit that I received a lot of help along the way. The stars seemed to all align for me during the past few years, and a series of improbabilities all came true to bring this project to fruition. There are too many to thank individually, but you know who you are. I couldn't have done this without you.

UMass Permaculture is a prime example of what can happen when individuals follow their heart and commit to making a positive change in the world. The Earth listens for that and helps facilitate the necessary steps. Visit www.umasspermaculture.com to watch the UMass Permaculture documentary, view pictures of the garden, and read the student blog. ☺

Ryan Harb, a certified permaculture designer and LEED Accredited Professional, facilitated one of the first student-led university permaculture gardens in the nation. Harb is the first person in the US to hold a Master of Science degree in Green Building and he currently lives at Sirius Community in Shutesbury, Massachusetts. Visit www.ryanharb.com.

communities.ic.org

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CREATING FAMILY WHERE WE ARE NOW

(continued from p. 61)

settled, because that's how long it takes sometimes to adjust to change." My goal was not to get too frazzled, and to take a little space and time to navigate the new roles and relationships.

Celebration

Knowing that both boys are being very well fed, and cared for with lots of attention and an understanding of their individual needs and preferences, helps immensely, and is reason enough to celebrate. With just two, we can adjust to "no nap," or later nap, or needing a bit more holding or one-on-one time without any other pressures. The flexibility also extends to beginning our days later, or working it out between two families how we will handle vacation time. In daycare we would have to continue to pay during these times, whereas we just work this out between our families.

This childcare exchange has meant a new clarity for me, to be able to have some time to work and gain valuable perspective during two days a week, while enjoying the balance of time with the boys, and time with my family. Although, paying for the care if you know that it is the right match would certainly be worth it in some cases, mathematically speaking, there is a huge financial savings of thousands of dollars—a major bonus.

Final Reflections

If our children were members of a bluegrass band, my son would be wildly "faking it" on the fiddle and switching erratically to the mandolin mid-trill, while the other young man, age one, no less, would be solidly holding the tune with the stand-up bass. Part of why it works is that there are real characters involved in our new little community. It is easier to laugh at our inexperience and reservations now that we've seen results. The


other reasons for success are less easy to pin down. Our commitment to taking a risk together, born from necessity or a creative way to solve our problem, was a key. Our vision for what *could be possible*, beyond the challenges of *what was*, or *what if*, was necessary to move the concept into action. And now? I keep thinking that something will shift. They'll move to Oklahoma, or they'll decide to hire a nanny. But it's working, and I would be willing to try again. The lesson I've learned is this: We're committed, and we have faith, but more important, we have a plan. And a back-up plan, because it matters that much to us. We're building this new community together with purpose and intention. ☺

Zane Hamm is an educator in Edmonton, Alberta, with a passion for community health. Between gardening and photography, she's completing a Ph.D. in Adult Education.



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Spring 2012:
Spirituality



**An Insider's View of Twin Oaks
Community in its 26th Year**
by Kat Kinkade

Is it Utopia Yet? is a lively, first-hand account of the unique struggles and triumphs of the first 25 years of Twin Oaks Community, one of America's most prominent and successful communes. This thoughtful and entertaining 320 page book from the author of *A Walden Two Experiment* is illustrated with 16 photographs and 60 cartoons.

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REVIEWS

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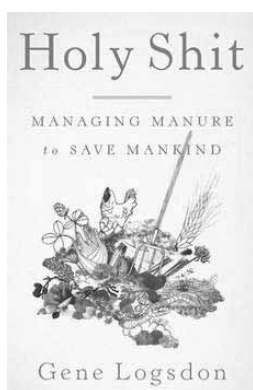


Sepp Holzer's Permaculture: A Practical Guide to Small-Scale, Integrative Farming and Gardening

By Sepp Holzer

2011, Chelsea Green, White River Junction, VT, www.chelseagreen.com

Austrian “rebel farmer” Sepp Holzer pioneered a comprehensive approach to permaculture more than a decade-and-a-half before the word even existed. His more than 40 years of experience developing his land with permacultural principles and techniques are a unique resource, shared generously in this book. From fruit trees, terraces, ponds, and waterways, to developing microclimates, caring for animals, cultivating mushrooms, and much more, he provides details about what’s worked, as well as his compelling personal story and philosophy.

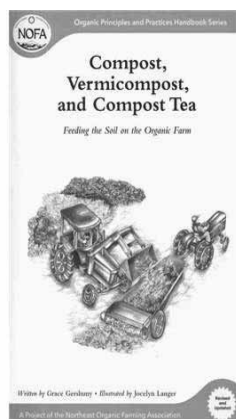


Holy Shit: Managing Manure to Save Mankind

By Gene Logsdon

2010, Chelsea Green, White River Junction, VT, www.chelseagreen.com

Gene Logsdon can make more sense while “talking shit” than anyone else I know. Informative, irreverent, eloquent, and insightful, this book explores our attitudes and practices related to excrement and ties them to a whole pile of larger issues in agriculture and culture. Positing that a post-petroleum agriculture will depend on manures (and the animals which produce them—including, yes, even those controversial “belching and farting...bovines”), Logsdon provides the low-down on how to handle them in chapters like “That’s Gold in Them Thar Horse Stalls,” “Pigs Can Potty-Train Themselves,” and “Meditations on a Meadow Muffin.” In writing just as engaging as that in his previous books (which include classics like *The Contrary Farmer* and *Living at Nature’s Pace*), he lays out a potent challenge to what he terms “The Anti-Bowel Movement.”



Organic Principles and Practices Handbook Series

A Project of the Northeast Organic Farming Association
2011, Chelsea Green, White River Junction, VT, www.chelseagreen.com

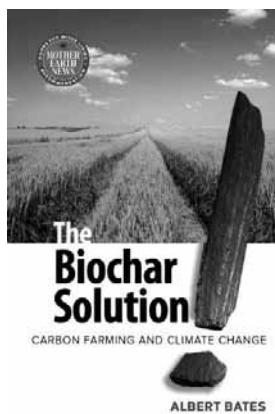
These eight guides cover a wide range of topics, of interest especially to small-scale market gardeners and farmers: Whole-Farm Planning; Organic Soil-Fertility and Weed Management; Compost, Vermicompost, and Compost Tea; Growing Healthy Vegetable Crops; Organic Seed Production and Saving; Crop Rotation and Cover-Cropping; Humane and Healthy Dairy Production; and Organic Dairy Production. Created by the experts at NOFA, most of the material is applicable beyond the northeast as well.



Year-Round Vegetable Production with Eliot Coleman

Two DVDs, 2010, Chelsea Green, White River Junction, VT, www.chelseagreen.com

The master of year-round vegetable gardening in northern climates presents his techniques and insights in a filmed workshop, describing innovative practices relevant to almost anyone wanting to grow more food.



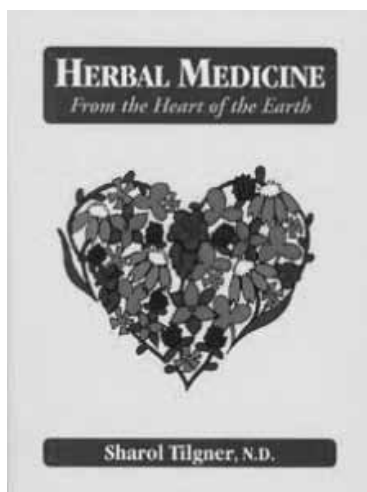
The Biochar Solution: Carbon Farming and Climate Change

By Albert Bates;
foreword by Dr. Vandana Shiva
2010, New Society, Gabriola Island, BC, Canada, www.newsociety.com

Conventional agriculture contributes to climate change, but a recently-discovered ancient farming technique sequesters carbon while building soil fertility. Albert Bates offers practical “carbon farming” approaches that, if widely implemented, could help reverse climate change while restoring ecological balance and long-term sustainability.

—Chris Roth

•••



Herbal Medicine from the Heart of the Earth

By Dr. Sharol Marie Tilgner
Second Edition, 2009, Wise Acres LLC,
Pleasant Hill, OR,
www.herbaltransitions.com,
www.wisecresfarm.com

Books about herbal medicine abound these days, but few are by writers with both extensive medical experience and hands-on plant knowledge. *Herbal Medicine From the Heart of the Earth*, by Dr. Sharol Tilgner, N.D., bridges the gap between past and present herbal knowledge to create a comprehensive

medicinal herb book useful for a range of experience levels.

Reading the preface, it's clear that Dr. Tilgner writes from both a perspective of deep respect for plants and people, as well as the detail-oriented mind of an experienced doctor and researcher.

Herbal Medicine is a straightforward herb book, with a focus on medical knowledge and herb safety. The author uses extensive references to herbal research throughout the book, providing the reader with both verification of the herb's properties and an avenue for further investigation. Being on the technical side, the book seems best for a person with some basic medical and/or herbal knowledge.

Herbal Medicine is arranged in a basic format used by many herbalism texts. The materia medica is organized alphabetically by common name first, rather than the plant's Latin name, which makes it a bit more accessible to the lay herbalist. It provides a thorough reference of herbs including indications for their uses, contraindications, and dosages. This materia medica is more detailed than many and does require a fair knowledge of medical terminology, but is still easy to use. The author shares traditional uses, as well as contemporary plant research backed up by an extensive list of references in the back of the book.

The book has a large section on herbal formulas organized by body systems. Learning formulation can take years, so it's nice to be provided with clear examples of formulas, dosages, and adjunct therapies for body systems.

The author also includes step-by-step instructions on making herbal preparations, such as tinctures, oils, poultices, and even suppositories. Most of the directions have photos to help illustrate the process, and the instructions are clearly described. Her directions for creating tinctures are extremely precise, and could be used for professional production of herbal extracts. The math can be a little intimidating, but the directions include gems of information about specific preparations that clearly come from the author's extensive experience.

I've had this book for many years now, and have come to use it as my go-to herb reference because of its medical detail and wide range of plants covered. Though it is probably best suited for a person who has already has some herbalist or medical training, *Herbal Medicine* is still a book one can learn from and enjoy.

—Kim Criegeer Goodwin

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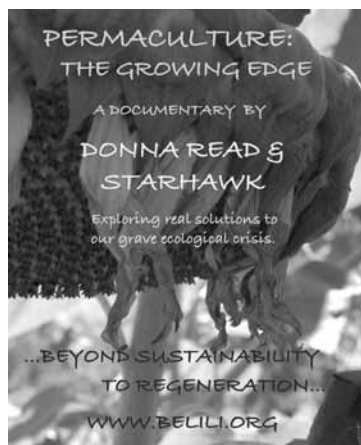
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Permaculture: The Growing Edge

A Documentary by Donna Read and Starhawk

DVD, 45 minutes, 2011. Available from Belili Productions, www.belili.org, info@belilil.org, 742 Treat Ave., San Francisco, CA 94110, 415-285-0242.

I watched this new DVD with a group of fellow resi-

dents at Lost Valley Educational Center, who gave it rave reviews.

Intended as “an antidote to environmental despair...exploring real solutions to our grave ecological crisis...[moving] beyond sustainability to regeneration,” this film shares inspiring stories of people who are making a difference by putting regenerative design principles into practice. Most of the action occurs in the Pacific Northwest, where mycologist Paul Stamets uses fungi to sequester and transform environmental toxins, Mark Lakeman and City Repair help create social vitality in Portland’s landscape, Connie Van Dyke practices and teaches permacultural urban homesteading, Elaine Ingham explores the art and science of encouraging healthy soil (and then applies this in New Orleans in response to Hurricane Katrina), Jon Young teaches nature awareness and tracking, the Hunters Point Family creates inner-city food gardens, and Penny Livingston-Stark and James Stark develop and teach about permaculture designs. The filmmakers also visit Maddy Harland, editor of the UK-based *Permaculture Magazine*, and Australian David Holmgren, cofounder of Permaculture.

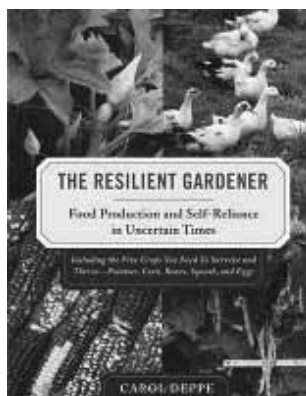
The film is wide-ranging, resembling more a poem than an essay, delving into permaculture principles and concepts organically. Lyrical rather than didactic, Starhawk’s narration accompanies sometimes stunning visual footage, exploring universal patterns of design that humans can apply to their own settlements and food-growing efforts. Its message is empowerment, and the ability of people to come together to create a better future.

“The only downside,” I was prepared to write in this review, “is that the movie is only 45 minutes long.” But having watched the DVD and witnessed how it constantly engaged its audience—not through production dazzle or sensory overload but through the strength of its contents and its reflective, holistic approach—I am not going to write that. While seeing more would have been wonderful, I think this film is the perfect length to draw people into the world it introduces. It will interest both seasoned permaculturalists and those new to the subject. No one will walk

out of this movie—or decline an invitation to see it in the first place—because it is too long. And 45 minutes of a well-crafted documentary can be more valuable than an hour and a half of a more sloppily done one. “Awesome,” was the first, spontaneous audience review of this film, and I would tend to agree.

—Chris Roth

Additional Resources:



The Resilient Gardener: Food Production and Self-Reliance in Uncertain Times

By Carol Deppe

2010, Chelsea Green, White River Junction, VT, www.chelseagreen.com

The Oregon-based author of the excellent *How to Breed Your*

Own Vegetable Varieties offers a comprehensive, very detailed guide to growing food at home, using approaches that help gardeners and gardens be resilient in the face of challenges and change. Among other things, Carol Deppe identifies “five crops you need to survive and thrive—potatoes, corn, beans, squash, and eggs,” and describes how to integrate them most effectively in your homegrown food system. Personable, well-written, and full of invaluable information, this book could prove not only helpful but even essential to some of its readers in times ahead.



Community Orchards Handbook

By Susan Clifford and Angela King

2011, Chelsea Green, White River Junction, VT, www.chelseagreen.com

What better way to build local community than to plant (or resuscitate) a food source that will feed you and your neighbors well into the future? First published in

England, *The Community Orchards Book* provides solid guidance on everything from planting and tending to creating a legal structure for your community orchard. Groups of neighbors everywhere could benefit from reading this book.

(continued on p. 78)

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