

THE PERMACULTURE GARDENING HANDBOOK



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INTRODUCTION

The following manual is a companion to the 5 day Permaculture course, but can also be used on its own.

The purpose of this handbook is to present permaculture concepts and methods to start your permaculture journey. We walk you through the basics of permaculture design and garden/farm layout so that you can create better energy-efficient systems. It also contains lessons on pest control, soil building and other helpful techniques which you can immediately apply to improve fertility and production in your garden. The handbook contains tutorials on seed saving and plant propagation, that will assist in reducing input costs, and helpful ideas on generating income from your surplus.

We hope you enjoy the book and that it inspires you along your path to abundance!

Portions of this manual have been drawn from African Conservation Trust (ACT) *Introduction to Permaculture and Homestead Gardening* (2014). Utilised and adapted with permission: www.projectafrica.com.

Compiled by Rory Clark.

*“The greatest change we need to make is
from consumption to production”*

Bill Mollison



Image Credit: Wikimedia Commons

SECTION 1: WHAT IS PERMACULTURE?

Permaculture Definitions

Permaculture comes from the words: PERMANent and agriCULTURE. So it can mean agriculture (food production) that continues, or culture (ways of doing things) that lasts.

One of the founding fathers of permaculture, Bill Mollison, defined permaculture as “the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems, which have the diversity, stability and resilience of natural ecosystems”.

In other words, permaculture is a system of farming in harmony with nature and using the resources that we have to their fullest potential.

“Permaculture integrates land, resources, people and the environment through mutually beneficial synergies – imitating the no waste, closed loop systems seen in diverse natural systems.”

Permaculture Research Institute

Relevance of Permaculture in Lesotho

Global challenges such as climate change are already impacting the lives of countless Basotho but particularly those who are most vulnerable; those who rely on the land for all their needs, food and income. The Kingdom of Lesotho bears yet another burden - that of land degradation. When land degradation is further exasperated by climate change and the land subsequently becomes infertile, unworkable and unliveable, we will reach a point of no return and become land refugees. At this point our landlord, Mother Nature, gives us the final notice - to leave!

The warning signs are there. Something must change, for it cannot be business as usual. Our future survival, our quality of life and that of our children depend on the actions we take now.

Climate change is everyone’s problem and is a symptom of a profoundly un-ecological society. In order for us to truly address the crisis that faces

us today, we need to address the way we live. Permaculture provides us with a map and the tools and helps us to awaken our ecological intelligence. As we pursue this journey, our very lives and presence here will benefit the Earth positively. We won’t need a solution as we will have become the solution.

The Benefits of Permaculture

Permaculture is more than just a sustainable farming practice. Beside the benefits of practical design tools, techniques and methods; through the act of practicing permaculture we re-establish our connection back to the land and this will have a profound influence on our lives and wellbeing. Through practicing ecological living and thinking we move into a spirit of co-creating with life and we carve out more meaningful destinies.

Permaculture helps us to create secure, resilient and healthy environments. With food available throughout the year, tanks and ponds full of rainwater and gardens full of life; we are daily reminded of the abundance and stability of nature. Our wellbeing is lifted when we are able to move from surviving to thriving and we share this with others around us.

- **Improved health through better nutrition and diet.** Permaculture helps us produce ‘real’ food that is free from harmful pesticides and herbicides, rich in minerals and vitamins; in a way that does not harm the environment.
- **Motivation and inspiration to do things differently.** Permaculture helps us to see opportunities and linkages between different elements and how to exploit these opportunities.
- **Meaningful work.** We can find great purpose in our relationship working with the land.
- **Livelihood and financial gains.** With a focus on diversity of product, your household income will be more resilient. Surplus can be sold and value added to increase profit.

ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF PERMACULTURE

These three core ethics are at the heart of permaculture and through their fulfilment we promote life.

1. Care for the Earth

Care for the Earth means taking care of all living things (such as animals and plants) as well as non-living things (such as land, water and air). We depend on all of these to keep us alive.

2. Care for People

Care for People is about promoting self-reliance and responsibility towards the greater community. It means meeting people's needs so that their lives can be sustained and of a good quality, but without damage to the Earth.

3. Share our Resources

The Earth only has a finite number of resources. Share our Resources means limiting your consumption so that you can invest your resources in caring for the Earth and for the people.

Through caring for the Earth, her people and sharing our resources we begin to address other more complex issues such as over-population, poverty, soil erosion etc. All forms of life have a right to exist thus our efforts as permaculture designers are directed towards enhancing and promoting life in all its diverse forms.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES OF PERMACULTURE

Permaculture design principles are a universal set of principles that help us guide our work in permaculture. They provide a framework, which can be used for designing our farm, identifying

relationships between elements, or finding sustainable solutions. The principles all relate to each other and work together. They are not complete and some sets of principles differ between various permaculture teachers and writers. Interestingly, the principles can also be applied to other disciplines and areas of our life such as health, natural building etc.

The following Permaculture Principles are based on the work of one of permaculture's co-founders - David Holmgren.

1. Observe and Interact with Nature

Spend time in nature, and in particular, the natural environment which surrounds you. In permaculture we seek to rekindle our relationship with nature and apply those 'observations & interactions' to our lives and permaculture systems. Before we are citizens of any country, followers of a creed or religion or belong to a particular race; we are children of nature. We are inseparable from Mother Nature; we often try to develop farms or businesses that are divorced from nature because we are ourselves. Although helpful, we will never develop ecological intelligence through books, social media, stuffy classrooms or teachers. No, we can only gain that from direct experience and interaction with nature.

It could then be said that the more intimate we are with nature the more we will express nature in our lives and decisions.

Observation practices:

- Walks and hikes in the wilderness.
- Sitting and observing the flora and fauna on your land or in your neighbourhood.
- Watching and keeping track of the weather, seasons and moon cycles.

"Nature does nothing without purpose or uselessly"

Aristotle