

Permaculture Design Certification Course

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What is Permaculture

Permaculture is a design approach to create regenerative, sustainable systems. Envisioned over 25 years ago by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren, from Australia, it has now spread to over 120 countries. Though its conception was as a land based system, its effectiveness has moved it into urban settings and to being applied in various social, political, and economic environments.

Permaculture was created through the synthesis of many design systems, with the emphasis on nature as the penultimate one. Similarly, the insights and value of traditional and indigenous practices and knowledge are acknowledged along with the necessity of adapting these with our current understandings and the appropriate technologies of today's world. What Permaculture seeks to do is to create three-dimensional designs that are site specific and sustainable. By bringing together elements (orchard, water system, farmer, cow, etc.), techniques (organic farming, natural building, etc.) and strategies (microclimate, relative placement, etc.) a system is designed or altered based on regenerative relationships. It is these regenerative, beneficial relationships that give a system complexity, three dimensionality, and thus, resiliency.

Permaculture principles are a list of attitudes, approaches, and actions that are practical and not system specific. These along with certain tools and techniques allow for a holistic approach and interaction with any type of system. As a tool of analysis it is an excellent way to look at existing programs, strategies, and interventions to assess their interactions, linkages, and success'. It is a way to reach an understanding of the various influences and flows involved in a system, be it self-help groups, a village, or organization. Second, it provides insights and principles by which to intervene or interact with a system. As there is neither a truly independent system, nor sterile 'environment' this aspect is of significant importance. Thirdly, as we have already stated, Permaculture is an excellent approach for designing resilient, site-specific systems, be it disaster preparedness, HIV/AIDS, or women's empowerment.

The world can be looked at as the convergence of many different flows. From 'natural' (wind, water, soil, etc.) to human (social, resources, transportation, etc.) to invisible (economic, information, etc.) which interact and create patterns. These flows form our world. Recognizing this, Permaculture teaches Pattern Literacy and Pattern Application.

This, along with Sector Analysis (site specific flow mapping), Zonation (a tool for structuring time) and other techniques and tools, Permaculture focuses on creating regenerative relationships that are the key to resilient, sustainable systems.

From its inception Permaculture has quickly spread to over One hundred and twenty countries where farms and other sites are successfully applying its' ideas, techniques and strategies. As further testament to its applicability, Permaculture is now being applied in many urban and suburban areas. In many developed countries these applications hold much promise for dealing with the many issues associated with mass populations.

Permaculture in the last few years has been moving into the invisible structures. In the United States a Permaculture credit union has been formed and 'green' investment firms are using Permaculture principles and ideas to create resilient, sustainable investment systems. Environmentalists and social activists are using Permaculture to give depth and complexity to their approaches to many issues we are dealing with today. These applications are possible because Permaculture is a design system that focuses on relationship and not so much on object.

Permaculture is a multi-faceted, in depth design system that will help us create appropriate, site-specific designs that are both sustainable and regenerative.

It is important to understand that Permaculture is not so much about giving you new and improved ideas, techniques, and strategies, though there is some of that. What Permaculture does is allow for a deeper understanding of the situation at hand and, with its principles and strategies, a more holistic, effective way to interact with or design a system. What Permaculture offers are skills and principles by which we build our awareness of why or why not something was successful. Through this insight we can build on what is successful and modify others to become more successful.

Stepping up another level, Permaculture is an excellent way to weave together the different parts of an organization so that a unity and synergy can be created. In this way unforeseen benefits and ease will raise within the system.

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Using a variety of learning techniques and strategies this workshop will present Permaculture with all of these applications in mind. Class time will consist of traditional lectures, guest presentations, group discussions, games, exercises photoshows, and movies. We will focus on land systems with as much hands on work and examples as possible. Many discussions and examples will be explored of possible applications in 'Invisible Structures', those social, cultural, political, and economic structures that shape much of our world today. Not only will the course be about Permaculture, but it will also model it by its structure and the environment we create together during the course.

Subjects will include:

Permaculture Ethics and Principles
Observation
Pattern Literacy and Application (physical and invisible)
Energy and Flows
Site Assessment and Sector Analysis
Zonation
Maps and Map making
Energy Storage and Resources
Water: Harvesting, Holding, and Cycling
Grey and Blackwater
Humanure
Soil Health and Building: Compost piles, tea, soup and stew
Micro-Organisms and their uses
Plants and Cropping Patterns: Guilds to Forest Gardens
Annual Vegetable production
Cold Weather Food production
Animal Systems
Aquaculture and Ponds, including Pond construction
Integrated Pest Management
Buildings: Siting and Integration with Environment
Natural Building and Green Architecture
Microclimates
Appropriate Technology
Design: Methodologies and Process
Designing for Catastrophe
Urban Permaculture and Community Scale Design
Toxins and Bio-remediation
Invisible Structures
Alternative Economics
Peak and Post Petroleum
Permaculture in the Majority World
Permaculture and Organizations
Right Livelihood

Hands-on projects may include:

Greywater system construction
Sheet mulching
Compost Pile building
Spiral garden construction
Solar hot water construction
Seed ball making

Harvesting Indigenous Micro-organisms (IMOs), i.e. local EMs
Making Bio-preparations, natural organic pesticides and fertilizers
Building a Worm box
Building a floating Garden
Roof top garden building
Hanging planters with Bamboo or plastic pipes
A-Frame construction
Swale and/or Terrace design and building
Mapping

During the latter part of the course design teams will be formed and given real life design assignments that are relevant to the site of the workshop. The course will culminate with each team giving presentations of their designs to the class and interested local people and groups. These designs will be left with site to become valuable resources for them. Elements to whole sections of past student designs have been incorporated by many sites where this course has been hosted.

This workshop will contribute to the enrichment of its site and each of its participants. This will not only be an opportunity to learn about Permaculture, it will also offer an opportunity to understand that we can create a regenerative, sustainable world together.

The person attending the Permaculture Design Course will not only gain theoretical and practical knowledge on Permaculture, they will be awarded a basic Permaculture Design Certificate. This certificate will enable the participant to be a certified Permaculture Practitioner.