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PERMACULTURE? what...on earth...is permaculture?

by Ann Baird

When we started building our Eco-Sense home 5 years ago, we had never heard of the term "Permaculture", or perhaps we had, but filed it away in that box with all the other "hippy stuff".

The goal we set for ourselves with our new blended multigenerational family, was to create a home that truly functioned as an integral part in the surrounding ecosystem. Energy, water, and resources could be shared for mutual benefit where our needs and nature's needs are met. We are after all science nerds, and we could do this; we were going to change what it meant to build green, AND we were going to do it affordably. Our home was going to make all it's own electricity and hot water from the sun, treat it's own waste with composting toilets and grey water reuse, capture it's rain water from living roofs, be built with local non-toxic materials, grow our own food, and do this all with a net zero carbon footprint. The fact that we also built our home out of MUD was really just one of the smaller points.

MUD: Modern Utopian Dwelling

Today, the tours of our home continue and we still get our share of nerdy engineers and architects, but we have had a major rise in high school groups and "permaculture" students.

We have finally learned more about permaculture...because we are teaching it through example. If you are like me, I thought permaculture was some hippy thing about growing food and going back to the land. I was wrong.



Permaculture is about ethics: Earth Care, People Care and Fair Share.

Permaculture is a science based ethical design system of balancing energy, water, resources, and life, to create human managed biologically diverse ecosystems. Each component of the system creates synergies with other components, and thus results in expanding biodiversity while sharing mutual resources in closed loop networks. The beauty of permaculture is that it's all about relationships where we work with nature to provide for our needs for food, shelter, and income while at the same time increasing the health of the environment. So yes, permaculture is about food, but it's so much more. It's science and values based, yet incredibly intuitive and creative to provide a remarkable way to connect with what is really important in life. Permaculture design facilitates nature's true growth economy.

The origin of the term Permaculture: Bill Mollison, a disgruntled and highly motivated biologist, culminated a true "aha" moment with student David Holmgren in 1978 when they set out the seminal work Permaculture One. Coined as a combination of the words permanent and agriculture, and then permanent and culture, permaculture from its textual origins is about creating a world where we can live indefinitely... true sustainability.

Funny how it occurs to us now, that our permaculture food gardens are essentially made up of the same materials as the walls of our home...just organized a bit differently. Our home IS a part of the garden.

Permaculture course graduates, earn a PDC (Permaculture Design Certificate). The intensive yet fun PDC courses are usually taken in a 2 week to 2 month period, but they are also offered on weekends, and one can study and learn online or from books.

Local Permaculture websites:

<http://www.permaculturebc.com> <http://seven-ravens.com/academy/courses/>

Excellent article to learn more:

<http://urbangardenmagazine.com/2010/04/what-is-permaculture/>

Book:

"Gaia's Garden: A Guide to Home Scale PERMACULTURE" by Toby Hemenway



Ann and her family walk the talk of sustainable living in their multi-generational home, Eco-Sense. Their motto is: **Less life stuff ... More life style!** The Bairds offer tours of their home and provide consulting and educational services in sustainable building

Find out more at
www.eco-sense.ca,
or email Ann at
ann@eco-sense.ca

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