

Frequently Asked Questions

"[Permaculture]... draws together the diverse ideas, skills and ways of living which need to be rediscovered and developed in order to empower us to move from being dependent consumers to becoming responsible and productive citizens"

David Holmgren, *Permaculture: Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability*, (Holmgren Design Services, 2002), p.xix

Permaculture Basics

What is permaculture?

Permaculture (from permanent agriculture and permanent culture) is a successful approach to designing sustainable environments that have the diversity, stability and resilience of natural ecosystems whilst also providing for the needs of people who use them. It is based on the philosophy of cooperating with nature and caring for the earth and its people.

Does permaculture work in a cold climate?

Yes. There are projects in Nepal, Norway and Scotland, and 3000 feet up in the Alps. Permaculture is a design process that helps you make best use of the situation and resources that you have around you, so you can use it just about anywhere.

Can you use permaculture in a city?

Yes, there are lots of exciting projects in cities. Urban food growing on derelict land, local exchange and trading systems, community supported agriculture, converting old council nurseries, schools projects, retrofitting houses and much more. See the website, newsletter, and the *Permaculture Magazine* for examples.

I don't have a garden, can I still do permaculture?

Yes, permaculture is more than food growing. Permaculture is about self-reliance rather than self-sufficiency. Self-reliance concentrates on what we can do with the skills and resources we've got, and on cooperating with others for the rest. If you don't have a garden, and you are keen to grow, then you can get an allotment, or find a local food-growing project. You can try indoor gardening – sprouting seeds on a windowsill – very nutritious! Even very small spaces can be productive using trellises, containers and boxes and small fruit trees. There are many things you can do to 'care for the earth and people' without a garden. Offer your skills, spend your money and get involved with what others are doing locally.

Is permaculture the same as organics?

No, organics is an excellent set of techniques for growing without chemicals, whereas permaculture is a design process that uses a variety of techniques – including organics – as appropriate for the situation or project. Many permaculture designed farms use organic techniques, but not all organic farms are permaculturally designed. Permaculture is also very similar to 'whole farm design' / 'whole farm planning' a method that is favoured by groups such as the National Trust, Countryside Agency, and RSPB.

Learning about permaculture

How can I learn more about permaculture? Where is the best place to start?

Join the Association. We can inform you about current opportunities to get involved and learn about permaculture. Read the books and attend an introductory course. Join a local group and visit local projects.

How can I get answers to specific technical questions?

Write an open letter to *Permaculture Works* (the Association's newsletter) or *Permaculture Magazine*. Join the email discussion group: http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/permaculture_uk where you can post a question. Look on our website: www.permaculture.org.uk. Hire a designer to help with the project. Join your local group and share your knowledge. Come in to the Office – we have a range of books and resources that may be of use. The office staff may be able to answer technical questions.

What does an introduction to permaculture course cover?

This is generally a weekend course that is designed to give you a flavour of what permaculture is all about. It will usually include group work, a slide show or video and opportunities to ask lots of questions. Some courses will include a design project or some practical activities. They are often held in places that are using permaculture.

What is a Permaculture Design Course?

This is the standard permaculture curriculum that has been used worldwide for over 25 years. The course is often held as a 2-week residential course or as a modular course over a series of weekends or evenings. The course is now fully accredited with the Open College Network as a 90-hour course. The courses are run locally and you need to check for details of accreditation, cost and time arrangements with the local course organiser.

What is the Diploma in Applied Permaculture Design?

A two-year self-directed period of full or part-time study in which you put the theories and ideas learned on your design course into practice. No other formal qualifications are needed, there is no age limit and it is a rolling programme that starts when you are ready. Please ask for the registration pack, which gives full details. Successful graduates have gone on to become self-employed teachers, designers and gain employment with a range of international agencies and businesses.

What other courses are there?

There are a wide range of specialist courses available. Some will help you to advance your permaculture design skills, and others will teach you just about anything you want to know, from Apple Juice & Cider making, through to Self-build housing and lime rendering courses... Many of these courses are listed (free of charge) on our website.

How can I become a permaculture designer?

Attend a permaculture design course, and then go on to do your Diploma in Applied Permaculture Design. Ask friends, family and neighbours if you can practise on their houses / gardens. Many local community projects will also welcome your input, and can provide opportunities for you to put permaculture into practice.

How do I become a permaculture teacher?

You need to have attended a permaculture design course, and it is

strongly recommended that you also complete a Diploma in Applied Permaculture Design. Alongside these qualifications we recommend you find a teacher that is willing to provide apprentice teacher opportunities. We can provide a list of teachers. Buy a copy of the Permaculture Teachers Guide to help you to plan lessons, design timetables and learn from over 30 experienced permaculture teachers.

Can you recommend books and resources?

Yes, we can send you a booklist, (also on the website). There are two speciality permaculture book suppliers that we recommend:

Permanent Publications
The Sustainability Centre
East Meon,
Hampshire GU32 1HR,
England
Tel: (01730) 823311 Fax: (01730) 823322
info@permaculture.co.uk www.permaculture.co.uk

eco-logic
Mulberry House
19 Maple Grove
Bath BA2 3AF
England
Tel: (01225) 484472 Fax: (0) 1179420164
info@eco-logicbooks.com www.eco-logicbooks.com

Both offer reductions of 5% to members of the Association

Groups and project work

Are there people locally I can work with?

Over 3000 people have attended the design course, and there are at least 200 projects in the UK, so there should be someone close to you. You can get group and project details from the website and the Association's newsletter. We can provide lists of people in your area once you are a member. We can also help you to set up a local group.

How can I get someone to do some design work?

Details of designers are in the Designers Register (find the register by clicking on George Sobol's face on the website).

How can I get a public speaker for my group?

Details of public speakers are in the Designers' Register on the website.

How do I find out about local, national or international projects?

Look on the website, which details hundreds of projects.

What can I do with my garden / allotment / smallholding / farm?

Employ a permaculture designer, train as a designer yourself (courses on the website), read the books (see list below) or visit a project to get some ideas.

Supporting the Permaculture Association

How can I support the Permaculture Association?

Money, time, skills, info, book donations, feedback about how we are doing/the website etc, help at events, local networking/regional reps, local promoters and media contributions.

Can I volunteer with the Association?

Yes, we welcome offers of help at the Leeds office - there is always plenty to do - from one-off projects to ongoing admin support. Call us to discuss how you can help. We are also keen to get volunteers to support specific events. Some volunteers can help via the internet. For all volunteering questions, contact the office.

What is the best way to make a donation?

If you pay tax, you can make your money worth an extra 28% at no extra cost, by making a Gift Aid declaration. We can send you details and a form. You can make regular donations by standing order and

again, we can send you a form. Just give us a call!

Can I leave a legacy to the Association?

Yes, we can send you information about this, or you can get advice from a solicitor about making a will. We are happy to provide relevant details for this purpose.

How can I find out more?

- Attend an introductory or full design course. These are held across Britain in a variety of formats.
- Visit or volunteer with a project
- Read books and Permaculture Magazine. A full booklist can be found on the website.
- Join the Association - we can put you in touch with members in your area.
- Visit our website, where you will find a wealth of information, such as a full reading list, project contact details, course information and much more.

Further reading

Permaculture: Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability, Patrick Whitefield, 2002
Permaculture in a Nutshell, Patrick Whitefield, 2002
Permaculture Magazine, Permanent Publications, Quarterly
Permaculture Teacher's Guide, Permanent Publications, 2000
The Beginners Guide to Permaculture, Graham Burnett, 2000
The Permaculture Way, Graham Bell, Permanent Publications, 1992
The Permaculture Garden, Graham Bell, Permanent Publications, 1994
The Earth Care Manual; A Permaculture Handbook for Britain, Patrick Whitefield, Permanent Publications, 2004
Permaculture One - a perennial agriculture for human settlements, Bill Mollison and David Holmgren, Tagari, 1978
Permaculture Two - practical design for town and country in permanent agriculture, Bill Mollison, Tagari, 1979
Permaculture: A Practical Guide for a Sustainable Future, Bill Mollison, Island Press, 1990
Plants for a Future, Ken Fern, Permanent Publications, 1997
How to make a Forest Garden, Patrick Whitefield, Permanent Publications, 2000
Eat More Raw, Steve Charter, Permanent Publications, 2004
Forest Gardening, Robert A de J Hart, Green Earth Books, 1996
The Woodland Way, Ben Law, Permanent Publications, 2001
The One Straw Revolution, Masanobu Fukuoka, Other India Bookstore, 1992

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About the Permaculture Association

The Association is an education and research charity that supports the development and use of permaculture in Britain and around the world.

For full details about our work see our website or contact us at the office.

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Membership rates

£15 concession, £24 individual
£30 household, £40 group
£80 business, £400 lifetime