

Core Tenants of Permaculture

- **Care for the Earth** by supporting healthy ecosystems and respecting the role of each species.
- **Care for People** by ensuring everyone has the sustenance needed to survive.
- **Return the Surplus** by recycling waste material back into the system.

Zones

Zones help to organize different areas based on use and proximity to the home.

Zone 0: This zone is focused on sustainable living and maximizing water and sunlight effectively while reducing excess in the home.

Zone 1: Closest to the home centre, zone 1 focuses on high need plants like lettuces and soft fruits as well as worm composts and raised beds.

Zone 2: Focus in zone 2 is on perennials like squashes, potatoes and plants requiring less maintenance. This area is also used for larger composters and beehives.

Zone 3: Main crops that require the least amount of care with weekly weeding and watering are planted in this zone.

Zone 4: This zone is mainly wild and used for forage purposes

Zone 5: A wilderness area for observation of natural cycles and growth of species that can aid the other zones.

Patterns

Permaculture encourages the observation and replication of naturally occurring patterns.

Branches, waves, spirals and honeycomb patterns are easily recognizable ecosystem patterns that may be useful in home garden settings to allow easy of access and effective plant placement.

Layers

Layers are naturally occurring in any ecosystem with tall trees occupying the top layer followed by shrubs, and then short plants and flowers that do not develop bark or overwinter.

Soil surface and groundcover make up the next layer followed by the subsoil and root-systems. These layers are important for worms, microorganisms, insects and fungi.

Vines represent a final and important vertical layer.

Guilds

Guilds are a collection of interdependent plant, animal and insect species that support each other with important nutrients or pest management.

Edges

Edges are areas where distinct and contrasting ecosystems meet, creating immense opportunities for productivity and connections. Edges can easily be replicated in any garden using spirals or wavy peripheries to increase the surface area exposed to contrasting systems.



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Back to Nature



Permaculture



Permaculture and your home garden

What is Permaculture?

A combination of the ideas, 'permanent' and 'agriculture,' permaculture is a system for designing spaces that take advantage of natural cycles and relationships between species to create sustainable and self-supporting ecosystems.

Permaculture is based on a philosophy of community and interrelationships between people, plants and animals.

Why Use Permaculture?

Permaculture provides efficient growing designs that require minimal upkeep with high return.

Water is used more effectively in permaculture designs and waste is recycled back into the system.

Pollinators and natural predators are encouraged to support plant growth instead of heavy fertilizer and pesticide use making permaculture more sustainable than other designs.

Utilizing Permaculture

Many books are available on permaculture, while several courses are offered by Calgary-area organizations, some of which have been held at the Sheep River Library.

For more information see: David Holmgren's *Permaculture: Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability*, or visit Calgary-based vergepermaculture.ca.

Holmgren's 12 Permaculture Design Principles

1. Observe and Interact

Engage with nature to develop workable design solutions that are applicable to a particular situation.

2. Catch and Store Energy

Develop systems that collect resources, like water, at peak abundance for later use.

3. Obtain a Yield

Ensure that you are producing rewards for the work you put in to your home and garden.

4. Self-regulation and Constructive Feedback

Support community members endeavouring towards developing functioning systems while discouraging inappropriate or destructive activities to ensure sustainable futures.

5. Renewable Resources and Services

Encourage sustainable use of natural resources. Reduce over-consumptive behaviours and dependence on non-renewable resources.

6. Reduce Waste

All waste may be recycled back into the system if it is produced using natural cycles.

7. Patterns to Details

Designs should focus first on observable patterns in nature and our communities and then be filled out with important details.

8. Integration not Segregation

Effective placement facilitates important interactions and relationships and reduces the need for unnatural additions like fertilizers and pesticides.

9. Small, Slow Solutions

Focusing energy on small, slow solutions makes maintaining the system easier. Small solutions help build community while reducing the need to import additional resources from great distances making the process more sustainable.

10. Value Diversity

Diversity creates more resilient systems that can effectively manage threats while taking advantage of existing relationships.

11. Utilize Edges

Border areas are where the greatest production and connection occurs. Increasing edges will increase yield and support for natural processes.

12. Embrace Change

Careful observation will allow natural changes to occur while creating space for effective intervention when necessary.