



PERMACULTURE

What is Permaculture?

Permaculture is two words combined: permanent and agriculture. Permaculture is a set of design principles and ideas that have become a tradition in themselves. Permaculture could be seen as no different from agroforestry, but its power is based in realisation that the modern agricultural advantages are only advantages if you look at them in a certain way. The illustration of this is given by the story of a Western Agricultural Adviser lecturing a traditional subsistence farmer about pests and the need for expensive pesticides. The adviser showed the farmer an insect eating a leaf, saying the insect is eating your food, the farmer ate the insect.



History of Permaculture

It is important when explaining what permaculture is that learners understand the Indigenous foundations of this knowledge. Both the design-thinking and ethical philosophy of permaculture (Earth Care, Fair Share and People Care) draw on an Indigenous worldview of living with its deeply connected understanding of nature and harmonious agricultural practices.



The original inspiration for modern permaculture was a 1929 book (A Permanent Agriculture) by Joseph Russell Smith, who was a farm researcher. Bill Mollison and David Holmgren were inspired by this book and further developed the ideas.

One of permaculture founders Bill Mollison, worked with Aboriginal peoples of Western Australia for many years. He codified and translated their knowledge and synthesized it with the young western science of ecology. In his first books, along with his student David Holmgren, he developed a curriculum which has been taught and adapted as the Permaculture Design Certificate (PDC) throughout the world. Their codification was through a Western (and mainly white) scientific-ecologic lens. They tried to create a language and use a set of principles and ethics to try to help bridge the loss of indigenous science to people who were cut off from it in a post-colonial and late stage capitalistic mono-cultural world.

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Modern Permaculture

We live in a world where agriculture and food are largely seen as completely disconnected from all other aspects of human culture and living systems. Most people come to permaculture through food production, forest gardening, mulching, no-dig, and agroforestry where some of its principles have been applied. They often then begin to learn about its potential for both social and ecological transformation.

In the last few years, a mainly white male permaculture movement has been moving steadily towards walking-its-talk in terms of 'using and valuing diversity.' This has been about tuning into deeper nature and human connection, but also toward an intersectional and anti-oppressive permaculture. The spaces are changing, and Irish permaculture is part of that change. It is increasingly including the voices of women, recalling and including indigenous peoples and history, people of colour, and otherwise marginalized communities as welcomed and more and more centred.

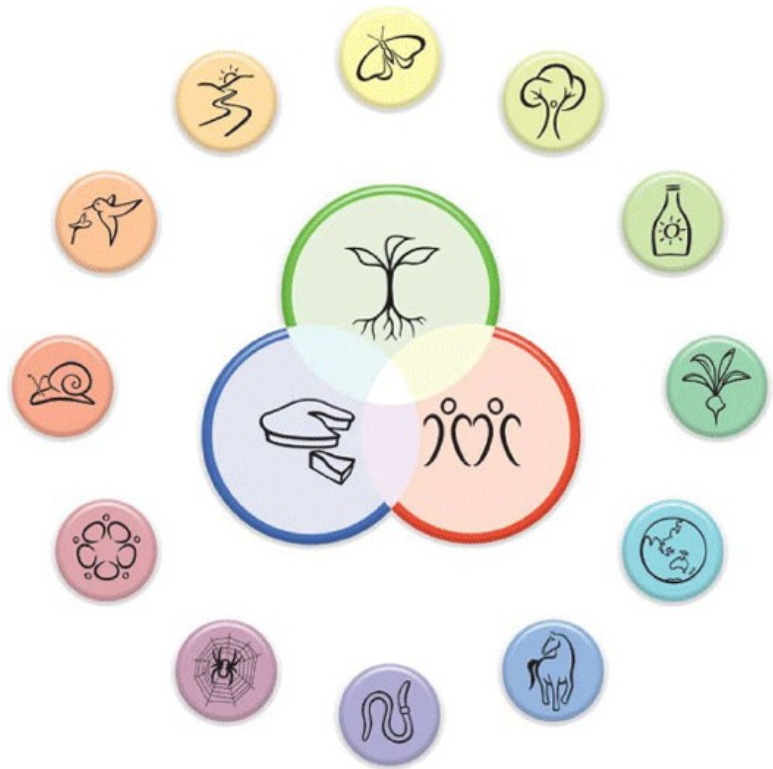
Many permaculture practitioners on the Islands of Ireland hope to make the vision of its social and environmentally-just transitions more possible throughout this local/global movement.

Permaculture Principles

The core of permaculture is designing a system that needs very little work, nutrient input, or energy input (apart from the free sunlight that powers all agriculture). Permaculture also values the same principle as other organic techniques, which is to let nature do the work.

Some permaculture benefits:

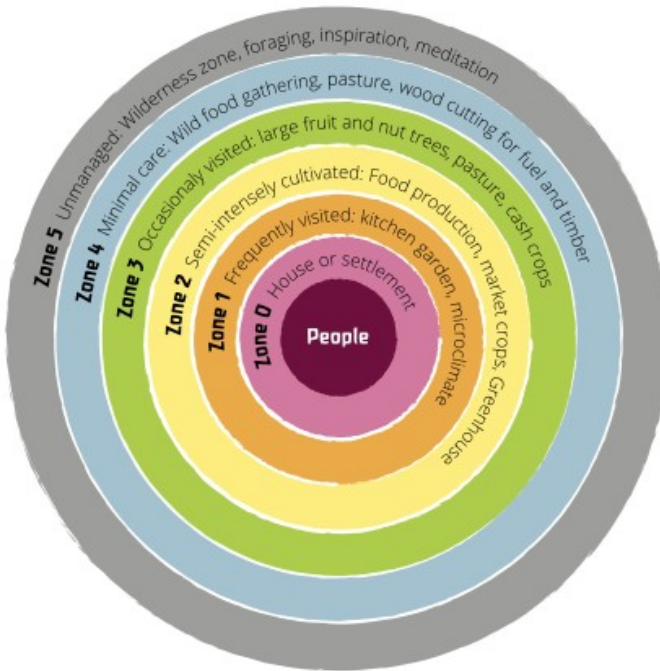
- Energy saving
- Small scale and slow is better
- Obtain a yield but produce no waste
- Use renewable resources only
- Integrate - a problem may be a solution if seen on a different way
- Observe and respond to change



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Permaculture Zones



Permaculture projects usually begin with assessing a site in-person and on maps. Then, assigning zones for different activities. The tasks or operations that need most frequent attention should be placed closest to the home.

Zone 1: closest to the home: seedlings, herbs, tool sheds, etc.

Zone 2: perennial plants, composting areas, beehives

Zone 3: main crop area

Zone 4: semi wild, forest for fuel, foraging area

Zone 5: wilderness area

Avoiding Complication

Permaculture is a new branding of an old concept. It was started by academics, trained in Western Methods, who realised that the traditional agriculture which they were teaching people to replace modern methods were, in reality, more efficient and productive.

There are many, many books about permaculture; it is becoming an industry. The most important ideas were all contained in the book: [Permaculture One](#) by Bill Mollison (**click here to access the book in English and French**). Permaculture is a good approach to living on the planet.

Let's not let it become just another buzzword and cult; it is agriculture that needs changing, not alternative culture!

Related Videos & Websites

- ⇒ [Off Grid Permaculture in Ireland](#) ⇐
- ⇒ [Irish Permaculture Garden introduction](#) ⇐
- ⇒ [13 Years of Permaculture in Ireland](#) ⇐

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