



A Permaculture Myth

“[A Permaculture Myth](#)” by Charlotte Anthony, handsonpermaculture1.org. Published by Planetshifter.com

There was a whole system design practice for living on the earth and it was named ‘**permaculture**’. It was put together because people in their modern society had forgotten that they too were part of the whole system, part of the earth. They forgot that, as had been taught by elders for centuries, and what their scientists were starting to discover...that THEY were part of the equation...the viewer and the viewed are one. This ‘permaculture’ was used by many, many people.

These practices were used in a culture based on Newtonian physics and linear thinking. Most of the people used techniques that someone else had applied and that had worked for them. Most people wanted the technique they used to be stamped for approval by a scientist or someone well-known, or at least a famous permaculture practitioner.

Almost all of these techniques were high-energy intensive practices, which needed a lot of off-site materials, especially if the land was a recent acquisition and was not using animals. Older farms often had a lot of materials needed for the intensive practices like hugelkulture, making compost, or mulching. Most people in permaculture knew that tilling would damage the soil but still, they would till, as they did not know any other way to grow what they wanted to grow.

A man named Masanobu Fukuoka told them that most people practicing agriculture spent most of their time correcting for the damage they did and that they were better off to do the least work possible and to let nature do the rest. He told them that tilling the soil (because it took out the biology nature had put into the soil) was the worst culprit.

One day, a person who had gone to India to learn about their 10,000-year history of sustainable farming, observed that the traditional farmers were regenerating their land with very light or no tilling, were adding microbe teas, planting diversified crops resulting in great yields, and all with no irrigation. All of the farmers had one thing in common: a connection to, and a reverence for the ecosystem where they worked and lived.

She did some experiments herself and found she could get great yields on pure sand subsoil, or on rock-hard clay in the first season.

It was difficult working only with the rain that nature provided. She discovered she had to wait for the rain, be creative with how to use water, use much less water, keep herself connected with the land, and not spend her time wishing for irrigation and all things modern. She was raised in a culture where control of the environment was a dominant theme, where living in a house protected from insects and climate variation was a top priority for most people, and where farming was almost always done with irrigation.

Pests, diseases and weeds were controlled chemically. Fertility was controlled chemically. In her culture, the attitude toward nature was mainly one of exigency, and what could be taken from nature. She found that all these attitudes were very deep inside of her.

Being in India allowed her to see outside her own culture. Growing food in this way, i.e. without off site inputs - using microbial teas instead, without irrigation, and with a real connection with the land, sounded so in line with everything she'd learned in permaculture. She started shouting from the roof tops, "Wow! Look what we could do! We could regenerate soil, farm the deserts, even grow biofuels, feed the hungry people, and reverse desertification and climate change at the same time".

There were folks such as Gabe Brown doing most of these techniques in North Dakota where there was only 15 inches of rain a year. There were even soil biology scientists, for example Elaine Ingham, describing how these techniques worked and, realizing how revolutionary they were, had left their science laboratories in order to consult directly with farmers, showing them how to use these techniques.

She wanted to walk her own talk . Though 71 years old, she found some financial backing, and found a farming couple who had extra land in eastern Oregon (termed a desert with its 8-15 inches of rain a year). She made the leap into the unknown and began her own demonstration farm. The work often seemed more than was humanly possible to do. Rain did not come when she thought it was needed. Money for deer fencing and/or seeds or for soil testing to show how the system was working did not come when she thought it was needed.

Being a person who had benefited from her own creative solutions in a range of different projects, it often seemed more was needed than even she could come up with. Fortunately, some young people were drawn to help in this effort and they came to work and learn in return for food.

Other friends helped her put together a crowd funder and the needed money was raised. She was learning to trust nature rather than rely on her own ability to control situations.

She posted some of the results from her work in India on a large permaculture site. Then the naysayers began. This did not sound like the permaculture they knew and loved. It was much too simple and did not have a lot of 'techniques'. They hurled the epithets a culture used to trying to control its environment would hurl:

"Outrageous claims without scientific backing!" (**there was scientific backing**), and ...
"People need to be protected from these claims!"

So they took her material off their website, even though there were many others who were intrigued and begging for more information, because it rang true to them. Fortunately, there were other ways to get the word out, including Facebook. She started a couple of groups on Facebook, 'Microbe teas, a quick way to regenerate soils' and 'Reverential Agroecology' which she soon realized were better combined into one group, Radical Permaculture.

Soon many people were trying the method and for most it went well. There were some people who had trouble 'staying in the present' and focusing with full attention while working. But once they learned how to do this, their projects started to work. Many were delighted to be involved in this new way of being. They felt more connected with both the land and their fellow humans. They were much more creative, and almost every day new ways of working on the land were discovered.

These ways spread like lightning all over the globe. Soon there was no starvation, and desertification and climate change were reversed. Some people had other jobs, and some had spouses and family members who had other jobs, many of whom were deeply affected by their 'farming' experiences. They began taking what they learned from working on the land out into the larger culture. They began to occupy the food service industry, the health industry, even the insurance, banking and military industries.

Just one example from the insurance industry:

A check was about to be cut to an apartment owner; whose building in a slum area had burned down. A woman employee realized that all the people made homeless by the apartment burning down would not be benefitted by this check. She was inspired to put a deal together where the apartment owner would buy another apartment building nearby, and move all the occupants to the new building.

She went through bank-owned properties and found a condemned building that was unoccupied. She put the numbers together and went to the person who would receive the check and told him how the deal could be a win/win/win for everyone involved. The person went for it. Then she found a friend with a literary gift to write up the transaction for the press, including interviewing the folks in their new apartments.

One question the interviewer asked the woman who'd pulled off this feat was, "Weren't you stressed out, doing all those things you didn't know how to do?"

The woman answered, "Yes, some days I was very stressed, but usually it was like an unfolding. I was in the middle of a wave of connection, and the solutions just came to me."

The press ran with the article. The tipping point came and folks everywhere started honoring their own vision, and allowing ways to put their visions into practice. Everywhere one went people were smiling and living can-do lives.

And all lived happily ever after, or happier than they had been for a long, long, long time.

* * * * *

Contact Charlotte -
Victorygardensforall at gmail.com