

PERMACULTURE LIFESTYLE EXPLAINED:

# THE ECO-ENTHUSIASTS' GUIDE TO EFFICIENT LIVING



JASON BLISS  
SHARING INSIGHTS - 2020

# Introduction

Here we are, 20 years into the 21st century. A snapshot of current events might leave one to wonder how far we'll make it into the 22nd. One might even question whether, at this rate, we would even want to. From one perspective, humanity is gripped in waves of fear, confusion, misinformation, pestilence, famine, natural disasters, isolation, and inequalities of every kind.

Thankfully, this era has likewise been filled with mind-blowing innovations, mass waves of heart-opening compassion, broad-band information exchange, dispelling of age-old institutionalized oppressions, scientific breakthroughs, and an awe-inspiring race to raise global awareness for ecological conservation.

We find ourselves, now, at a tipping point. Global attention has finally turned toward our urgent need to preserve planetary conditions, for a future that is suitable to human life (not to mention the rest of our fellow earthlings.) All credible evidence shows that the only hope we have for handing our children's children a world worth having children in is to change the way that we, ourselves, live & do business.

In my personal opinion, voting with our dollar is one of the most potent actions that we can take daily. Throughout this paper, we'll explore why and how, as well as other design principles that one might use to redesign their life in ways that can bring more time, purpose, and impact into their lives.

Plainly speaking, every time we exchange money with any type of organization, we're essentially showing our support for the contribution they are making to our lives, humanity, and the planet. We are directly encouraging them to keep up with what they're doing. Any time we exchange our money with an organization that is polluting, enslaving, and producing low-grade products destined for a short life of use and a long life in the landfill, we are personally responsible for that pollution, enslavement, and low standard of human potential. It's a hard truth that we need to understand and accept if we're to secure our grandchildren's future.

Conversely, when we choose to invest the extra time, money, and willingness to support environmentally and socially responsible businesses, we are personally contributing to a future in which our grandchildren might still thrive. The good news is that many of these new choices can save us time, money, and energy once set into place. As well, you are not alone. The work has already begun!



## Can My Personal Choices Really Make a Difference?

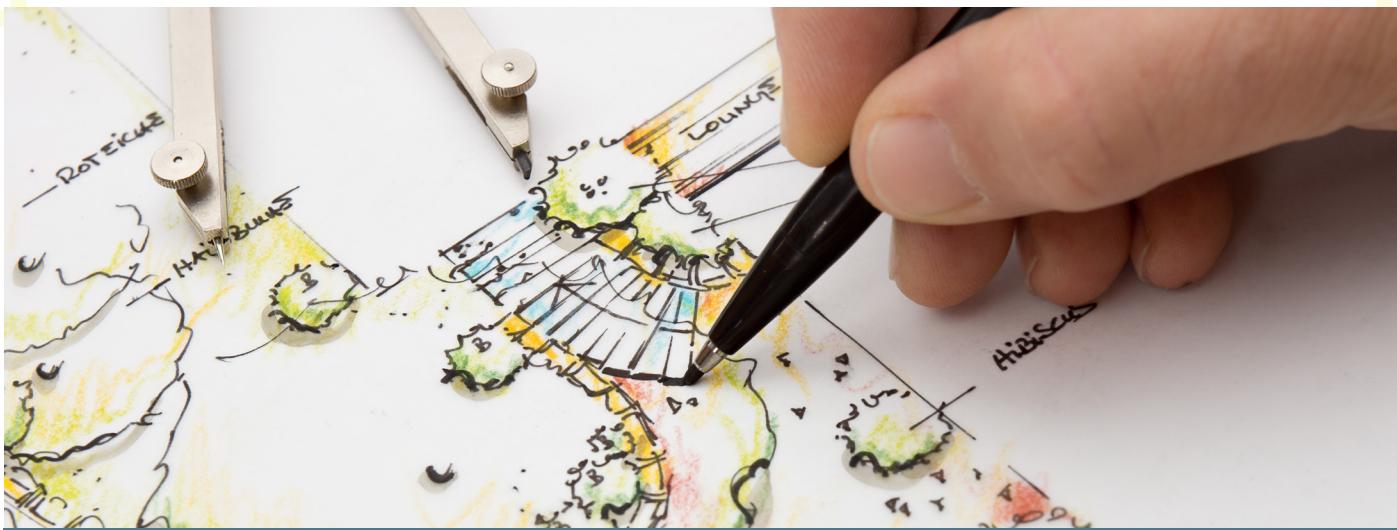
The last 50 years have represented a dawn of human awareness and innovation, and we continue to develop new methods for sustainability and ecological resilience. While we still have a long way to go, the last few generations have begun to systematically expose, deconstruct, and evolve thousands of years of degenerative human practices. While that dawn has brought light to the situation, the sun has risen, and it's time for the rest of us to get to work!

Chances are, if you're reading this, you may agree with this perspective to some degree. But what can we do about it? Where do we start? Is recycling, composting, buying organic, and using cloth shopping bags enough?

While I'm delighted to imagine that the majority of those reading this report not only understand these concepts but are also able to practice them, with municipal and social support even, I recognize the need to take you even deeper down the rabbit hole. It's not enough that we simply change some of our habits; we need to change the way that we think and process our interactions with the world around us - systematically.

It has been in my experience that adopting the principles that I'm about to share with you will not only help secure the future for humanity on this planet, but it will also help many of you find a richer relationship with life and your part in it.

Let's begin with a little background...



## What Is Permaculture, and How Does It Apply To My Lifestyle?

The term “Permaculture” was initially coined in the 1970s by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren. They devoted much of their lives to traveling the world, investigating best practices for land management from indigenous, traditional, and modern-day land stewards alike. The term originally referred to “permanent agriculture” but was later expanded to represent “permanent culture,” since social aspects were recognized to be inseparable to a truly sustainable system. The application of the Principles in this way is often referred to as “Social Permaculture.”

Their discoveries led them to assemble what is known as the Permaculture Design Course, through which tens of thousands of individuals worldwide have studied, adapted, and experimented with these techniques for a regenerative approach to land management. As useful as these ideas and innovations have been for redefining its practitioners’ approach to homesteading and growing food, this study extends far beyond garden maintenance and water management. The brilliance of permaculture isn’t confined to its innovative techniques and technologies. It’s in the application of its Principles. The brilliant and insightful founders of this movement saw beyond the doing and put the focus on contemplation first. Patrick Whitefield, author of *The Earthcare Manual*, called permaculture “the art of designing beneficial relationships.”

The steps for planning and problem-solving in Permaculture generally start with consideration for the three founding Ethics. From there, the Principles are used as directors for creative thinking, designing, and problem-solving. Next, a strategy is designed to set up systems that meet the short and long-term needs of the situation, to maximize output with as little ongoing input as possible. Only then are techniques and technologies applied to create the systems or lifestyle patterns. For this reason, it doesn’t matter what country, climate, scale, need, or function that you are being faced with, the Permaculture Principles will guide you to the best tactics and technologies appropriate for your situation.

# An Approach Grounded in Ethics:

Before diving into the practical applications of the Design Principles and how they can apply to our lifestyles, let's take a look at the Ethics from which they're all based. A permaculture design course is generally begun with a review of the 3 founding Ethics - Earth Care, People Care, and Fair Share. Let's take a quick look at how these seemingly common sense Ethics might be applied to our lives and business practices.

## Earth Care



We've seen recently, in the wake of the corona pandemic, what it can look like when industry and petroleum-based travel take a pause. In a very short time, revelatory images have surfaced, showing the earth's atmosphere and waterways healing themselves when given a chance. It's not surprising. Like us, the planet has its own detox and immunity systems. Like us, over 4500 million years of evolution, it has developed the capacity to regulate a state of balance amidst shifting influences. For it to do that in a way that humans can survive through, however, we absolutely must stop polluting it and stripping it of its limited resources. Pollution comes in many forms, but it's a factor that we've learned to calculate and mitigate.

We live in an innovative day and age. Many humans have devised systems and technologies for enjoying our modern-day comforts with less of a negative impact on the environment. Some of these practices are even regenerative! Supporting lifestyle choices and businesses that employ renewable-energy technologies and organically grown food is a powerful start. The exciting thing is how many companies have been exploring ways to make "going green" initiatives a path toward greater profits!

This is the practice of permaculture. How can we change our systems and habits to be more beneficial for us, while staying mindful and supportive of a healthier planet for all of humanity, its descendants, and the plants and animals that are also part of our global community?

The answer is both intimidating and empowering. It all starts with me. It all starts with you! The responsibility lies within each one of us. The great news is that we already have many established precedents that are worth paying some attention to. The Permaculture Principles that I will be sharing with you, here, will always be guiding you toward an Earth Care focus. This Ethic is a great reference point when we consider voting with our buying power, as well.

## People Care

When we support industries and lifestyle habits that discriminate, marginalize, impoverish, enslave, abuse, or otherwise cause hell for our fellow humans, we all lose. It's long overdue for us to ask ourselves whether we are willing to continue giving our money to corporations that are intentionally contributing to these crimes against humanity, or are we willing to take a stand and start supporting business owners who are taking the chance to sacrifice short-term profits for a business model that pays fair wages, builds diversified teams, and practice social outreach to lift up their community. It's up to each one of us to decide what kind of impact that we want to initiate or support, but the days of remaining blind to the implications of our choices must fall behind us. We are in the information age. There are no more excuses for playing aloof!



My friends, supporting fair-trade and cooperatively-designed businesses that are making an effort to provide healthy environments for their employees & their families is a must if we want to claim ourselves to be good people. Buying food and products produced using toxic chemicals and industrial waste is a direct contribution to our fellow humans' ill living standards and the uncertain future that we're currently leaving as our collective legacy.

Hopefully, it goes without saying that each of these ethics are applicable in all of our lifestyle choices, not just those associated with commerce. The only way toward a more sustainable, compassionate, and connected world is for us each to take personal responsibility for how our actions affect others.

## Fair Share



The overwhelming amount of waste produced by our first world nations is one of the most embarrassing misuses of the gifts that we've been granted as Earthlings. We have more than enough resources on this planet to sustain us all, healthfully. That can come from an abundance of food from our gardens or an abundance of time, money, attention, or even just hugs. This Ethic calls us to share that abundance and invest it, as you see fit, into the first two ethics.

This Ethic is also referred to as "Future Care" and calls us to recognize the limits inherent in life and on our planet. If you think about it, only about 25% of the earth's surface is inhabitable by humans. Furthermore, an eye-opening quote from National Geographic states that "While nearly 70 percent of the world is covered by water, only 2.5 percent of it is fresh. The rest is saline and ocean-based. Even then, just 1 percent of our freshwater is easily accessible, with much of it trapped in glaciers and snow-fields." Misuse and unequal distribution of land and water is not a sustainable practice, by any measure.

According to recent statistics, United State's citizens generate approximately 4.6 pounds of trash each day per person, which is collectively about 251 million tons. Every day! And over 20% of that mass is food!!! How many millions of Americans are suffering from malnutrition these days? Not to mention those in even less fortunate countries. I believe that we can do better than this.

Many of us have grown up in cultures that teach you that if you can afford it, go for it! There is a term referred to as "opportunity costs" that too many of us have learned too late in life, if at all. Our choices have consequences, both constructive and destructive. All imbalances will catch up to us eventually. The responsibility and potency for change lie in each one of our daily decisions. Are you ready to be the change?

# Why Do I Think That Permaculture is Worth Considering Beyond Land Management?

After our first few years of homesteading our 20-acre farm in the hills of southern Costa Rica, we thought it would be great to hold a permaculture workshop & music festival. We already had hosted a 2-week permaculture course and another mini music festival. We had hosted over a hundred people from many different countries, and most people were enjoying the experiences they were having. We were in a stage of growth and were eager to keep moving forward.

Being caught up in the fun of it all, we thought the next logical thing would be to hold an even bigger event! Just months after our previous events, and with only six months to plan and prepare for our next one. We decided to further improve our infrastructure and hold a 6-day event around the summer solstice of 2012. It was to include daytime workshops on natural building, gardening, appropriate technologies, and music. We got a few friends excited to help us and went all in. We invested money into building more structures, brought on a huge team of extra volunteers, found presenters willing to share their knowledge, it was great! The work leading up to it was tough but exciting.

The week of the event came. As luck would have it, days before we were to have 50 people over, an illness knocked out 4 of our 8-person support team. Before we knew what was happening, those of us that were left standing doubled up our efforts and made it happen. It was inspiring, educational, fun, creative, and exhausting! We built a solar shower, the foundation for a sauna and hot tub, and new garden beds. We had live music, a cacao ceremony, shadow-puppet theater, and various classes taught by different guests. We pulled it off, but at what cost?

At the end of the event, we had a circle with the team of volunteers who helped us put it on, and the feedback was beyond humbling. It was deflating. The feedback was that we were doing too much, too fast, with too little resources. These friends loved us, but it became clear that they were helping, not because they wanted to put on an event, but rather because they wanted to be supportive. Some just wanted a free place to stay and were willing to do whatever we needed to afford that. Everyone left, we felt completely depleted and let down, and we shut the program down for the next three months so that we could have time to reflect and reconnect with ourselves and our family.

During that time, it occurred to us that we needed to reevaluate not only our ambitions to hold events but how we were managing our entire project. While most people that came through genuinely enjoyed their experiences, we were spending too much of our own time and money to host them, without actually producing any income. This is a challenge that far too many projects like this encounter. Unfortunately, farm owners aren't always in touch with many modern-day technologies, services, or systems that can help them and end up struggling to reinvent the wheel. The results of our first honest look at the input/output cycle of our project showed us that the founding ideals of our sustainability project were leading us down a path that was anything but sustainable. But where to start?

Thankfully, the idea of using the Permaculture Design Principles that we'll be talking about in the next chapter proved to be just the innovation that we needed. We used the design principles as a framework for asking ourselves the important questions and eliciting honest answers. Over the next few weeks, we had regular brainstorming sessions where we would pick a principle and use its guiding wisdom to analyze each aspect of our life. We considered our family, farm, home life, animal maintenance, interaction with guests & volunteers, income and hosting models, personal relationships - everything that we could think of as an influencing aspect of our lives.

We dove deep, asking questions to examine not only what challenges we'd had in our founding years but also what else might go wrong in future situations. We also highlighted what was working well for us and determined to focus more on those systems. The practice elicited answers that forced us to accept that the ways that we were practicing our founding ideals and business model were letting us down, and we needed to make adjustments or we were going to fail.

The results of those weeks and months of deep inquiry led us to write two of our most valuable assets. They are what we refer to as our "invisible infrastructure." One was a Community Living Agreements. Another was our Membership Guidelines. We also began creating sections for what is now becoming a formal Operations Manual. None of these was easy or particularly enjoyable to draft. We spent months editing, running ideas by folks who had stayed with us, re-editing, getting more feedback, and editing again. But it was needed and worth it! In the process, we spent time looking through other similar documents from other organizations to help us think of even more items that we might have missed in our original analysis. The truth is, even today, these are living documents that we are in the process of re-editing, yet again, as the project continues to take on a new life of its own.

The value of these documents, as a result, has provided our project with an element of sustainability that allows the project to operate, whether we're here or not. It is the decisions that we made, guided by these Principles, and the agreements that we made in their wake, that have allowed other people to manage the program when we are away.

This was all possible by our decision to look at our home and business life from the perspective of the Principles that I'm about to share with you. It's become impressively clear to me how important it is to design our systems before implementing them and to consider the opportunity cost of taking on new projects. The great news is that it's never too late! With these design principles, we can continue reevaluating our projects and lifestyle habits to be more beneficial and efficient.

These Permaculture Principles help us to start asking the right questions before starting new projects and start looking deeper into the resulting benefits and consequences that lie awaiting. It is my sincere desire that you find something useful here that can help you ask yourself some deep & meaningful questions, and to explore some honest and growth-inducing answers.

# The Guiding Principles of Permaculture & The Wisdom of Living a Principles-Based Life



After years of traveling the world, studying with indigenous tribes, traditional farmers, and modern innovators of the organic food movement, the founders of the Permaculture movement concluded that some basic principles seemed to be evident in the most sustainable systems and approaches that they came across. The genius of designing an education program based on principles, before techniques, has allowed Permaculture to flourish into a global movement. It's not only applicable to land management & food production in every conceivable climate and part of the planet, but it also lays the framework for how we might best approach building our municipalities, communities, businesses, and lifestyles for a more resilient future.

A key consideration of social permaculture is that, while changing individuals can indeed be difficult, we can design social structures within our homes, workplace, and communities, that favor beneficial patterns of human behavior. With these intentionally designed structures in place, change becomes easier and more culturally appealing.

The following 12 Principles are those first identified and defined by David Holmgren in his book "Permaculture: Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability." My own adaptation follows each as to how I feel these Principles may be applied to our lives and business practices. Bill Mollison has offered another list of design principles that I've interwoven into these for the purpose of keeping this essay succinct. The exciting thing about these principles is that they are tools that we can use to think deeper into any aspect of our life or business. Contemplation of these Principles can lead one to discover new and exciting options for living a more sustainable life, more efficient business, and a more integral contribution to community and humanity's chances for survival.

Due to this type of thinking's synergistic nature, you may find that many of these solutions can be placed below several different principles. Take note. This type of observation is what leads to big picture innovation! Please also understand that this document has not been written for entertainment purposes. While reading through these examples, I sincerely encourage you to have a notebook handy to make a list of what you feel you can implement in your life now, integrate your own ideas, design yourself a brighter future, and then TAKE ACTION!



## 1. Observe and Interact:

*“By taking the time to engage with nature, we can design solutions that suit our particular situation.”*

Making solution-based decisions, of any sort, requires that we can first accurately identify the present situation, influencing elements, and the desired outcome. This may sound elementary, but it's something that is too commonly overlooked. Too often, we make decisions based on impulse, idealism, habits, and short-sighted projections. Our societal tendency to get it done quick, or to implement an idea out of the context of its intended conditions, or even just because “that's how we've always done it” has been the set up for some of our societies' greatest tragedies.

Here are a few suggestions for how you can begin to observe & interact with your life in a more contemplative manner:

- Whenever possible, avoid the tendency to be “in a hurry” and make decisions from this state! The feeling is often based in a habitual response pattern, born of our cultural drive toward “progress.” Activating from this place, very often, proves to be a less productive approach. When we're faced with making an important decision and don't know what to do, this Principle teaches us to step back, breathe, open our mind, wait, and contemplate. Asking others' advice is always useful, even if it's just to have someone there as a “sounding-board.” If possible, give it time to revisit the topic over a several day or week period to gather more perspective and insight.  
\* This is not an invitation toward procrastination, but rather an active choice to work smart, not hard.
- Take the time to get to know your neighbors, co-workers, employees, customers, and children. How well do you really know them? How well have you allowed them to know you? These are the people that bring value and meaning to our lives. Contrary to modern-day practices, our greatest chance to live happy, connected, and productive lives requires that we make time to put down our phones, close our computers, and ask meaningful questions to those who are meaningful to us.
- Observe the interactions of your family members, co-workers, or employees. What are the cultural tones and social dynamics? How do others interact? Is it serving the whole? Might it be worth it to ask questions, do a survey, investigate root problems & group opinions? Are we courageous enough to accept the feedback and make changes in our structures or ourselves, based on the needs of the whole?
- When evaluating solutions, consider unconventional ideas that might appear or be presented from unexpected situations or people. When a solution doesn't seem to meet our ethics or serve everyone involved, take note as to why that is the case and be willing to discuss new versions of the solution.

- Apply SADI (Survey, Analyze, Design, and Interact) in strategic planning for any level of business management. SADI is a permaculture design approach and serves to create a feedback loop, both before the beginning of a project, as well as for its ongoing maintenance.
- Study emotional intelligence and consider it as a skill worth developing. It can prove highly useful when you want to more clearly understand what you're really seeing, communicate effectively, and interact efficiently.
- Finally, I'll briefly point to the studies that have been done on mindfulness meditation. The daily practice of observing one's thoughts and the unfiltered reality of each moment (independent of our endlessly enchanting thoughts) has proven to be stimulating to healthy neurological development in the brain, as well as improved productivity, and healthier relationships. Regular practice of meditation can be positively influential to one's tendency toward happiness and a clear and effective mind!

## 2. Catch and Store Energy:

*"By developing systems that collect resources at peak abundance, we can use them in times of need."*

Let's start with a note about self-care. My friends, the phenomenon of human potential is dynamic beyond comprehension. The computing capacity of our brains and the ability to increase that capacity with practice is beyond amazing. Our bodies' innate ability to heal, detoxify, and regenerate is our single greatest asset in this life. Our bodies and minds are organic processes of perpetual energy in motion, and yet we must remember not to take that for granted (at least not for too long.)



By maintaining a balanced diet, attitude, and lifestyle, we can maximize on the energy that our bodies are generating every day. Failure to maintain the body and mind with healthy daily habits and mindsets is the surest way to squander and lose our greatest assets.

*So, how do we optimize our lifestyles with this Principle?*

- Do whatever it takes to get excited about eating a more balanced diet of whole foods and minimize processed foods & beverages. This is the foundation of maximizing our lives' potential.
- Drink plenty of clean water to keep your bodily systems optimized.
- Meditate daily to train your mind and improve its capacity to focus, remember, and contemplate.
- Surround yourself with others who uplift and inspire you.
- Remove influences from your life that discourage and doubt your potential, thereby stealing it away.
- Compliment and celebrate friends, family, employees, and customers who add value to your life in any way.
- Journal regularly to record insights, set goals, and keep yourself on track to achieving them.
- Install water catchment tanks to supply water for washing and garden watering.
- Compost your kitchen scraps.
- Can those extra tomatoes that you grew and can't eat all at once.
- Consider buying solar panels for your house or investing in other renewable energy initiatives.
- Make your homes and businesses as energy-efficient as possible. Consider natural resources such as natural lighting, solar heating, coupling the room with a greenhouse window.
- Change over to LED lightbulbs already!
- Use and support public services, parks, and other initiatives that already exist for the health and efficiency of our communities.



### 3. Obtain a Yield:

*Ensure that you are getting truly useful rewards as part of the work that you are doing.*

There are many different types of yield that can be collected from the fruits of our efforts. Whether it's turning last year's composted kitchen scraps into this year's garden beds, enjoying your youth and the health of your family while you have it, or choosing to plant fruit trees instead of ornaments at the office, it's important to design systems around you to best leverage your efforts.

Businesses naturally think about this principle when planning their investments and evaluating cash-flow. However, when practices are used that are exploitative, distorting, and damaging, seeing profit maximization as the sole focus, obtaining a yield in this context is out of balance. There are, of course, many other types of value that can be yielded, beyond money. Let's take a look at what those might be.

- Cultivate increasingly beneficial relationships and a more enriching home or workplace, by paying compliments or doing favors. The return on these investments can be life-changing!
- Free up space and create good will in your life by turning your trash into other people's treasures. Contemplate underused resources in your home, and explore ways that those resources can be shared with family members, friends or neighbors.
- Call on a friend for a favor.
- Go for a walk in that nice park in the neighborhood.
- Incentivize your children to do chores around the house or yard.
- Replace your lawns with edible gardens.
- Create edible balcony gardens, as well as common use areas to have more food than flowers.
- Put plants inside your house to clean the air and provide more oxygen.
- Create or join a buyers club for your family, neighborhood, co-workers, or employees to take advantage of the savings inherent in increasing your buying power.
- Use those aging veggies, in the fridge, to make a soup before you end up throwing them in the compost.
- Re-invest a portion of your profits/earnings into passive income streams.
- Re-evaluate your measures of success and perception of value

## 4. Apply Self-Regulation and Accept Feedback:

We need to discourage inappropriate activity to ensure that systems can continue to function well.

Self-regulation, or self-control, empowers us to be more accountable and effective human beings. It can also lead to greater efficiency in business. Feedback is essential for personal and professional growth. It gives us information on the effects of our actions and allows us to make better decisions based on those effects. This Principle encourages systems to be self-regulating and continually accept feedback so the system can be maximized for efficiency and abundance.



Any person or business who is unable to gracefully accept feedback and self-regulate is destined for struggle, alienation, confusion, and stifled growth. Conversely, encouragement of these elements significantly increases the chances for reduced stress, greater efficiency & profit, a healthier home/work environment, and improved relationships.

Ways in which we might encourage feedback and apply self-regulation include:

- Be honest with yourself about your personal health and wellness goals. What is your body telling you? What do you know to be true about your habits and their resulting effects? If you don't know, seek a professional. Either way, cultivate the courage to make the needed changes. If you lack the strength to make those changes, consider hiring a coach.  
Identify distractions that consume your time. Decide who and what is allowed to get your attention. Some of the biggest universal distractions are Social Media, cellphones, and email. Learn to be proactive with these things rather than reactive.
- Open conversations with our spouses, partners, children, and family members about home life, interpersonal struggles, unmet needs, outdated agreements, shifting preferences, shared spaces and responsibilities, etc. The harder the topic is to talk about, often indicates the increased need to bring it up. Practicing active, non-reactionary, non-defensive listening is crucial for success here.
- Leave room in conversations for devil's advocates, for black sheep, and to hear the voices of those outside of the organization's dominant culture.
- Lastly, I'll mention the importance of getting good at offering feedback to others. Studying and practicing methods of providing constructive feedback in an objective, non-threatening, and compassionate manner is one of the best things that any of us can do for building healthy relationships and helping those around us realize their highest potential.



## 5. Use and Value Renewable Resources and Services:

*Make the best use of nature's abundance to reduce our consumptive behavior and dependence on non-renewable resources.*

The natural world, by its very design, performs ongoing regenerative functions, essential for the ongoing survival and maintenance of the earth and its inhabitants. Worms aerate the soil, clovers & legumes provide nitrogen through their roots, and the leaves, seeds & fruits falling from trees (when left to decompose) provide nutrients for new life (including those worms and clovers). Early humans existed for hundreds of thousands of years, mimicking these naturally cyclical tendencies and living in-kind.

Today, the logic of this Principle, while commonly understood, is too widely disregarded. At some point, humans decided to stop utilizing these attributes of nature and began replacing them with less-evolved methods for short-term gain. The information age is finally showing us, en masse, the devastation wrought by the shortsighted ambitions of the industrial age. In a short period of time, humans have managed to exhaust a stunning percentage of the planet's resources and diversity of inhabitants, of which it had taken hundreds of millions of years to cultivate. Rainforests are being turned into dryland, species of every sort are becoming extinct, and our grandchildren's children may never know the degree of natural majesty that we've had the blessing to call home. In several parts of the world, this is already the case. Humans everywhere are suffering the consequences of living in societies based on the capitalization of natural resources, imposed resource scarcity, and the overproduction of unnecessary and short-lived "disposable" products.

This Principle recognizes the need for a general shift away from our dependence on non-renewable energy sources, such as petroleum fuels and fossil fuel dependent production methods. Instead, it encourages us to put an increased focus on cultivating and developing naturally renewable resources. It emphasizes a shift toward investments into self-renewing systems and the development of technologies based on mimicking natural processes

"Reduce, reuse, recycle" is a well-known mantra that fits this Principle, well. Other items to consider might be:

- Know the power of your purchase, folks! The unchecked practices of the Industrial Revolution, these last few centuries, have taken humanity & our fellow Earthlings, on a ride toward extinction. We're at a moment when an ever-growing number of entrepreneurs & small business owners are making an effort, and taking the chances, to create a new standard for ethical business models. By shifting our buying habits and supporting regenerative businesses, we extend our influence beyond our in-home impact.

- Maximize the usefulness of biological and human-made materials.
- Attempt to upcycle and donate before discarding.
- Consider the full expected lifespan of the products that you are buying.
- Search for biodegradable alternatives that can be used as mulch or compost at the end of their usefulness.
- Purchase used goods when reasonable. This not only keeps things from being disposed of and reduces the need to produce more stuff, but the practice generally helps to keep money circulating within your local community.
- We can also broaden the concept of renewable resources to include things like goodwill and trust. Relationships built on trust might be viewed as a renewable resource because that relationship can be revisited over and over again. This especially applies in the form of repeat customers and sustained business partners. Trust is at the heart of success in business, and it is very much a renewable resource.

## 6. Produce No Waste:

By valuing and making use of all the resources that are available to us, nothing goes to waste.

This Principle continues the practices of using renewable resources and further closes the loop. Once we've made the efforts to change our consumption habits and embrace more efficient business practices, we get to look back at what we are still left with, as waste products, and decide what we're going to do with them. The more that we practice thinking this way, the more we can find usefulness in what we once considered waste.



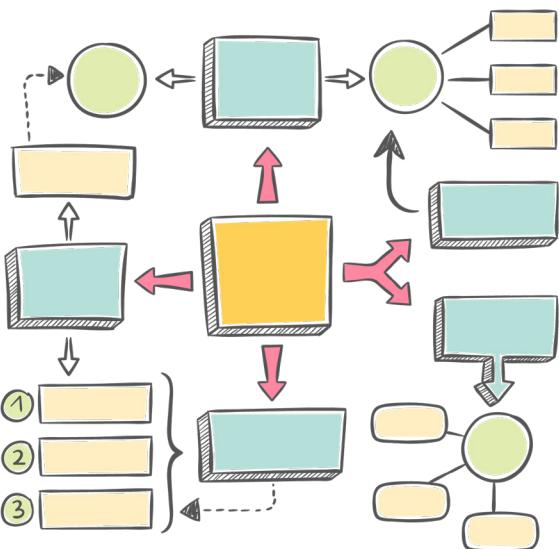
Current research shows that among the 251 million tons that Americans throw into the landfill, besides the 20% food scraps that we could compost instead, our landfills are filled with nearly 50% of paper waste products. Also, much of what is in a modern landfill is plastic bags. It is estimated the US uses 380 single-use plastic bags per year, and there are as many as 1 trillion used annually across the globe. By reducing our waste, reusing or sharing what we can, composting, recycling, and stuffing what's left into bottle bricks, we can eliminate a tremendous amount of waste that goes into landfills. Did you know that it takes as long as 1,000 years for a single plastic bag to degrade? Everything that we send to the landfill should be considered part of the legacy we are leaving for our descendants. How do you want to be remembered?

In this Principle, permaculture designers consider how to be frugal while maintaining an abundance mindset, caring for and maintaining what already exists, preventing and remediating pollution, and looking for resources opportunities. The truth is that everything you produce can have value. The trick is to figure out how to best use it. Every output from one system has the potential to become the input to another system. By thinking cyclically, rather than conforming to linear-based habits, we start to imagine unrealized possibilities.

A good place to start is using the suggestions laid out in this document to reduce wasted effort, in your day to day life. Some other steps might be:

- Composting. It's another zero-waste system that turns trash into treasure and is easy to set up. Just do it already!
- Properly clean and sort your recycling so that you're not overburdening the recycling centers with having to take non-recyclables out of the mix. The hard truth is that you are honestly better off not recycling than recycling carelessly and putting an unsustainable responsibility on the centers trying to provide the service. Most municipalities have a downloadable guide for what they can recycle or not. Take a minute to look it up and read it. It could prove enlightening.
- Shopping locally can save immensely on transportation costs and emissions, as can ordering in bulk. Look into a local food-buyers club.

- Keep your cloth bags in your car, rather than in your house, so that you remember to use them.
- Electric cars are an excellent way to reduce your transportation's consumption of fossil fuels. Install solar panels and you can create a near-zero waste output! This is huge, considering that cars are one of our greatest personal contributions to creating greenhouse gases. A nice side-effect is that electric cars end up being much, much, much cheaper to own and operate. If you're in the market for a new car, and you aren't addicted to road trips or driving Uber, I strongly suggest you consider looking for electric or plugin hybrid options!
- Speaking of greenhouse gases, did you know that conventional livestock practices account for even more toxic waste into our atmosphere than cars do?!
- Yup, our modern-day beef addiction is one of our planet's and our pockets' most prominent enemies, not only in air pollution but in waste and pollution of freshwater. Many have provided evidence that over-consumption of beef is also detrimental to our bodies. I'm not saying that we all have to become vegan. However, it is crucial to take into account that the current trend of beef production is having one of the most significant negative impacts on our environment and chance for survival as a species as any other practice that we're caught up in. We need to come closer to something that can be recognized as moderation with this one.
- Working from home, or allowing your employees to work from home when possible, has proven to be a significant waste & cost reduction measure for many businesses.
- When doing a project and you need to move something, think about where it's going to be used or stored and put it there, right away. A lot of time and effort can be wasted, moving things more than once.
- Keep in mind that many things that are commonly considered waste products end up becoming assets for those looking at the problem as a solution. Take, for example:
- Dry composting toilets that create humanure, in turn, provide fertilizer for the trees that produce the food that we eat to refill the toilets. Flushing it down the toilet into the sewers and septic systems conversely serves to pollute our drinking water, nothing more.
- Greywater from our sinks, showers, and even laundry (when biodegradable soaps are being used), can be run through simple plant-based filtration systems and used to water our gardens.



## 7. Design from Patterns to Details:

By stepping back, we can observe patterns in nature and society. These can form the backbone of our designs, with the details filled in as we go.

This Principle is where we apply what we've learned from our observations and interactions into our systems' designs. A tremendous amount of time and energy can be saved by designing our systems based on the patterns in our environment. These patterns can be observed in

the arc of the sun, the varying water influences from one season to the next, fitting our personal routines in around our children's school schedule, or identifying unique strengths in people in our organizations and shifting the business model to take advantage of those assets. What are each individual's natural patterns, and how can you best work with them? How can we widen our perspective, take in as many influencing details as possible, and see where patterns invite creative opportunities?

Simply taking the time to design is another inherent element of wisdom in this Principle. Jumping into projects without sufficient research and planning can degrade the potential of an excellent idea and turn it into a resulting failure. This is about strategic thinking, minimizing loss, and maximizing profits. It's a different approach from the more traditional mode of having an idea and trying to make it work, no matter what opposing forces might come up.

Widen your perspective and see how the greater environment will respond to your decisions. How should your decisions take into consideration the wider environment?

- Talk with our elders! They have seen a lot of change over the last century. The breadth of their perspectives can offer invaluable insights into large scale cyclical patterns, as well as reawaken forgotten pearls of wisdom.
- Find a system of goal setting that works for you.
- Experiment with drawing Mind Maps.
- Imagine, again, how we can let nature do some of the work for us. Work with it, rather than against it, whenever possible.
- Take time to imagine all possible outcomes, especially all of the possible ways that something can go wrong. We don't need to be inhibited by the prospects of failure or complication, but we do well when we consider them from the outset.
- Value the generalist and holistic thinkers in your organization. It doesn't mean that you need to concede to their insights, but putting a value on hearing and considering the patterns that they see could revolutionize your business and maybe even your industry.

## 8. Integrate Rather Than Segregate:

*“By putting the right things in the right place, relationships develop between those things, and they work together to support each other.”*

One of my favorite ways to apply this principle is in “stacking functions.” Stacking functions is an effort to make sure that each of the elements in a design perform multiple functions, and that more than one element support each vital function. It’s the efficiency builder. When we’re about to make any effort or learn a new skill, it does us well to ask, How many different benefits will this provide? How many systems will this support? If I did it differently, or elsewhere, would it save time or effort, later? Thinking this way opens the door to a multitude of creative options that might be overlooked by using a default, or out of context, solution. Integration allows complementary qualities to support each other.



So, if the integration of ideas and elements is such a great idea, why do we tend to segregate so much? Holmgren suggested that “we tend to opt for segregation of elements as a default design strategy for reducing relationship complexity”.

Before diving deeper into how the principle of integration can empower our efforts with harmony and success, I want to share a thought about relationship complexity and forgiveness. No approach to personal growth can be more valuable than learning how-to and getting good at forgiving. When we have arguments or differences of opinions with other people or groups, we may develop a tendency to want to push them away, or to retreat, ourselves. Unfortunately, it is often our greatest potential allies that we segregate ourselves from for the sake of holding grudges and imbalanced opinions. Practical methods exist for healing these wounds. Forgiveness is a skill that can be practiced, and the rewards of progress are opportunity-opening for more than just the one or two people involved. The more skillfully we can heal those things that keep us apart, the sooner we can embrace the power that comes with integration.

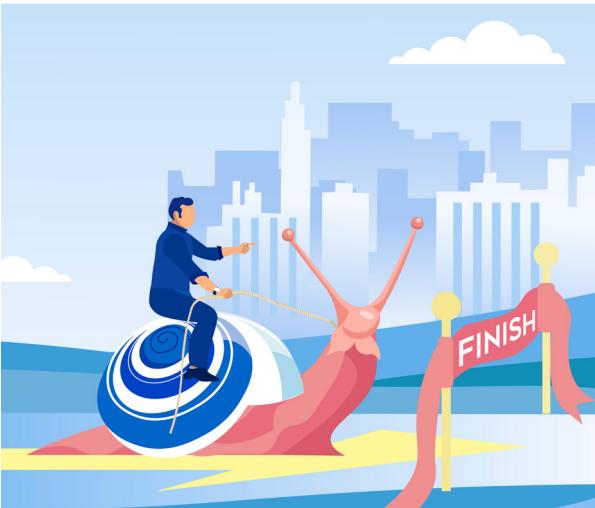
We are all fallible - me, you, everyone. Isolating emotions like hate, intolerance, and held grudges affect the person holding them, far greater than the person or people that they think they’re projecting them to. Most often, these patterns are subconscious and seem difficult (or impossible) to change. Nonetheless, they are toxic emotions that do more harm than good. We hold onto them with a false hope that they will keep us safe from the interaction that we’re imagining. Instead, they keep us isolated, weak, prideful, shameful, and embarrassingly ignorant. That doesn’t even address the physical, emotional, and psychological illnesses that can come with repetitive recycling of painful stories inside our heads. If you find yourself in this state, consider if it’s worth it to you. If not, maybe it’s time to pick up a book or schedule an appointment with someone and begin to explore the joys, revelations, and treasures that can come with the dedicated practice of forgiveness.

The idea of mastering such skills may be daunting, but the value is found throughout the journey. Success in any aspect of life relies on maximizing beneficial relationships.

The next seven generations are counting on you!

*Let's look at some of the wonderfully empowering things that can come from integrating instead of segregating.*

- Support and collaborate with local businesses. The importance of a resilient local economy cannot be overstated.
- Join, or start, a local co-work space, tool bank, or resource library.
- Participate in community events as a volunteer or presenter.
- Volunteer to teach about your skills or offerings at a local school or to a home-schooling group. Children benefit from having as many alternative life options presented to them, as possible, to build their dreams from. This is also a great idea if you're losing inspiration for what you do. The excitement and wonder that comes from the faces of inspiring young minds might be just the catalyst you need to take your mission to the next level.
- Join a local coop or buyers club.
- Harness the power of diverse opinions and insights to expand opportunities for innovation in your life and in business.
- When engaging in polarizing topics on social media or in person, use it to understand why someone else has the opinion that they do. I'd dare to guess that a very small percentage of people ever get convinced to change their viewpoint when being confronted on a public post where they've decided to announce it. Instead of shaming them, or yourself, for having the opinion or preference, consider asking yourself how a combination of both viewpoints might be the key to a lasting solution.
- Whenever disagreements are found to be keeping us apart from others and rolling around in our heads, keeping us ill in some way or another, it is an excellent time to call on the wisdom of forgiveness practices. Some popular ones to look into are Ho'oponopono, Radical Forgiveness, Tapping, The Work (by Byron Katie), and The Completion Process. Living with the traumas left from difficult encounters is neither healthy, helpful, nor necessary. The work isn't always easy, but the results are most often life-changing.
- Next time you go to a party or business meeting, find someone in the room that you are least likely to interact with. Go up and say hi. Magic is waiting for you. I promise!



## 9. Use Small and Slow Solutions:

*Small and slow systems are easier to maintain than big ones, making better use of local resources and producing more sustainable outcomes.*

It can easily be argued that large and fast solutions are sometimes needed. Emergencies happen, and appropriate responses should be contemplated within context. And it's also important to note that "small" and

"slow" are relative terms, and everything should be considered in scale. Sometimes, starting too small can inhibit growth, impact, and success. However, speaking from my own life's experiences, I can see no shortage of times when I've enthusiastically invested time, energy, or money to make something happen all at once, just to find that I got ahead of myself and, in turn, wasted resources to some degree. I'm pretty sure I'm not the only one.

The wisdom here is a discipline that some of us would do well to write on our walls. It's so easy to get excited and jump into a big project or solution. However, it's often more valuable to take advantage of the SADI feedback loop and the adaptation & corrective opportunities that come with taking it step-by-step. There is additional value in doing things in their most cost and energy-efficient timing, which often involves some manner of stacking functions, and building step by step. Bill Mollison phrased this principle :"Make the Smallest Change for the Greatest Effect." By starting small, one can see whether there is indeed wisdom in making the solution larger and can correct inefficiencies while the consequences are low. Remember, "slow and steady wins the race."

Some examples of where this applies might be:

- Developing rich relationships based on patience, trust, and communication
- Choosing a property to buy
- Remodeling one's home
- Changing your lawn into a garden
- Raising animals
- Managing water movement on your property
- Developing local currency
- Expanding your business's new revenue streams
- Diversifying your investments
- Vote with every little thing that you buy, choice that you make, and word that you speak. We are daily creating our realities, and these things are the building blocks!

## 10. Use and Value Diversity:

Diversity reduces vulnerability to a variety of threats and takes advantage of the unique nature of the environment in which it resides.

Look, we're all different. We have different looks, styles, preferences, habits, languages, cultural norms, gender, skin color, eye color, hair color, economic resources, communication skills, temperaments, etc.

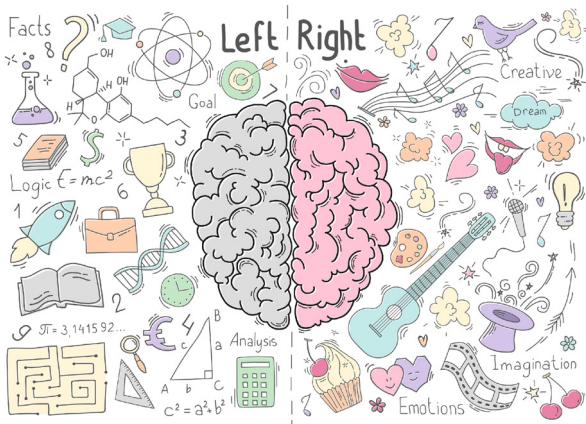
It is simply how the universe is designed. Like the rest of nature's diversity, on this planet, it is a vital function of growth and evolution that we don't all share the same capacities, skills, and preferences.

Diversity breeds resilience!

If one species, technique, or initiative doesn't work in addressing a problem, another may. Designing diversity into our systems, lifestyles, food systems, energy sources, workforce talent, clientele, and what we have to offer them is a sure way to increase chances for security, wellness, productivity, and happiness. Look at it as a type of insurance. We can see the converse in action with modern monocropping practices, which have proven to be incredibly fragile and prone to disease and pests.

- A diet rich in diverse colors and flavors provides a full spectrum of essential nutrients and minerals that the body needs to maintain wellbeing.
- Invite your kids to make dinner, now and again. The family might enjoy the switch up, and your children will learn empowering skills.
- Support small organic farms that work with dynamic regenerative systems, over monocultures that rely on unsustainable amounts of outside input (often toxic) to stay productive.
- Learn about companion planting, in your own garden, to include naturally pest discouraging elements that will keep your yield safe without needing to poison it.
- Ask for advice or feedback from individuals outside of your field of interest or profession to find unconventional insights for consideration.
- Start making friends with people from different cultural backgrounds.
- Provide facilities that encourage diverse participation. For example: events with childcare so that parents with children can attend or translation so that non-English speakers can contribute to a discussion
- Consider participating in and support alternate currencies, where available.
- Diversify your perception of what holds value. Ethan Roland & Gregory Landua wrote a great article worth checking out, discussing a study to identify what has come to be referred to as the "8 forms of capital": social, material, financial, living, intellectual, experiential, spiritual and cultural.





## 11. Use Edges and Value the Marginal:

The interface between things is where the most interesting events take place. These are often the most valuable, diverse, and productive elements in the system.

As someone who enjoys dreaming up systems composed of systems connected in synergistic ways, this Principle is one of my favorites. The practice of “stacking functions” provides compounded value when we can find multiple uses for each element, creating synergy within our systems.

This principle applies to nearly every aspect of life or business but requires an open and creative mind. Everything exists in proximity to something else, either physically or conceptually. The more we observe and contemplate each peripheral component’s needs and values, the more we learn to see where their overlap provides new potentials for innovation and growth. We can apply this to maximize potential between two or more things that are already in proximity to each other, or we can use this principle to design our systems, from the ground up, creating intentional high-yielding edges.

“Marginal” is an interesting choice of words here, as well. While marginal essentially refers to that which exists at the margin, or edge, it also refers to a person or thing that seems to have little value, importance, or influence. This Principle calls us to recognize that these marginal elements are often where many treasures of innovation lie awaiting discovery.

A few ways that this Principle might uncover hidden potentials in your life could include:

- If you have a small or shady yard, talk to a neighbor to see if they would be interested in allowing you to use some of their yard for a garden.
- An unused (marginal) property could likewise be a great place to start a community garden. The friendships & partnerships forged through these types of collaborations often prove to be the most valuable yield harvested from the effort.
- When finding ourselves in a disagreement with someone, we could consider exploring where those different ideas might find a common interest and build from there. Thinking together from that place has the potential to create a much more reliable, more unified solution.
- Invite your children to be part of family decision making. They might come up with some great ideas, and the empowerment they feel will help them become more valuable human beings. It might even prove healthy for your overall family dynamics.
- Learning to use the split-screen option on one’s cell phone could significantly impact the ways and efficiency at which they use it.

## 12. Creatively Use and Respond to Change:

We can have a positive impact on inevitable change by carefully observing, and then intervening at the right time.

Change happens. It's up to us to decide how we're going to respond to it. To remain firmly fixed, in the face of change, can be difficult and ultimately lead to stress and a breakdown of vitality and effectiveness. To be flexible in life and business is considered wise and helps keep oneself healthfully alert to opportunities. To courageously cultivate and direct the movement of those changes, and put them to work for us, leads to mastery and keeps one thriving.

Recently, our entire planetary population has undergone an unprecedented change, with regards to the coronavirus pandemic and its many elicited responses. Businesses who have been able to adapt quickly and move their focus to online sales, education, and services will be shown to be those who have earned greater security, resilience, and dynamic-sufficiency.

- When you find yourself about to throw something in the trash, give thought as to whether it could be upcycled for another purpose. Ideas for innovative reuse of generally discarded items are all over the internet. Just search “Upcycle (fill in the blank).” Try it for old shoes, toilet paper rolls, jeans, pens, etc. The practice might bring you some surprising ideas.
- If you’re out of work, consider:
  - Studying any one of the many opportunities that exist for online work or entrepreneurship,
  - Use the time off to create a new workout or mindfulness practice.
  - Begin new family bonding rituals.
- When a change affecting you affects a broad number of people (resulting from a pandemic, for instance), get involved with or create brainstorming meetups or masterminds to come up with creative solutions together.





## Don't Envy The Change Makers - Be One!

I've laid out a long list of options, here, for how one might choose to apply the Permaculture Principles to their home life, relationships, business, and lifestyle. You may very well be practicing some of these things, already. Congratulations! The Principles, themselves, were formed by an observation of what many might consider "common sense". The problem, as my 6th-grade history teacher used to often say, is that "Common sense isn't so common."

Whether these concepts are elementary or revelatory for you, take another look through what's been presented here and see if you can make even a short list of ideas that are worth implementing. The benefits of doing so will not only help to secure the future health of our planet and our ability to live here comfortably, but the solutions born of this type of Principles-based thinking will bring greater efficiency to how you organize and approach the game of life. These methods of observation and interaction have the side-effect of benefiting you in nearly any aspect of life.

After more than two decades of exploring and practicing these principles, I am constantly humbled by how difficult it can be to consistently meet my personal standards in life and business. Like most of life's most valuable things, Permaculture is not a thing. It is a process - a way of perceiving and thinking. Whether your interests in reviewing this information have been to reduce your negative impact on the environment, save you time and money in your day-to-day life, or to improve the bottom line of your business, it is important to keep in mind that our fate is directly tied to that of the planet and of each other. The work that we do to cultivate wellbeing in ourselves

and in our businesses benefits the whole. Wellbeing for humanity starts with wellbeing in our homes. Likewise, wellbeing for humanity increases the likelihood of wellbeing in our homes.

Do what you can, friends. Whatever your reasons are for wanting to live and do business in a more insightful, less reactive way, use those as your guide. There are many of us in the world at this time, who firmly believe that what is good for the planet and what is good for people everywhere, is the standard that we need to hold for what is good for our families and our businesses. Thank you for taking the time to consider new solutions. I hope that I've offered you something useful,

If you're interested in hearing more about ways that you can adopt permaculture into your lifestyle, Sharing Insights Podcast takes you on a journey as I visit an array of ecological impact centers throughout Costa Rica. Most of these centers are practicing permaculture in one form or another, and the interviews pull out gems of wisdom and practical advice from those who have been living the lifestyle and sharing it with others.

Visit

<https://sharinginsights.net> or look for the podcast on your favorite app.

You can also join our FB Community at

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/sharinginsightspodcast/>

You've got this!



## References

Holmgren, D. (2002). Permaculture: Principles and pathways to sustainability. Hepburn, Victoria, Australia: Holmgren Design Services.

Hopkins, R. (2008). David Holmgren on Permaculture, Business, Resilience, and Transition. <https://www.transitionculture.org/2008/12/18/david-holmgren-on-permaculture-business-resilience-and-transition/>

Jaber, D. (2010). How to Use 12 Principles of Permaculture to Grow Sustainable Organizations. <https://www.greenbiz.com/article/how-use-12-principles-permaculture-grow-sustainable-organizations>

Meyer, E. (2017) The 12 Design Principles of Permaculture as Rules of Living, <https://medium.com/land-and-ladle/the-12-design-principles-of-permaculture-as-rules-of-living-e9fc0176dd16>

Mollison, B. (1988). Permaculture: A designer's manual. Tyalgum, Australia: Tagari Publications.

Roland, E., & Landua, G. (2011). Eight forms of capital: a whole system of economic understanding. <http://www.regenterprise.com/8-forms-of-capital/>

Shuler, T. (2018). Permaculture Applications for Business Management. Paris

Starhawk (2016) Social Permaculture—What Is It?, <https://www.ic.org/social-permaculture-what-is-it/>

Whitefield, P. (2004) The Earthcare Manual, Permanent Publications