**Information and Application**

**Designing Educational Ecosystems:**

**A Whole Systems Permaculture Teacher Training**

*Why do you want to take this course? What do you hope to get from it?*

I want to take this course because I found Dave’s Edible Forest Garden Design Intensive (March 2013) one of the best designed educational experiences in which I have ever participated. My work, education and personality incline me toward attending to process over content and I was fascinated by the processes embedded in the EFGDI course structure. We had a couple of very challenging participants and I was very interested in seeing how the course (and Dave) responded to them. Following the course, I had the opportunity (during a very long drive back to Sydney) to ask Dave about the general course structure, and about specific questions I had and I believe we have a very similar educational philosophy.

I hope to gain:

* greater insight into specific techniques and approaches Dave uses
* understanding of a different approach to teaching the permaculture design course
* opportunity to reflect on my personal direction
* membership of a network of teachers with similar approaches

*What do you plan to do with what you learn in this course? What are your hopes and dreams as a*

*teacher of permaculture?*

I plan to apply my learning to the courses and workshops I am involved with through the Ballarat Permaculture Guild, as well as any courses I run in my own right. I would prefer to teach through a community group like BPG where possible, rather than operate in competition to them.

I would like to be regularly involved in permaculture teaching, as part of a wider range of activities and income streams. I would also like to be actively involved in:

* permaculture design work for domestic clients
* permaculture design work for schools & kindergartens
* writing articles
* sale of plants & trees, particularly berries and heritage fruit trees (apple, pear, nashi, cherry, fig) that are difficult or expensive to source from commercial nurseries.

All of the above would be balanced with implementing permaculture on my own property. I enjoy training and think I am reasonably good at it, but I want to keep the training part of my life in balance with other aspects. At the moment, I wouldn’t envisage training being more than 20% of my time.

*Are there specific areas on which you would like to focus your teaching, in terms of topic areas,*

*audiences, regions of the country/world?*

I imagine I would mainly teach in Australia. To teach within PDC programs, I need to be able to teach all areas of the standard 72 hr curriculum. In terms of topic areas, I am particularly interested in heritage fruit trees (scion collection, grafting, propagating rootstock, preservation of collections), espaliering techniques, potager gardens, forest gardens, alternative building, general construction, cool temperate water systems, community & social structures, community group organisation and governance, alternative economic systems, bee keeping, use of social media and networks & the place of beauty/aesthetics in permaculture.

*Please write at least two paragraphs describing the qualities and personality of a fully-developed*

*teacher of permaculture.*

A fully-developed teacher of permaculture is someone who is practising permaculture on a daily basis on their own property; someone with practical skills and abilities, not just a theorist or proponent of the system. They will have areas of particular expertise, as well as a general knowledge of sustainable lifestyle skills. It is important that they read outside permaculture circles, so that they remain up-to-date as knowledge changes. They don’t accept something as true just because they heard it at a permaculture training or convergence; instead, they research and evaluate independently.

A fully-developed teacher of permaculture is increasing the knowledge-base of permaculture by ongoing thinking and research. They share their ideas & findings with the wider permaculture community; sometimes in return for commercial returns and at other times as part of a contribution to the knowledge pool.

They operate ethically and professionally; charging reasonable rates and delivery on their commitments. When in a competitive situation, they operate ethically and are civil toward colleagues. Their personal and professional behaviours leads to an increase in public confidence in permaculture!

*What are your greatest strengths as a teacher? What can/do you offer to your students/participants now or in the future?*

I have a solid understanding of adult learning principles, competency-based training and the range of learning styles that students have. Because I have successfully delivered training to a wide range of audiences (unemployed, corporate, academic, community group) in different places (Australia, Asia, Africa, Europe, North & Central America) over many years, I am relaxed about training, enjoy the process and am confident of success; this translates into a relaxed style which sets people at their ease and facilitates their learning. That approach is probably the ‘thing’ that I can most offer my students.

I am very process-based as a teacher. Content is important; but process will determine the quality of experience that the student has. The most amazing content can be rendered boring if it is delivered in a poor way (e.g. monotone delivery from a dull presenter in a stuffy room). My training cycles through a series of content presentations, class discussions, individual activities, site tours, small group activities, practical exercises and reflective exercises. Key knowledge is repeated in different ways. Key concepts are checked both explicitly (e.g. challenge tests or requirements that ask students to restate in their own words) and implicitly (e.g. key concept from earlier session is essential for undertaking new group activity – groups struggling indicate need to restate or return to earlier content).

I assume that students come with existing knowledge and experiences that are relevant to whatever the topic may be. In a larger group, there will be much wisdom, so some of the processes I use are based on the assumption that the group can often teach itself; the trainer needs to get out of the way and become a facilitator rather than an “expert” presenter.

[I don’t like what I call the ‘cult of personality’ approach which I’ve observed in some permaculture trainers. This is an approach that revolves around individual – often male – trainers pretending to know everything about everything and implicitly wanting students to teach them as a guru who can do or say no wrong.]

*What are your greatest fears as a teacher? What else do you believe most holds you back from*

*being your most effective self?*

My greatest fears as a teacher would be to

* teach something that was incorrect (especially if it was because I misunderstood it!), or
* have students misunderstand or misinterpret my teaching

I am unwilling to teach in areas unless I have a very sound understanding of both theory and practical application of the area.

The other strategy I use is to be quick to admit the limits of my knowledge or experience. I am comfortable saying “I don’t know – let’s do some research on that and find out”.