

DYNAMICS ECOLOGICAL DESIGN

Site Planning • Landscape Design • Construction • Education • Permaculture

David K. Jacke • 33 East Taylor Hill Rd. • Montague, MA • 01351 • (603) 831-1298 • davej@edibleforestgardens.com

Permaculture Teacher Training Student Outcomes

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The following comments come direct from past graduates of *Teaching Permaculture Creatively: A Nine-Day Intensive Permaculture Teacher Training*, the precursor to this year's *Designing Educational Ecosystems* course.

Since taking the Permaculture Teachers Training course I have been teaching community college classes in sustainability studies at Greenfield Community College in Mass. and, starting this Fall, at community College of Vermont in Brattleboro.

The PCTT has greatly enhanced my approach to teaching classes such as Human Ecology which looks at big picture questions of culture/nature relations, and more technical classes like Green Building Design Applications. I use permaculture design practices in course development and I use many of the educational techniques that I derived from the PCCT. In teaching Human Ecology: Problems and Solutions, I offer permaculture principles and practices as a framework for solutions before we start talking about problems.

The PCTT reinforced for me the importance of process; *how* we do things is just as important (maybe more so) than *what* we do. The group experiences that I had with the PCTT now influence how I facilitate group projects with my students. And the feedback from them is overwhelmingly favorable. While the basic Permaculture Design Course that I took several years ago got me oriented to good design practice, it was the PCTT that inspired me to make my teaching work more experiential, more fun, more holistic, and more community oriented.

I think that any educator who is interested in linking their disciplines to the greater work of moving our culture toward sustainability would do well to take a PCTT with Dave Jacke & Co. I also think that people who have taken a Permaculture Design Course and have been practicing permaculture techniques may find the impetus to expand their endeavors into teaching through taking the PCTT.

Charlie Laurel
East Dummerston, Vermont

The PCTT course instilled me with a powerful understanding of the responsibilities and potential of facilitation. It gave me the confidence to think of myself as a teacher, and the prudence to acknowledge that I am a constant student, as well. Perhaps most importantly, it left me with a powerful sense of how to evaluate and continually improve my capacities as a permaculture facilitator.

Since completing the Teacher Training course, I've facilitated about ten permaculture-related events, most in the 2-3 hour range. These have included:

- Hosting a monthly series of interactive events for Transition Denver around topics such as community economics, water farming, and bioregionalism
- A "Permaculture at the Home Scale" workshop and potluck at my house
- A 2-hour Urban Permaculture module at the Central Rocky Mountain Permaculture Institute's PDC
- A session on Transition at a conference of local neighborhood leaders
- Several PC 101 workshops outlining the principles and patterns of permaculture and their applications in an urban environment

The participant feedback from these events has been uniformly positive (although not without some helpful advice). This fall, I'll be starting to teach half- and full-day permaculture workshops at venues such as the Denver Botanic Gardens and the new Denver Urban Homesteading center.

Adam Brock
Denver, CO

I went in wary to the training, wary because I was not sure that I had enough permaculture experience and I realized I was not alone. I left the training empowered, confident and possessing a tangible permaculture educational toolbox. Absolutely Fantastic!

I have done many, many trainings and this was definitely top of the list! It was transformational for me as a student, teacher, and a whole person.

I began my position as Permaculture Education and Resource Coordinator March 2009, shortly after the course. I manage the annual garden and am creating community education boards. I have recruited work/study participants, created and facilitated hands on permaculture education for them. <http://sivananda.org/ranch/perma_weekend.html>

We have a permaculture presentation planned for September 2009 with NYC non profit New Energy Choices <<http://www.newenergychoices.org/>>. We are excited to see how we can collaborate with this non profit that focuses on sustainable energy and sustainable food.

My colleague Alice Lo and I are in the early stages of collaboration with an U.S./Indian non profit called *Lend a Hand India*. <<http://www.lend-a-hand-india.org/>>. We are currently writing a proposal for a pilot permaculture education component to be added to their current vocational education project in India. The proposal will be presented in the fall to the United Nations Development Fund for funding.

I am incredibly excited about my future as an educator and designer! I have much to learn and it is beautiful!

I owe a lot of it to Dave Jacke and the teaching staff of Teaching Permaculture Creatively... I not only received encouragement and teaching tools, I became more deeply connected to the larger permaculture community from which I draw great strength.

Monica Ibacache
New York, NY

The Teaching Permaculture Creatively course did far more than provide me with ideas for teaching activities, it helped me overcome my fear about being a teacher. Permaculture is an extremely broad and complex concept and only with a lifetime of study could someone become an “expert” in its breadth. At Mr. Jacke’s course, I learned that our society promotes learning only from experts and this is where my anxiety about being a teacher originated. Through the staff’s patience, empathy, and many creative activities, I learned that patterns for learning and teaching are very similar and are actually intertwined with patterns for living sustainably. When viewed from this standpoint, I understood that we are all teachers despite our level of domain knowledge. Teaching is simply another form of living a fulfilled, sustainable, and abundant life.

Mr. Jacke’s course gave me the confidence to transition Backyard Abundance from an environmental awareness citizen’s group that I founded in 2006, to a environmental education nonprofit. The organization focuses on empowering residents with the knowledge and skills needed to cultivate food in urban areas, restore the health of urban streams, and create wildlife habitat. In the winter of 2010, we will launch a series of ongoing permaculture courses to teach these skills and help people reconnect with the natural world.

Since the course, I have been very active in using my newfound skills through Backyard Abundance:

- Conducted 3 public ecological garden tours
- Conducted a public worm composting and sheet mulching demonstration with Iowa City
- Conducted a film screening of *Farming with Nature* with a follow-up workshop about choosing environmentally-friendly plants
- Conducted Iowa City’s first annual public seed swap event
- Conducted a worm composting workshop
- Conducted an urban landscape design workshop
- Conducted ecological gardening presentations:
 - Kirkwood Community College, The Environment: Natural Science Perspectives class
 - University of Iowa, Art and Ecology class
 - First United Methodist Church of Wilton
- Organized a residential garden renovation project with students of Kirkwood Community College

In addition to workshops, we also teach by offering permaculture design services:

- Provided garden design consultations for 3 Iowa City residents
- Created a Nature Explore Classroom playground design for the Iowa City Home Ties childcare provider
- Created an urban food forest landscape design for 2 Johnson County residents
- Created a Nature Explore Classroom playground design for the Fairfield Maharishi School

We have received the following publicity this year:

- Received the Maharishi Award in Education and Enlightenment for work on their playground
- Featured in 3 local newspaper articles <<http://search.press-citizen.com/sp?aff=1100&skin=100&keywords=backyard+abundance&x=15&y=13>> and 1 television news story
- Featured on a local radio program about growing local food
- Will be featured in the fall edition of Iowa Gardening Magazine

More information along with pictures of events can be seen on our website:
<http://www.BackyardAbundance.org/events.aspx>!

Fred Meyer
Director, Backyard Abundance
<http://www.BackyardAbundance.org>
Iowa City, IA

I found the PCTT course to be supportive, inclusive, and dynamic -- brilliant really. it left me feeling eminently capable as a teacher, educator and permanent student. further, I felt the thoughtfully created atmosphere to be safe and inclusive -- and conducive to everyone growing pushing edges in optimum space.

My senses of observation are now keener than ever, in regards to the nature and qualities of effective teaching. My watching has improved as well as my sense of what is effective -- and providing it -- I still feel becoming more and more internalized. I feel possessive of the tools that create positive flow and supportive content -- utilizing dynamic delivery, clear goal-setting, beneficial spatial configurations, etc..

And now, I TEACH. I offered a workshop on fermentations (<http://natureworks-ny.net/2009/06/five-ferments-workshop-friday-june-19th.html>). Tom and I offered one previously on Urban Permaculture. Both were well-received and the feedback, asked for and received, glowed. MOST VALUABLE LESSON from course (maybe): feedback as fuel.

yesterday, I assisted a lead instructor in a NYC pdc, and will return to the class to present on common plant families and ferments. in the fall I will co-teach two 3-class courses -- one a survey in regeneration; the other, a food section of that magnified -- at an adult school in north jersey. and there will be more in between (the breakthrough will be classes and workshops offered in suburban Jersey). again, I feel well-equipped and capable.

Frances Subbiondo
New York, NY

The Permaculture Teacher Training meant a whole lot to me. In fact, it was the best permaculture course I attended in my whole life. The design of the course curriculum and its environment was what strike me the most -- it was so well designed and so different! For instance, it was design as to **accept feedbacks** (e.g., the feedback cards, the one word check-in) and **respond to changes** (such as peoples needs), the color templates in the schedule to reveal patterns, the roles of the teachers team, etc. Most of all, it really pushed every one's **edges**... and that should explain why it was so rich and successful!

Also, the course kicked ASS-omption about the teachers-student false duality and, thus, empowered every one of us to step-up to their fullest potential as permaculture teachers. As we are all designer, whether we are regenerative or destructive ones, the course also helped us realize that we are all teachers whether we like it or not... and so might as well get "better" at it ... and most of all be more aware of this simple 'fact'!

Personally, changes have been drastic. First, I was unable to complete my ten minutes lecture because of lack of confidence and over-preparation (both link to each other) and, then, at the end the 10 days course, me and my colleagues led an workshop that rocked the house! Indeed, the result of this workshop, was way beyond my wildest expectation for this course.

Moreover, after this workshop, I came back to University and led an hour-and-an-half long talk/workshop on critical ecopedagogy (environmental education) and how permaculture can contribute to its discourse(s) and pedagogy(ies). Most surprisingly, important scholars assisted to my talk and all gave me amazing feedbacks about the content (theory and praxis), the critical pedagogies and participatory exercises used in my talk and, ultimately, they were very curious about this "new" field called permaculture!

As will attest Bill Mollison, teaching permaculture in a university setting is surely not the easiest place to do so! In any rate... I did it... and I will do it again (not just in University though)!!

Jean Doyon
Sherbrooke, Quebec

The PCTT gave me the permission I needed to think of myself as a teacher. I'm the type of person who needs to be escorted to a new understanding of myself and the course did that not only practically, by showing a 360 degree view of the Pc teaching experience, but also symbolically through the "Seat of the Teacher" exercise.

The other powerful aspect of the course for me was the attention to individual needs that I try to include in my own workshops. For example, at NOFA there are a lot of people that have years of experience and present with authority. I don't have that so I introduced my workshop as a forum for sharing my experiences with natural body products and encouraged others to share and ask questions. Consequently, I was fortunate to have in my audience a woman who I had taken a NOFA workshop with 2 years prior. I made my first infusions with oil based on that workshop and she was incredibly helpful answering questions (without taking over!). So this workshop fostered a

sense of community because attendees were able to satisfy their need for practical information and not just looking at me as the expert.

Tom Nielsen
New York, NY

I've been thinking a lot about what the teacher training has meant to me over the last several months. I have been revisiting some of my 'strikes' and they all seemed to do with the application of permaculture to our inner realms. The 'ol zone 00. Unlearning was also a huge theme for me, mostly unlearning old ways of thinking and deconstructing belief systems that maintain old patterns. This is what has continued to stay with me since the course and as I reflect on it now, I can see how important the course has been for shaping decisions I have made since. I have become a full-fledged believer in pushing my edge as a catalyst for growth and of the fact that learning is greatly enhanced by teaching.

One of the interests that I have had in permaculture is working with people who are not often exposed to permaculture. To follow this edge I just accepted an Americorps position that involves working with behaviorally-challenged kids at a community school in Cincinnati. I will have the opportunity to do some mentoring work with a group of students and I plan to incorporate a ton of ideas from the inner permaculture aspect of the course, incorporating this with hands-on experience to reinforce the lessons. This is a huge edge for me and the PCTT definitely spurred me to go for it.

On other teaching fronts, so far I have given one public talk on permaculture that will develop into a forest gardening class this fall. The goal is to plant a demonstration garden at the community center in my home town. I also collaborated with a Cincinnati fella this spring to offer a weekend intro to PC course. I plan on expanding on these efforts, but my energies are going to be focused more on the Americorps thing for a while.

In short, the training gave me a whole new approach to my life. It helped me realize that I am constantly designing my life and that I can be much more intentional in the process. So that is where my path stretches at the moment and what I want to explore more as a teacher and practitioner of permaculture. Thinking of my edge as a place of maximal growth has made me really excited to explore it way more.

Thank you so much to all.

Sam Dunlap
Cincinnati, OH