



RNDM Earth Community

“We are One, We are Love”

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“Let ours be a time remembered for awakening a new respect for our earth and all her inhabitants, for one another, for ourselves and for our common destiny.” (RNDM Congregational Chapter, 2008)

A NEW TYPE OF LANDSCAPE

Darlene Cullimore, M.A., M.Ed.

Master Gardener-in-Training and permaculture practitioner

I have never thought of myself as a religious person, in spite of having been raised in a Christian religion, Sunday school, singing in a church choir, all that. Yet I am not an atheist either.

Where I experience a sense of awe, reverence and serenity is in a forest, any forest. My most consistent activity through all my life's changes is to walk, with a dog most ideally, in a forest.

I once worked with First Nations Technical Institute of the Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory near Belleville, Ontario. At an FNTI conference, I was amazed to be involved in a closing ceremony in which the Elder host named each of the elements of the natural world, from the earth to the sky, and thanked The Spirit for the opportunity we had been given to share and learn. I looked out the window at the beautiful natural panorama outside and wondered how our lives in mainstream society would be different if this were our practice. Perhaps my soul resonates with the spirituality of Aboriginal peoples who understand that all is connected, and that human beings are only one component of an interwoven world.

Selected permaculture principles:

Use small, slow solutions
Use and value diversity
Work with nature, not against it
Observe carefully before acting
Make the least change for the greatest effect

Recently this path has led me to *permaculture*, a word coined in the 70s by Australian, Bill Mollison, from 'permanent' and 'agriculture', a practice that is catching hold around the world for its power to restore the ravaged earth, feed people, and build community.

Practising permaculture leads one beyond 'gardening' or 'farming', though these are its core activities, to the experience of active engagement with the web of life. Permaculture embodies an ethics, backed by science, that compels action. Through learning about permaculture, we all – you and I – can do something active and real to heal the earth, feed our bodies and souls, and learn and grow together. We can create a forest.

“I have a mini-forest in my backyard...Like the natural forest, it comprises a wide diversity of plants, occupying seven levels or 'stories', but ...almost all its plants have been carefully chosen to meet human needs... which could enable a family or small community to achieve a considerable degree of self-sufficiency... while enjoying health-giving exercise in a beautiful, unpolluted and stimulating environment.”

Robert Hart: *Forest Gardening: Cultivating an Edible Landscape*

The waning light of December, the miracle of the Solstice's turning point, and the lengthening days following have for our species throughout time generated both reflection and celebration. At this critical juncture of the earth's history, when making a difference for our planet has never been more important, let us all reflect on how we can best cultivate our own gardens.

“... a new type of landscape... true backyard ecosystems – not just disconnected fragments – that are as resilient, diverse, productive, and beautiful as those in nature... Places where nature does most of the work, but where people are as welcome as the other inhabitants of the Earth.” Toby Hemenway: *Gaia's Garden: a Guide to Home-Scale Permaculture*.

More on permaculture:

Britain's *Permaculture* magazine estimates that 12 million people in the world have been formally trained in permaculture, often practising in war-torn or disaster-ravaged countries. Its ethical base is: "Care of the earth; Care of people; Share the surplus."

Courses have begun in Manitoba. For more information, please contact Darlene at dcullimore@sympatico.ca.

She recommends:

Hart, Robert. *Forest Gardening: Cultivating an Edible Landscape*. Chelsea Green Publishing. 1996.

Hemenway, Toby. *Gaia's Garden: A Guide to Home-Scale Permaculture*. 2000. ISBN 1890132527

Mars, Ross. *The Basics of Permaculture Design*. 2005. ISBN 1856230236

Mollison, Bill. *Permaculture: A Designer's Manual*. 1988. ISBN 0908228015

"Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect." ~Chief Seattle, 1855

Did You Know?

A group of people are exploring ways for Winnipeg to become a **Transition Town**. A Transition Town is "a grassroots network of communities that are working to build resilience in response to peak oil, climate destruction, and economic instability."¹ Permaculture teachings are an important part of the Transition Initiative.

For more information, see:

¹http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transition_Towns
<http://www.transitionnetwork.org>

Many communities around the world have joined the Transition Initiative. There is already one Transition Town in Manitoba—Steinbach—with a website at: <http://southeasttransition.com>

Some major cities in Canada with transition initiatives are: Victoria, Vancouver, Edmonton, Ottawa, Toronto, Halifax, and Whitehorse. Many smaller Canadian cities and towns have also become Transition Towns and are listed on the Transition Network's website.

IN THE SPIRIT OF THIS SEASON...

We invite you to take some time for this 10-minute meditation on gratitude:

http://www.ted.com/talks/louie_schwartzberg_nature_beauty_gratitude.html

(Thank you, Darlene Cullimore!)

Even after all this time,
The sun never says to the earth,
"You owe me."
Look what happens with
A love like that.
It lights the whole sky.

- Hafiz of Persia

If any of these articles have stirred a response in you, please share your insight at GreenSistersTalk@yahoo.com
