



open permaculture school
regenerative leadership institute

50 Easy Ways to
Permaculture
YOUR PROPERTY



50 THINGS CHECKLIST

HERE'S A CHECKLIST OF 50 WAYS YOU COULD APPLY PERMACULTURE IDEAS TO YOUR SITE.

- ✓ **Think of all the small ways you could save water in the home.**

From turning the tap off while you brush your teeth to fixing that dripping faucet. Even small changes soon add up, saving water and reducing water bills.

- ✓ **Consider replacing paved paths in the garden with low-lying vegetation.**

This will reduce water runoff and increase biodiversity.

- ✓ **Consider using greywater – the "waste" water from the laundry and bathroom.**

As long as you use organic detergents, it's perfectly safe for use as irrigation on your garden beds – just avoid spraying it directly on fruits and vegetables.

- ✓ **Consider mulching your garden beds.**

Mulching with organic materials adds nutrients to the soil, preserves soil moisture (so less watering is needed) and prevents erosion by wind and rain.



- ✓ **Think about installing solar power.**

The energy is free once you have the requisite equipment, and so will save on your energy bills over the long term. The initial cost can be off putting but increasingly you can arrange leasing or hire-purchase arrangements with solar power companies to offset or stagger the cost.



Consider harvesting rainwater.

Water is a very precious resource and a lot of it simply runs off into the municipal drainage system. Diverting rainwater from the roofs of your buildings to storage units helps reduce wastage, means you use less municipal water as irrigation (so saving money) and gives you access to water even in times of extreme shortage (such as heat waves), making you more self sufficient.

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Think about how often you upgrade your digital devices.

Do you really need the latest version of a smartphone, or that slightly larger TV? Looking after devices and only replacing them when they are no longer useable reduces waste and pressure on the mineral resources that go into producing them. It also saves you money.

Consider building a pond.

It will attract a great variety of wildlife, allows you to cultivate aquatic species of plants, thus increasing the biodiversity of your site, it provides a body of water for emergency use, and can be used to support fish or ducks.

Consider canning and pickling your surplus fruits and vegetables.

Doing so will give you access to foodstuffs even when those crops are not in season, will mean you don't have to buy so many groceries, and prevents the fruits and vegetables going to waste. They are also delicious!

Think about when you irrigate your garden beds.

Watering plants early in the morning or late in the evening gives the plants the most time to absorb the maximum amount of water before it evaporates, making for healthier plants and reducing your water use.



Consider starting a compost pile.

By converting "waste" from the kitchen into compost for the garden beds you create a closed loop of energy, with the foods giving you energy when you eat them, and you giving the plants the foods came from energy by increasing the nutrient content of the soil.

Think about how you use your washing machine.

By only putting it on when you have a full load, and by reducing the temperature (even by just a few degrees), you save energy and water – and thus money on your household bills.

Think about planting your crops in guilds.

So they support one another and require less energy and intervention from you.

Consider drying your clothes outside.

As the tumble drier is one of the most energy-hungry of all household appliances. Sure, outside drying may take a little longer, but think of the energy and money you are saving.

Consider getting a few chickens, if you have the space.

They help turn the soil, add nutrients to it via their manure, help keep pest insect populations under control, will eat scraps from the kitchen, and provide you with fresh eggs. Plus, they are cute, inquisitive and fun to watch.

Consider replacing your conventional light bulbs with energy saving versions.

They save you money, use fewer resources, and last longer.

Think about all the ways an object could be reused on the site before you throw it out.

Most things can be repurposed somehow. For instance, a bucket could become a plant container, an old bath can be turned into a worm farm, or bottle tops can be utilised as a deer deterrent.

Consider growing cover crops over the winter after your main harvest is over.

This avoids leaving the soil bare (leaving it prone to erosion by wind and rain), and will add nutrients to the soil profile ready from replanting in the spring.

Consider using native plants on your site.

These species are the best adapted to your local soil and climate conditions, meaning they are more likely to thrive on your plot – while requiring less input from you.

Consider your neighbors.

Respect and concern for other people is central to the ideas of permaculture, so always think about the effect something you do on your site may have on those around you, and talk to them about potential changes that will impact them.





Think about getting rid of your lawn.

It requires lots of water and maintenance, but does not give you a yield. Transform it into growing beds and reap the rewards of a useable harvest.

Consider sheet mulching to transform areas of weeds to viable garden beds quickly.

Layering cardboard, compost materials and newspaper over weeds denies them sunlight so they can't photosynthesize. You can even plant crops into the sheet mulch to get a crop while clearing the unwanted plants.

Think about ways to get some free manure.

Local riding stables and farms will typically have lots of manure you can use. Composted, this manure will add loads of nutrients to your soil.

Consider making keyhole garden beds.

This style of bed maximizes the viable planting space, meaning you get more yield from your site, and increases the amount of edge – the interface between two environments – which is the most dynamic part of an ecosystem.

Think about ways to cool your house.

Adding a door or planting a deciduous tree to protect the building from the summer sun can moderate the temperature and mean you won't have to use the air conditioning so much – saving energy and money.

Think about how you can attract birds to your site.

Increasing biodiversity, instituting a body of water, and protecting them from predation by pet cats, will bring in birds, which will help keep insects under control, aid plant pollination and fill the garden with delightful birdsong.

Consider taking showers rather than having baths.

Showers use less water and less energy to heat the water – saving on water and heating costs.

Consider using trees as windbreaks.

This will protect more fragile plants from wind damage, create an environment that is more attractive to insects, birds and other wildlife, and modify temperature across the site, including on the home.

Think about how often you will visit a particular plant to care for it and harvest it.

This will help determine the zones of your design, with those plants that you visit most often positioned closest to the home.

Think about swapping surplus crops with your neighbors.

Gardeners often have different varieties of fruits and vegetables from one another, and swapping amongst yourselves means food does not go to waste, you don't have to buy so many groceries, and you get a wider variety of food for your kitchen.





Consider using a wind turbine to convert wind power to useable energy.

It could be a small one to power a water pump, say, or a larger one (local ordinances permitting) to supply some of your household energy. Either way you will be saving resources and saving money.

Think about how the topography of your site affects how water runs off it.

Water is a precious and essential resource for the success of your permaculture plot, so look at ways to modify slope to slow runoff, such as planting trees at the top of slopes, or building swales.

Consider installing a drip irrigation system for some of your crops.

Such systems give a steady supply of water to the roots of plants, making them more efficient in their water use.

Think about your electrical appliances when they are not in use.

Turning them off completely rather than putting them on standby will save energy and reduce electricity bills. For instance, a microwave not in use is still drawing in electricity just to power the clock – and you probably don't need another clock in the kitchen!

Consider starting some of your crop plants indoors before the growing season starts.

That way you can extend the growing period, having access to more yield from your plot for longer, and reducing the need to buy groceries.

Think about ways to reduce your carbon footprint.

From using public transport more instead of taking the car, to buying local, seasonal ingredients to minimise food miles.

Consider a herb spiral.

These unique garden beds maximise the growing area, allow easy access for harvesting, and have a variety of microclimates across their surface meaning you can cultivate many different species.

Think about starting a worm farm.

They are easy to set up, require minimal energy input from the gardener, and turn kitchen waste into useable compost, making a closed loop energy system on your permaculture plot.

Consider how you move between different activities in the garden and design so that they minimise energy expenditure.

For instance, place the compost pile somewhere you would logically visit after checking the chickens, so you can dump the manure into the compost pile, rather than moving back and forth.

Consider leaving the leaves that fall from deciduous trees on the ground,

Rather than raking them up and throwing them away or burning them. They will act as natural mulch, releasing nutrients into the soil as they rot, which is particularly useful in fall and winter, resupplying the soil ready for planting in spring.

Think about instituting a forest garden.

With the many different "layers" in a forest garden, you maximize the number of species you cultivate, as they can each find a niche at different heights, thus maximising yield. You also increase biodiversity, which will attract wildlife.

Consider permaculture even if you don't have a lot of space.

It is very adaptable. Even those with a courtyard garden can still grow fruit trees in containers or espaliered against a wall, grow vegetables and herbs in vertical gardens (in recycled plastic bottles hung up, for instance), and even construct a no-dig garden bed over the paving stones.





Think about selling your surplus crops at the local market.

It will give you a potential extra income and will provide the local community with access to organic food, cultivated without chemicals and inorganic fertilizers.

Think about turning off all your appliances when you go on vacation.

Plan to empty the fridge in the run up to your departure, and turn it, as well as your TV, entertainment devices and kitchen equipment, off at the wall when you leave. It will save energy and reduce you bills.

Consider catching the water you use to wash vegetables and do dishes.

This moisture can be reused to irrigate the garden (just remember to use organic washing up liquid).

Consider the local wildlife.

Designing in harmony with nature is integral to permaculture. Of course, you can design to help keep insect populations under control or deter deer from eating your crops, but try not to impact upon the natural behaviors of wild animals too much.

Think about your "mistakes" as opportunities for learning.

Even when things apparently go wrong – a crop doesn't grow as well as you expected, for instance, consider the lessons you can learn from it.

Think about sharing garden equipment with your neighbors.

That way you don't all have to buy the same pieces of equipment, so you all save money, and you promote a collaborative and sharing community.

Consider leaving part of your plot to "go wild".

This gives you a chance to observe nature unencumbered – and it is likely to attract insects and other wildlife to the native plants, so protecting your crops from too much undue attention.

Consider testing the pH level of your soil.

It is quickly done with litmus paper bought cheaply, and you can relatively easily alter the acidity or alkalinity of your soil by adding organic matter, to make the growing medium more beneficial to your crops.

