

Intro to Permaculture - Permaculture Decision Making Matrix Video Transcript

Music

So does Permaculture include everything? Well yes, it pretty much does, but we only have 4 weeks here in this course so we're going to focus on the design of landscapes. Permaculture is most well known for its potent land design tools, which can improve the world around us, from gardens to farms to towns to refugee camps.

One set of tools we have is something I like to call the Permaculture Decision Making Matrix. This tool has 4 elements that we will learn about in this course. The elements of the decision making matrix help us to make informed choices about where to place objects within the landscape and how to relate them to each other.

We begin with topography and reading the landform. The way the land is shaped tells us how water moves through it, and reveals the way soils are formed and distributed. Understanding the patterns of water movement is a key component to designing a Permaculture system, because the design for water on a site provides the underlying bones that the rest of the system is structured around. We design for water in a way that creates abundance and keeps water in its place of highest potential, so we can use it again and again as it moves through our site.

Aside from topography we have a thing we call sectors. Sectors represent directional forces that come from outside the site in. This could be sunshine, warm or cold winds, storms, wildfire, frost, noise, pollution, or anything else that points in from outside. We map these sectors and then our design becomes a direct response to them. I want to welcome the sun in winter, block or deflect wildfire, shade from the hot summer sun.

The next element is what we call the Permaculture zones. Zones have to do with how people move throughout a site, and the placement of elements in relation to their proximity to the center of human activity, from things that require daily attention that are close in, all the way to areas that are left wild and untouched that are farther out. For example, a vegetable garden I want to visit every day should be in close proximity to the house, and get good sun, and not get flooded by rain. Unless I'm in the desert, and then maybe I want to channel rain directly into the garden and place it where it gets some shade. You get the point. Every element has reasons to be placed in one spot or another, and the decision making matrix helps you make that choice.

Then the different elements of your system relate to each other, and this is where the Permaculture design principles really come in. The principles guide design decisions and give us a theoretical backbone for the design and interconnection of the pieces of our life support system: gardens, trees, orchards, fields, forests, structures, energy systems, and social, economic and political structures as well.