

# Permaculture to Love the Earth

By Jocelyn Hoch - Ebb & Flow Farm

You may have heard of farming technique called Permaculture. Simply put, it is a system of Permanent Agriculture, coined by Bill Mollison in 1959. He was a field naturalist, schoolteacher, trapper, & forester. After his long study of indigenous people and their natural surroundings, he observed a living holistic system of agriculture that supported villages of people with very little effort. These systems provided useful plants including, medicine, food, building materials, vegetable dyes, and crafts. Mollison's mimicry of these systems kickstarted a movement around the world. Permaculture has become a common word among modern gardeners looking to take a more holistic and organic approach to raising useful and edible plants. Permaculture both looks and works the way nature does by interconnecting living systems between native, perennial edible plants, medicinal plants, culinary herbs, common vegetables, soil life, beneficial insects & provides habitat and food for animals and us.

If we sit and observe a natural park in our area we would see before us a wonderful organized system with beautiful oak trees, majestic pines, palms and herbaceous plants below. Take a closer look at the oak tree, if you imagine it as a huge umbrella, you will see that many plants thrive along the drip edges where the foliage ends. Under the oak you would notice there is an abundance of dark rich soil formed from years of fallen leaf litter. This debris provides habitat for shade loving plants such as ferns, vanilla, passion flower, ginger, heliconia, bromeliads, edible spinach such as longevity, ceylon or malabar spinach. All will love a little shade in summer and the rich soil that abounds with microorganisms and fluffy soil all what we lack in Florida. So instead of tossing the good stuff that builds richness in your gardens, use it to your advantage. Rake those leaves around your plants to provide mulch and add your kitchen compost for an extra boost of nutrients.

Moving our attention to the bayside we would see mangroves all along the water line and beyond that, succulent plants growing under that canopy. Where salty water ebbs & flows many plants will grow there that could benefit you and animals, including sea grape, acacia, argan tree, coconut, pearl millet, saltwort, sea oats, seashore mallow, wild rice, agave, beets, capers, carob, ceylon spinach, coco plum, jujube, natal plum to name a few reference this site for more information on salt tolerant plants, [http://www.biosalinity.org/salt-tolerant\\_plants.htm](http://www.biosalinity.org/salt-tolerant_plants.htm).

Where big pines grow we have a dryer arid land where we can plant sun tolerant plants that don't need rich loamy soil and can tolerate the heat of summer and soil that gets dried out for long periods. Planting accordingly to the environment will benefit the landscape profusely. You can plant so many wonderful edibles and perennials there, such as: prickly pear cactus, grapes, blackberry, rosemary, blanket flower, spiderwort, buttonwood, cranberry hibiscus, black sapote, custard apple, guava, mulberry, banana, papaya, mango, pineapple, African blue basil, cuban oregano, cassava, chaya, lemongrass, katuk, pigeon pea, moringa, olive, sweet potato and peanuts. Just endless wonderful things to plant. And of course they will all benefit from mulching.

This concept of permaculture is about creating this visionary landscape using your conscious mind and creativity, not taking away the useable nutrition that your older plants provide by using old palms fronds and woody cuttings to create magical gardens that abound. Another concept I love in permaculture is hugelkultur, a concept created in European woodlands to limit their amount of hard labor. This method takes all larger wood scraps, branches, leaves and creates garden berms with them. It's brilliant. You can pile up all wood cuttings 4-8 feet long 1-2 feet high, throw all kinds of yard waste on the pile, sod, weeds, grass clippings, straw, compost and soil, stomp on the pile, place leaves on top. Next create a hole in the middle, place a big bag of soil inside the leaf area and plant potatoes, squash, melons, seminoe pumpkins do really well here. Once planted, mulch it with leaves and water occasionally, voila instant garden. It is a wonderful thing that occurs in the next year, you have created a wonderful garden bed that will be flourishing with fungi & microorganisms to follow and it is less work then tying sticks and branches into a neat little bundle for the trash men to pick up. If we could simply view the natural world and emulate natures design then we wouldn't feel so overwhelmed by the work that goes into maintaining such a manicured lawn, and the more mulched garden beds we have the less we have to mow. Love ourselves and the Earth more by becoming a perma mulcher instead of a perma mower. Like Ebb & Flow Farm on facebook