INTEGRATING PERMACULTURE INTO A PLANTING DESIGN STUDIO FOR LANDSCAPE DESIGNERS

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What is Permaculture?

Permaculture is an internationally recognized sustainable design philosophy that began in Australia over forty years ago. Bill Mollison, the ecologist who coined the phrase from “Permanent Agriculture,” is fiercely independent and considered his design concepts unsuitable for the confines of an institution.

Mollison’s Definition of Permaculture:

“the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems which have the diversity, stability and resilience of natural ecosystems. It is the harmonious integration of landscape and people providing their food, energy, shelter, and other material and non-material needs in a sustainable way. It seeks first to stabilize and care for land, then to serve household regional and local needs, and only thereafter to produce a surplus for sale or exchange.”

Philosophical Paradoxes:

Fantasy is an environment where the typical rules that play into creating a satisfactory design for a client do not apply. From a Permaculturist perspective this means that the primary consideration for design decisions rely on the needs of the land, plants, water, insects, animals and beyond survival including the social needs of people as a whole. None of these are more important than the other yet none can be ignored. Financial considerations and client goals are not separate objectives from all other aspects of creating a functioning integrated environment.

Major Concepts for Instruction

Permaculture is a vast subject however a few foundational principles are highlighted for presentation. Creating simplicity and ease for “gardeners” is a primary Permaculture goal achieved by “zone and sector planning” (locating elements by the frequency of attendance needed) and “stacking functions” (every elements needs to serve a minimum of two functions). The drawings illustrate how students used these ideas to develop their own fantasy landscape.

Abbreviated Assignment Example

PERMACULTURE PLANTING DESIGN FANTASY

Forest’s Design

Solar orientation and integrating the residence into existing landforms were two of the main factors in this design. A south facing ridge was used to create a “earth” house and also take advantage of passive and active solar opportunity.

Brian’s Design

Aesthetics and edible plants are united in creating an entrance alle of fruiting trees. “Apple tree guilds” are used as focal points and terminial points creating a gateway effect. Vegetable and herb gardens requiring daily supervision are located near the home.

Heidi’s Design

The social and economic benefits of a residential retreat are united with a wind farm that will educate visitors as well as provide the electrical energy needs for the resort. Rental cottages are located near the main road so less pavement is needed.

References: