

## Workshop Title: Permaculture 101

Speaker(s) & their titles:

**Alex Denicola, Highland Farms/mother Oak Permaculture**

### Executive Summary

Alex has been doing organic small-scale mixed farming and market gardening for twenty years. Although he discovered permaculture in the late '90's, he only began more formal study in 2008, taking both the Permaculture Design Course and a Teacher Training from Peter Bane. So why do this? "Although ecological farming and land stewardship holds much meaning for me, it doesn't cover the whole picture, which is what I was after—permaculture does that—it's a big umbrella! His design project has been to transform several acres of pasture and a barn on his property, which has also become the host site—MotherOak PC—for his permaculture teaching in Nova Scotia.

### Detailed Notes:

Although ecological farming and sustainable practice are all well and good- they do not encompass everything. Permaculture is an umbrella of all methods.

It is a radical departure from conventional thinking, a different way of thinking about problems- not falling into this culture of 'more' but instead using logical and simple methods to produce useful items.

Provide a way to make a graceful and ethical decent down the curve of peak oil.  
Cooperation is key!

Permaculture Design is creative responses for energy descent and climatic difficulties.

Resilience rather than sustainability: Resilience requires foresight and planning- preparedness for inevitable change in order to keep a culture of goodness going rather than moving into survivalist mode.

**"Top down thinking, bottom up action"** through adaptation.

People need to develop a sense of urgency- creating a farming system that is still dependent on fossil fuels is part of the problem.

ex. Follow Nutrients: oil > fields > processing > store > you > sequestration in septic tank. This is a huge problem and comes from a poor way of thinking about energy.

Resources:

[futurescenarios.org](http://futurescenarios.org)

[transitionnetwork.org](http://transitionnetwork.org)

[postcarbon.org](http://postcarbon.org)

[permacultureactivist.net](http://permacultureactivist.net) **\*\*COMPONENT AND DESIGN PRINCIPLE CHARTS AND DIAGRAMS CAN BE FOUND HERE**

The Foundation of Permaculture begins with the Design Principles and creating a permanent replacement/alternative culture. The ethics behind this design are about doing good and not harming the planet. The prime directive is to take complete responsibility for your own existence. This is as essential and basic as controlling your own inputs and outputs.

Nature and land stewardship is very important within permaculture, as most of the damage done to the biosphere is through agriculture. We need to focus on the built environment and its inherent problems- and find better ways to design things. No new inventions are necessary, only taking things/concepts from the past and moving them into the future.

Culture and Education

i.e. Home schooling, apprenticeships & entrepreneurship action research

Health and Welfare (and spiritual wellbeing)

i.e. Holistic medicine, etc. maintaining a healthy core is key

Finance and Economics

i.e. Ethical investment

The Idea of financial growth and debt are co-originated- and are both new concepts. We are at a point where geographically we can no longer expand- we are in a contraction. There is strong evidence that we are in an L-shaped economy. CSAs are a good market, and the underground economy (bartering) works well too. Money = Debt. There is so much debt in the world that there aren't enough resources on the planet to repay it.

Legal, Land Tenure, Government

Access to land; find ways to plug into networks where you can use land together without having to buy it. Co-ops evoke co-operation. Doing it yourself is a part of the old model. Eco-villages-togetherness is very important for readiness.

Holmgren's 12 principles of Permaculture:

Observe and interact: By taking time to engage with nature we can design solutions that suit our particular situation.

**2011 NS ACORN Conference  
Holiday Inn Halifax Harbourview**

Catch and store energy: By developing systems that collect resources at peak abundance, we can use them in times of need.

Obtain a yield: Ensure that you are getting truly useful rewards as part of the work that you are doing.

Apply self-regulation and accept feedback: We need to discourage inappropriate activity to ensure that systems can continue to function well.

Use and value renewable resources and services: Make the best use of nature's abundance to reduce our consumptive behavior and dependence on non-renewable resources.

Produce no waste: By valuing and making use of all the resources that are available to us, nothing goes to waste.

Design from patterns to details: By stepping back, we can observe patterns in nature and society. These can form the backbone of our designs, with the details filled in as we go.

Integrate rather than segregate: By putting the right things in the right place, relationships develop between those things and they work together to support each other.

Use small and slow solutions: Small and slow systems are easier to maintain than big ones, making better use of local resources and producing more sustainable outcomes.

Use and value diversity: Diversity reduces vulnerability to a variety of threats and takes advantage of the unique nature of the environment in which it resides.

Use edges and value the marginal: The interface between things is where the most interesting events take place. These are often the most valuable, diverse and productive elements in the system.

Creatively use and respond to change: We can have a positive impact on inevitable change by carefully observing, and then intervening at the right time

Some of Alex's personal examples drawn from the 12 principles of Permaculture:  
Care for the earth; Care for the people; Use only a fair share.

- 1- Create ecologically friendly human habitat, plan and design for energy decent
- 2- Connection and integration; built a green house to heat main building, used pv panels make money durable; use thermal mass
- 3- A greenhouse at the farm was destroyed by a windstorm, so they rebuilt it with a windbreak.

**2011 NS ACORN Conference  
Holiday Inn Halifax Harbourview**

- 4- Incorporated draft horse-farming (less machinery!); built a cob-oven; offered workshops to teach permaculture, they learn while the work gets done!
- 5- They wanted to increase light reflection to brighten a room, so they created a mirrored wall design from old materials

Further Information: [www.novascotiapermaculture.net](http://www.novascotiapermaculture.net)