Getting Started with
Homesteading & Permaculture:

Site Analysis & Assessment Checklist

Reading & Understanding the Landscape

Scale of Permanence

Study Further: Water for Every Farm
By P.A. Yeomans

Climate

- Which Global Climate (5):
- Latitude/Longitude:
- USDA Growing Zone:
- First and Last Frost Dates:
- Average Monthly Rainfall:
- Max historic precip. Event in 24hrs:
- Wettest Month:
- Driest Month:
- Flood, Wildfire, Tornado, Hurricane, Snow risk:
- Prevailing Wind:
- Seasonal Wind Trends:
- Solar Angles:
- Length of Longest and Shortest Days:

Landform

- Slope: (overlay on satellite/base map)
- Slope Solar Aspect:
- Topographic position: (mid-slope, hill crest, valley floor, etc.)
- Elevation (min-max):
- Frost Pockets:
- Landslide potential:
- Bedrock geology: (permeability, depth, nutrient content, acidity)
- Surficial geology: (type of parent material, permeability, depth, stoniness).
- Estimated seasonal high water table depth:
- Estimated depth to bedrock, hardpan or impermeable layers of soil

Water

- Water Sources/Features: (location, quantity, quality, dependability, sustainability)
- Watershed:
- Depth to Water Table/Aquifer:
- Nearby Pollution Sources:
- Well Water Test Results:
- Drainage Channels:
- Pooling Sites:
- Erosion: (existing and potential areas)

Access

- Existing Access Routes: (add on base map)
- Activity Centers:
- Storage Areas:
- Constraints of Roads to Site: (weight, size etc)
- Material Drop Sites: (mulch, compost, produce, firewood, laundry, etc.)

Legal

- Property lines/easements/rights of way:
- Restrictions: (wetlands regulations, zoning regulations, building setbacks etc.)
- Special Applications and fees:
- Electricity sources/costs:
- Water Rights & Access: (Ponds, wells, city supply, rainwater collection etc.)
- Health & Sanitation: (sewer access, septic system, compost toilets etc.)
- Agricultural Regulations: (livestock, composting, crops, gardens)
- HOA:

Scale of Permanence

Economic

- Currencies used: (local currency, alternatives)
- Main Industries of Region:
- Proximity to Market: (higher population areas with farmers markets and locally sourced restaurants)
- Cooperatives, Associations, Trade Unions:
- Land cost & taxes:
- Utility costs:
- Cost of Living:
- Social Programs:
- Credit Unions & Local Financing Sources:

Existing Species

- Existing animal species: (movement patterns, seasonality, impact, threatened/endangered etc.)
- Particularly Aggressive Species:
- Ecosystem architecture: (layers and their density, patterning and diversity etc.)
- Existing plant species: (locations, sizes, quantities, patterns, uses, poisonous, threatened/endangered etc)
- Plant Communities/Habitat Types: (Cedar-Birch Swamp , Buckthorn Shrub Thicket, Beech-Maple-Basswood Climax Forest etc.)
- Habitat conditions: (light/shade, wet/dry, character, quality etc.)

Existing Infrastructure

- Buildings: (size, shape, functions, locations of doors and windows, possible build sites etc)
- Permanent pavement:
- Snow piling locations:
- Power lines: (above and below ground and electric outlets)
- Outdoor water faucets:
- Septic system/Sewer Line Locations:
- Well location/s:
- Greenhouses:
- Other underground utilities: (drain fields, gas lines, spout drain lines, tile drains, culverts, etc)
- Fences and gateways

Soil

- Soil types: (texture, structure, consistence, profle, drainage)
- Management history:
- Topsoil fertility: (pH, % OM, N, P, K, Ca)
- Subsoil composition, minerals, texture:
- Soil toxins: (lead, mercury, cadmium, asbestos, etc.)
- Soil texture DIY jar test:
- Soil infiltration DIY bucket test:
- Patches of fertility/infertility: (on basemap)

Other Considerations

- Define various microclimate spaces: (on basemap)
- Sun/shade: (areas of full sun, full shade, partial sun, morning sun, evening sun, etc)
- Cold air drainage and frost pockets:
- Soil moisture patterns: (vernal ponds, seasonal flood zones, water drainage)
- Frostline depth:
- Use history and impacts on land: (logged, cropped, inhabited, pastured, sprayed, etc.)
- Previous site owners/managers: (go as far back as you can)
- Current or future uses:
- Past or current cultural relevance of site:
- Unique aesthetic features: (direction of a nice view etc)
- Experience of place: (quiet, loud, calm, busy, serene, claustrophobic, expansive, chaotic, exposed, sheltered, secluded etc)
- Outdoor rooms/spaces: (covered porch, pergola, arbor, fire pit, resting bench, swing, playground, outdoor kitchen/processing space, natural amphitheatre, etc)
- Arrival and entry: (gateway passthrough, approaching the center from outside, direct or meandering, inviting or confusing etc)
- On Site Resources: (water, wind, light, carbon, buildings, etc):
- Security of Land Tenure: (mineral / water rights, Deed restrictions, zoning, easements, etc.):
- List of Plans, maps, drawings available:
- Features: (rock outcrops, waterfalls, caves, swimming holes etc)
- Describe neighboring properties and their uses:

Self Assessment

Study Further: The Permaculture Handbook
By Peter bane

- # of people on site, relationship, names, ages:
- Occupations / Interests / Hobbies:
- Lifestyle(s):
- Eating / Dietary Patterns:
- Allergies:
- Occupation:
- Level of food self reliance desired:
- Eating habits: (eat out # per month, cook meal # per month etc)
- Handicaps / Limitations:
- Ability to Invest in Site (time on and off land, labor, budget, etc.):
- Degree of privacy / sociability:
- Short and long-range priorities / goals:
- Desires and dreams, wants, needs:
- Other hobbies/activities:
- Skills: (building, gardening, plumbing, sewing, cooking etc)
- Areas of Weakness:
- Pets:
- Size of gatherings:
- Connections in same neighborhood, town, county, state: (family, friends, coworkers etc)
- Is this part time or full time residence:
- Legacy plan: (who stewards the site afterwards)
- Spiritual/Religious practices:
- Current electricity, gas, water use:
- Vehicles: (cars, trucks, bikes, boats etc)
- Additional Comments:

What is Permaculture?

It's not just gardening!

A design system (and grassroots social movement) to create ecologically sustainable and regenerative human settlements.

Includes principles & strategies for holistic decision-making and problem solving.

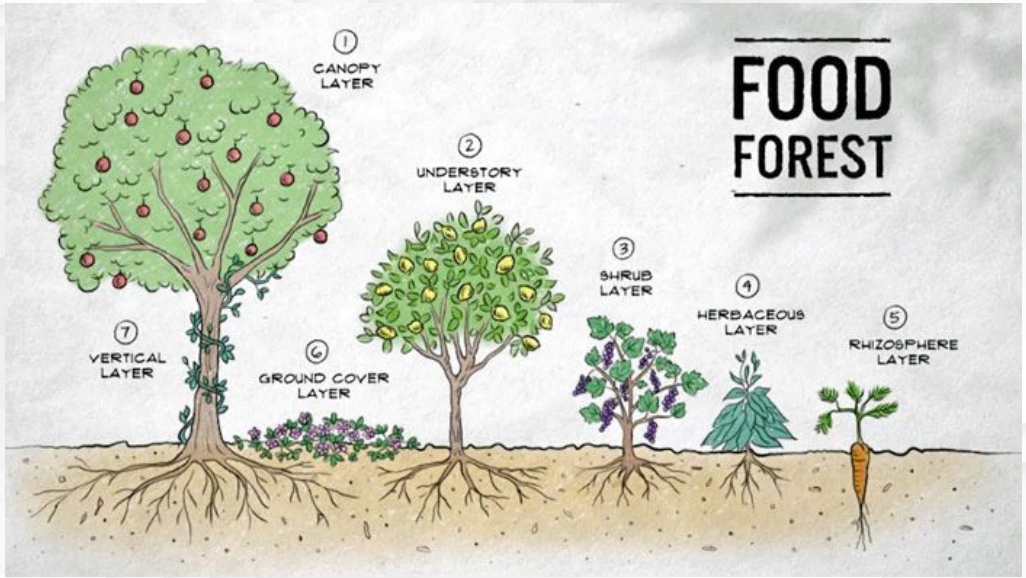
Study Further: Gaia's Garden by Toby Hemenway, Permaculture A Designers' Manual by Bill Mollison

What are Edible Forest Gardens?

(Aka; Food Forests, Agroforestry, Agroecology)

A biologically diverse planting that provides many needs of people and wildlife by mimicking and integrating with natural forest ecosystems.

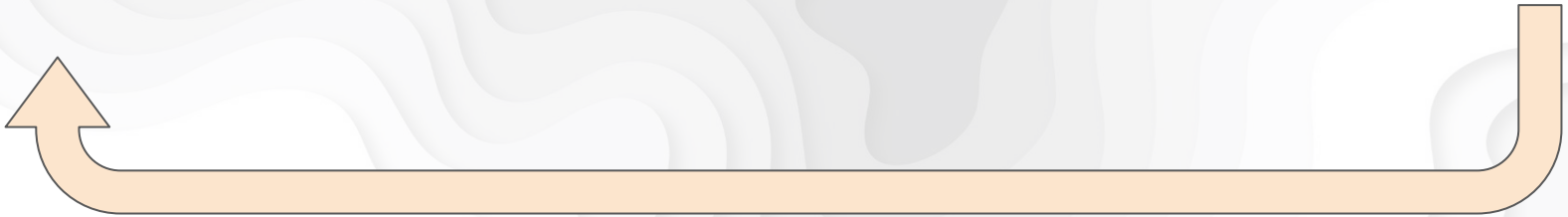
Beyond food, they can also provide medicinal plants and fungi, building materials, fuel-wood, fiber for basketry and textiles, feed for livestock, fertilizer and more.



Study Further: Edible Forest Gardens Vol 1 & 2
by Dave Jacke with Eric Toensmeier

The Design Process

Observation	Design	Implementation	Evaluation
• Site Analysis & Assessment • Self Assessment (Goals, Budget, Skills, Assets...)	• Concept Design (Big picture) • Detail Design	Do the Work	What Worked? Lessons?



More Resources

- TEXT format of This Checklist for Easy Copy/Paste Action
- Daftlogic Google Maps Distance Calculator Tool
- Daftlogic Google Maps Area Calculator Tool
- Topographic Maps
- USGS Web Soil Survey
- Windfinder
- USDA Plant Hardiness Zones map
- Sun Angle Tool
- US Climate Data (Avg Precipitation, Temps etc)
- FEMA Flood Maps
- Permies.com Permaculture Forum
- Plants for a Future - Plant Database
- Motherearth News Homesteading Magazine/Blog
- Transition Town Network
- Temperate Climate Permaculture Plant List/Info

Sitting quietly, doing nothing, spring comes, and the grass grows by itself. - Zen saying