

Talk on culture by Alison Ensor to Tewkesbury Green party on 16 November 2021

Alison has developed a permaculture garden over the last eight years and conducts courses which several of our members have benefited from and learned much. Tonight's talk is to spread this knowledge understanding and insight to attendees more widely.

Alison describes the issue is that we have as essentially a separation from nature.

She asked what our gardens for? The answer to this in terms of simply gardening is to grow plants, improve habitats and the soil whilst encouraging wildlife.

The approach that permaculture takes is to enhance the personal relationship with the land and to plan and plant and manage according to this principle.

The garden ecosystem should be one where there is no waste, the process is circular and all the connections are made into the 'web of life', quoting the Fritjof Capra book. ISBN 0 00 654751-6

The permaculture philosophy is one of cooperation and partnership (the best part is, let the worms do the digging!) And one where recycling and resources and energy are part of the web.

By principle, complexity and diversity should add together to enable response to change. The garden, like our lives, is allostatic i.e. continual adaptation to disturbance and to maintain life as the balance changes.

We regard pests and weeds and diseases as problematic, but we should be asking ourselves what is beneficial? Sitting back and reflecting on our emotional response to these perceived problems may well provide us with insight into systems and provide answers which we haven't thought of. Our negative feelings may reside with the ancient fear of famine and lack of control.

The garden, of its own accord, will attempt to return to Forest given time and it may be that allowing nature to weave her own patterns may well benefit us, our garden and the world in general.

Remember, we are part of the disturbance to the extent we are threatening our own existence.

The general principle she recommended the following.

Leave alone and observe mother nature, she may be giving messages which we simply do not understand.

Encourage increasing diversity. Adjust our expectations, ideas and beliefs. Become facilitators not eradicators. Learn to enjoy and learn from nature's messengers and live with the flow.

She provided a wonderful example, in answer to a question, about bindweed. Known as moonflower it is a later season invader of our garden aka moonflower. It does not smother but if we are to allow it space, it attracts night flying moths to its nectar. These in turn attract bats and bats are a great consumer of insects and an indicator of biodiversity.

Alison runs courses at Foxfield Permaculture Land Centre. <https://www.permaculture-alison.co.uk/>

You may never think about your garden the same again!

Stuart Galey 17 November 2021