



PERMACULTURE SESTINA

Written at Bill Mollison and Scott Pittman's Two Week Permaculture Design Course, Fossil Rim Game Preserve, Texas in May, 1996. To be copied and given away freely.

Thirty of us from all over the U.S. are here to study permaculture straight from the horses' mouths; we listen to Bill and Scott's strategies for creating a sustainable future as well as how to create healthy organisms on and particularly *in* the earth, in the precious few inches of top soil that are rapidly being depleted all over the planet along with life-giving lakes and forests. Bill says he doesn't believe in devas or faeries

but I personally think the nature spirits—or faeries as they're called—are alive entities or energies while "permaculture" is a signifier for a system of ethics, the bottom line of which is a strategy to embrace the Gaia Hypothesis which views the earth as a single living organism. The real miracle, Scott tells us, is in the complexity of living soil. Rich composted humus teeming with worms, bacteria, protozoa, algae and other life

forms, trace minerals and the proper pH is what's necessary for healthy life. Throughout the course Bill teases us relentlessly about the Findhorn faeries. He points out those gardeners were employing permaculture principles unknowingly, that pig manure was their real strategy which along with kelp and their latitudinal location activated the Scottish sand's prodigious organisms. Bill claims *that's* what created those forty pound cabbages erupting out of North Atlantic soil.

Here at Fossil Rim, Texas, Cretaceous caliche is the primary soil type. But with the proper use of droppings from the resident wild life, particularly the preserve's rhinoceros dung making endangered feces tea, you'd think that faeries really do exist. It's such a powerful fertilizer Cross Timbers Permaculture Institute is considering packaging it to sell in their gift shop as a strategy to create some extra income. It will surely take *some* kind of magical winged organism

to get people to pay for it unless they can be educated regarding how living organisms in the ground could be greatly nourished so that they in turn could create arable soil in which to grow healthy food so we could Care for the Earth, Care for People, live an ethical life-style that sets limits to population and consumption but not to faeries, of course. We need all who want to help working away subversively in their permaculture costumes disguised as earthworms, ladybugs, honey bees, etc. using their magical strategies

like pollination and photosynthesis to promote Life. Pattern literacy informed by ethics is the main strategy we're learning here. Dance, song and myth store this information in our physical organisms; this empowers us to wake up to the mandate to build healthy soil. And that's the foundation of true spirituality right here on Earth—the Miracle of Life of which one strata is the unseen realm of devas and faeries. In an open system there's plenty of room for magic—particularly in one as enlightened as Permaculture.

Participation in Permaculture Nation is clearly the best strategy to care for the Earth as a single organism. If we build healthy soil we can live sustainable, abundant lives with or without believing in devas or faeries.

Brigid Meier

(A sestina is a six stanza poem of six lines each with six rotating words used in order at the end of each line plus a three line coda at the end in which all six words are used again.)

