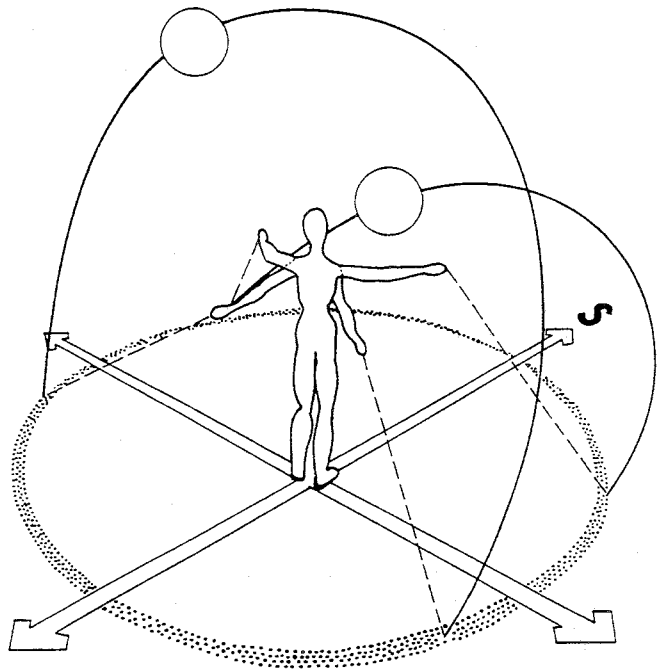

Dancing the Solar Arc

In our permaculture design courses, we have been introducing participants to a different way of evaluating solar aspect. Usually, people evaluate where the sun will strike at different times of year with one-dimensional representations of sun angles for their latitude laid over plan or elevation drawings.

Permaculture designer Tim Murphy came up with the idea of "dancing" the solar arc when someone asked him how he evaluates solar aspect in the field. He realized that he had unconsciously learned to represent the path of the sun through the sky with arm movements. Once learned, the arm movements became a sort of dance. Body memory ensures that the movements of the dance are retained, in much the same way that adults can remember the steps to a dance learned when they were small.

Dancing the solar arc allows assessment of any point in the field without need for tables, mapping materials, or anything other than one's own body (given normal range of movement.) This method is particularly useful for evaluating solar aspect in relation to garden elements, and can save a great deal of time and energy. Dancing the solar arc is cheap, infinitely portable, and empowering. Give it a try!

—Vicki Marvick



Movements corresponding to the solar arc at winter equinox and summer solstice. Adapt the movements to the arc at your latitude.

Illustrations: Silvia Rayces
