

Imitating Nature's Cycles

By Joni Keating

Imitating nature is a central theme of permacultural philosophy. In order to imitate her, of course, we must observe how she functions. One of the most concrete, easily observed, and readily imitated processes in nature is the continual recycling of all raw materials, both organic and inorganic.

Because we are failing to imitate this process as a society, we are wasting vast amounts of resources annually, many of them finite, and we have created a monstrous garbage disposal problem. Clearly, imitating nature is the solution to these problems.

Proven techniques for implementing this on the large scale are available for political institutions to consider. On the grassroots local level we can each commit ourselves to recycling everything we can from our individual households. Here is a simple way to make a wonderfully concrete and visible contribution to environmental health; indeed, a way in which every last one of us can practice permaculture—whether we live on 40 acres, or share a second floor apartment in the heart of a city.

Recycling

By Sally Ehrman

Consider how much cardboard circulates through your household. Yet, typically, most of it is simply thrown in the garbage. Those cream cheese boxes, cereal boxes, toy boxes, gift and toothpaste boxes are all recyclable. Any cardboard box can be broken down and stored to be taken to your local recycler.

Junk mail is another item that wastes resources and contributes to our trash disposal problems. Some of it, however, can be used. Use return address envelopes by taping paper over the printed address. It is also possible to have your name taken off the junk mail list altogether at your post office.

I keep a bag in the corner near my desk for all my scrap paper. Depending on the specifications of your local recycling center, you might want separate bags for different kinds of paper. Newspaper, for example, is a different texture than scrap and is usually separated. Brown bags can mix with cardboard. The best thing to do is find out from your local recycling center how they want things separated.

Tin and other metals are usually bought by a scrap yard. Scrap yards also take aluminum cans, but may not pay as much per pound as a recycling center would pay. Save those tuna cans, cat food cans, and tomato sauce cans. Clean them out and wait until you have a load. Might as well get a little money back. Think of recycling as rebates.

Glass jars can be used around home in place of plastic for storage or leftovers. Also, let people who may need glass know what you have. Some craft people, for example, would love to use it. Sort what is not re-used according to color, separating out clear glass and glass of various colors. Some recycling centers put green and brown glass together. Check locally.

Anything that can be composted, of course, should be put back into the land to maintain or restore fertility. Lastly, certain plastics are also recyclable now, although this has not caught on in most areas. Be a conscious consumer, and recycle anything you can. Start today by calling your closest recycling center to see what they will buy back from you.

