

ELMORE ROOTS' PERMACULTURE KNOW-HOW

A Simple Life

David Fried

Here in the north country, we have a good chance to live a simple life. We have a lot of examples of this. The frogs sit on a floating leaf for much of the day. The turtle finds a place in the sun on a rock and seems to be sitting there since the rock was formed beneath him. Flowers grow up into the light and we gather a few for a vase or a bowl. When we walk by, they look proud to be part of our simple life now.

I just planted spinach seeds a few days ago and they have sprouted. Their small curled leaves will be our fall salad and sandwich greens. When my youngest daughter was small, she would make a stack of spinach leaves and bite down on them to feel the crunch. She really liked that a lot. Every time I turn to the garden to weed a little, plant a little, and harvest a little I feel the simplicity of a garden and how it grows on me.

The apples are ripening and dropping. I went over to a tree to collect a few, and there was a deer eating them before I got there. I said "good morning" to the deer, and she looked up at me and then kept eating apples. When there were no more, she looked up to the tree, and the tree dropped a few more for her to eat. There is so much going on around us. We should only have

the eyes to see it.

Our pine nut trees have cones way up in the tree tops now. Their individual seeds are fatter than the white pines, so we can easily crack them and get the high protein tasty nuts. But how do we get them down from high up in the trees? The squirrel will soon be knocking them down, so he can get the pine nuts. We must be vigilant to notice when the first cones come down so we can gather some, too. Otherwise, we will see the squirrel sitting happily and proudly cracking and eating one pine nut after another.

A few years ago, I learned this method of getting the best hazelnuts and pine nuts: I put an old rubber boot inside a shed near the pine nut tree and the hazelnut bushes in late summer. The squirrel was searching for the best spot to store his prize nuts for winter. All options were checked out, but then he went inside the boot and I imagine him thinking, "Ah, perfect, rain won't get in, it is dark, I can turn around inside, and it will fit a lot of these small nuts."

A month later, I found a great stash of nuts in the boot and took most of them for planting to make new trees for our nursery.



Painting by Joyce Dutka

They already had their husks off and were down on the ground level and all cleaned and ready for planting. Because I am grateful to the squirrel for helping me as a horticulturist, I brought him a bag of nuts in the shell from the store in town. I had what I wanted and he had a good supply

of larger and very good tasting nuts from further away than he would ever travel.

We have been gathering apples all week to press into cider. We also press pears and black currants and northern kiwi berries into our cider. We take the apples and grind them and then add a layer of the other fruit and press it by turning a little metal handle until the fresh pure juice comes streaming out. We freeze it within minutes so this autumn day will be tasted in each bottle.

On our table at home is a vase of flowers from the garden and the field. Next to it is a fancy bottle filled with our pressed fruit cider. We can feel the essence of the summer, of the autumn, of the simple life all around us. One sip at a time.

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fruit trees, berry bushes, and native plants!

Is There Plastic in My Produce?

Jessie Haas

Many of us go to great trouble to purchase local produce, or to grow our own, this writer included. So really? One more thing to worry about?

Sadly, yes, and this is a big one. Plastic production is a growing contributor to global warming, set to surpass coal by 2030, according to Beyond Plastics, the Bennington-based organization founded by former EPA administrator Dr. Judith Enck. Plastic is a growth sector for fossil fuel companies, at a time of great pressure on their other products.

Agriculture has become a large-scale consumer of plastic. Plastic is cheap, light-weight, and versatile. You have probably seen plastic film mulches (PFMs) in farm fields, stretched neat and taut in rows with tomato and squash plants poking up through. PFMs can reduce the spread of soil-borne fungal diseases and keep down weeds without the use of expensive labor or herbicides. They have made truck farming easier and more profitable. Plastic has been a huge help, and has been sold to us as a clean, inert substance, like glass only lighter and less breakable. But it's a petroleum and chemical product. The huge train fire in East Palestine, Ohio, this year burned and exploded chemicals on their way to be processed into plastic.

And yet. We're familiar with the term 'microplastics', the extremely tiny particles of degraded plastic that are becoming all-pervasive on our planet. Macro-plastics, like PFMs, degrade in sunlight and rain, and shed microplastics into the soil. PFMs are used for one season, and become dirty, tattered, and impossible to recycle. The same is true of the bags wrapping round hay bales, which creates a conundrum for farmers. In an increasingly volatile climate with excess rainfall now common, those bale wrappers make it possible to harvest and store forage to feed to livestock in winter, essential in the Northeast. They are also a huge environmental problem.

To a lesser extent the same is true of the ubiquitous plastic-covered hoop houses which cover vast areas in farm country, including in the northeast and probably, on net, reduce the carbon footprint of the produce we consume. Hoop houses are covered with greenhouse-grade plastic that, thanks to added UV stabilizers, lasts a fairly long time in sunlight, with most people getting about six years out of a hoop house cover. But ultimately, they degrade over time, must be replaced, and are not recyclable.

The plastic we can see on the farm—which also includes feed and fertilizer bags—is not the only source. Biosolid fertilizer often contains microplastics from

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CULTIVATING LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE FOR THE SUSTENANCE OF HUMAN CIVILIZATION



Larry Plesent

Human civilization, despite its remarkable achievements,

faces a crucial question: Can we sustain our existence for the next thousand years and beyond? To secure our future, we must undergo a profound shift in perspective—one that transcends the present and embraces the long-term wellbeing of humanity and our planet. Let's together contemplate the changes in perspective required for the enduring survival of human civilization.

From Short-Term Gains to Sustainable Prosperity

One of the fundamental shifts in perspective involves moving away from a short-term, profit-driven mindset to one focused on sustainable prosperity. In our current model, immediate gains often take precedence over long-term environmental and social health. To endure for millennia, we must prioritize practices that preserve the Earth's resources and promote equitable, long-term well-being for humans and for the ecosystem that sustains us.

From Nationalism to Global Cooperation

A shift from nationalism to global cooperation is essential for the continuity of human civilization. Our economically and culturally interconnected world demands that we view ourselves not solely as citizens of individual nations but as members of a global community. This perspective allows us to address shared challenges such as climate change, pandemics, and resource management.

From Consumerism to Sustainable Living

Consumerism, with its emphasis on relentless consumption and materialism, is incompatible with the goal of a long-lasting



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civilization. Shifting our perspective from material accumulation to sustainable living involves embracing minimalism, resource conservation, and conscious consumption. It's about recognizing that true wealth lies not in possessions but in our active participation in the health and harmony of our planet and communities. It's time to recognize that the hippies got it right.

From Short-Term Politics to Long-Term Vision

Political cycles often prioritize short-term gains, leaving long-term issues unresolved. A shift away from corporate based politics and toward political systems that encourage visionary thinking and collaborative problem-solving can pave the way for the continuity of civilization. Policies should consider their impact on future generations by investing in education, healthcare, and infrastructure with the foresight of centuries, not just electoral cycles.

From Exclusivity to Inclusivity

To sustain human civilization, we must shift from exclusive to inclusive perspectives. This means ensuring that the benefits of progress are accessible to all, regardless of gender, race, or socioeconomic status. Inclusivity fosters social stability and empowers diverse voices and talents, essential for addressing complex, long-term challenges. We must honor and embrace our diverse cultural heritages and differences rather than demeaning, diminishing, and white-washing them.

From Resource Exploitation to Conservation

Our current approach to resource exploitation is clearly unsustainable. A shift toward worldwide resource

conservation and ecological regeneration is imperative. This perspective involves responsible management of natural resources combined with reforestation, sustainable agriculture, and circular economies. It's about recognizing that the Earth's resources are finite, and their preservation is key to our survival and the survival of the innumerable species who share our little blue ball in space.

From Isolation to Interconnectedness

An enduring civilization requires a shift from isolation to interconnectedness. Acknowledging our interdependence and cultivating a sense of global citizenship can inspire collective action and shared responsibility for the long-term welfare of life on this planet.

The changes required are profound, but they are not beyond our reach. Together, we can transition from a civilization driven by short-term thinking to one that cherishes the legacy we leave for future generations. It's a journey that beckons us to think beyond the confines of our time, and to envision and manifest a more compassionate human civilization capable of thriving for millennia to come.

Larry Plesent is the founder of Vermont Soap and is a writer and natural products formulator residing in the green hills of Vermont. Read more from Larry's work at www.reactivebody.org. ♻️