

# Permaculture in Practice

## *Gradual greening*

When news of America's pharmaceuticals-laced drinking water broke into the mainstream media's echo chamber (via an Associated Press four-part series on the subject last month), my immediate thought was, "Maybe I'm wrong for believing in a slow and steady approach to sustainability and water harvesting. Perhaps, with this news, people will now want to move toward using cisterns for drinking water more quickly than expected." Not surprisingly, though, since our society's reaction has been anodyne at best, I have come full-circle to realize that, at least for now, the approach to sustainability that I call "gradual greening" still makes good sense.

Briefly, gradual greening suggests that if you, with every passing year, add 10 minutes of your daily free time to your commitment to water harvesting (or any eco-activity), in 30 years you will be spending nearly four-and-a-half hours per day being ecologically conscious (which happens to equal the daily amount of television that the average American watches in a 24-hour period). So, if we were to add all of the green jobs that will, of necessity, be created during the current "fight global warming" zeitgeist, and then we were to tack on the prospect of a culture that has become gradually green, it's hard not to imagine an ever-deepening harmony between human nature and nature herself.

Gradual greening's challenge, of course, is to incentivize approximately one billion 10-minute donations over a 30-year period, which brings us back to stories about our increasingly medicated drinking water. Even though the AP story may not by itself inflame a vast social movement toward water harvesting, it will certainly help. Harvesting precipitation is good for the environment and respectful of future generations, and carefully harvested precipitation is also one of the healthiest beverages you can drink — with or without a prescription.



Of course many questions regarding the effects of slightly doped water have yet to be asked, much less answered. The good news locally is that at least one middle school will surely be studying such effects in the near future.

"Every third year at Camino de Paz our science theme is based on either water, energy or living things," says Camino de Paz School director Patricia Pantano. "In our 'water years' we investigate conservation, water tables, testing, watersheds, water rights, the geological history of water, the history of our use of water, water harvesting, water treatment, water colors. It's endless," she smiles as her eyes widen. "Now, with the whole prescriptions issue coming to light, I'm sure we'll have plenty to talk about along the entire spectrum between science and ethics."

Pantano, her husband, Greg Nussbaum, and a student or two from the farm-based school can be found most Saturdays at the Santa Fe Farmers' Market. You are also welcome to visit during any of Camino de Paz's regularly scheduled public events. The next one is their annual Food for Thought Brunch, a \$50-per-plate Earth Day fundraiser, on Saturday, April 19. Call me if you'd like a reservation.

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