

## PermacultureinPractice

### Wintertime gardening activities?

It's 6 in the morning. Big, spaced-out snowflakes float to the ground as I squint through a window and boot-up my computer. Tossing another log into the woodstove, I realize that now would be a wonderful time to garden. Especially in winter, "gardening" can include research into whatever you'll be doing to your landscape come spring, summer, or fall.

Having lost so many of our agrarian roots in the last 60 years, many gardeners would now be lost without a relatively new form of research, something I like to call "laptop gardening." Back when human communities were relatively self-sustaining, you could learn all you needed to know about landscape design, compost, plants, harvesting, and food preservation from folks around you. In the last century, many gardeners switched to seed catalogues, magazine clippings, and gardening books. Today, we're increasingly likely to Google for answers to our gardening how-to questions.

Fortunately, Google is not the only alternative to gaining access both to the knowledge of yore and to the latest information for tomorrow's ecological garden. There still are multiple opportunities to connect with folks from your local area who are willing to share their life's work. Here in Santa Fe, we are blessed with a plethora of well-organized workshops, panel discussions, lecture presentations, and seminars where you can expect to absorb a little bit more green into your thumbs. Master Gardeners, the Native Plants Society of New Mexico, the Santa Fe Botanical Garden, various watershed and wildlife groups, a number of concerned homeowner associations, and a significant slew of educational institutions make it hard to go much more than a month without a chance to learn something from a real, live garden guru.

For years, Santa Fe Greenhouses has provided our community with great talks



**NATE DOWNEY**

during their winter seminar series. David and Ava Salman are back at it again this year at their high-country-famous plant nursery at 2094 Rufina Street. Every Saturday in January and February this year at the nursery, you'll be able to catch eight experts expounding on topics ranging from water-wise landscapes and cisterns to fruit trees, annual vegetables, and culinary herbs.

My Feb. 4 presentation, like all of the workshops in the 2012 series, will be held on a Saturday at 2 p.m. My focus will be on practical solutions to our water woes, such as how to store runoff in the soil, and about pumice wicks and cisterns. We'll also touch on greywater and blackwater recycling. There will be ample time for questions and a chance to check out my book, *Harvest the Rain*. Other authors in the series are Colorado-based Tammi Hartung who wrote *Homegrown Herbs* and Howard Garrett who, by the sound of his book's title — *Texas Organic Gardening* — will be moseying over from the Lone Star State. Don't miss talks by regional-plant experts David Salman, Katherine O'Brien, Jeff Clark, and Greg Tickle.

In a way, you need community to grow a garden. Sometimes all it takes is knowing where to end your the frenetic search for information.

*Nate Downey is president of Santa Fe Permaculture (505-424-4444) and the author of Harvest the Rain: How to Enrich Your Life by Seeing Every Storm as a Resource (Sunstone Press, 2011).*



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