

# HOME

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Remaining

# Following Michelle's example

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Posted: Sunday, December 4, 2016 5:00 am

Nate Downey/For The New Mexican

At first I thought it was overkill, but First Lady Michelle Obama was smart to fortify her organic garden with concrete, steel, and stone. In the unlikely event that a future president should demolish her powerful statement about healthy food and a cleaner environment, the removal would be interpreted as an unadulterated ingratiation to the likes of science-deniers and the fast-food industry.

### Home Magazine / Real Estate Guide



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Uh-oh.

What's a citizenry supposed to do when Sarah Palin tops an Interior Secretary short list? First, get politically active. Show up. Push for sustainable policies. Although permaculture mostly works in the tactile world, its principles can be successfully applied to "invisible structures"— the social, economic, and political systems that affect our lives and land. So, wherever you are, please be the pistil of wisdom or the stamen of action that our species needs now.

Second, support local farmers. Eat their food. Allow your dollars to recirculate within your regional economy. For the holidays, give gift certificates from farmers' markets. Check for point-of-origin labels, and reduce the carbon footprint associated with a far-flung diet.


Third, follow Michelle's example. Design and install an edible garden. You know you want to get down and dirty. With difficult years ahead, now is the time to up your gardening game. If a super-busy first lady can do it, you can, too.

Not everyone can get the University of Virginia to provide landscape architecture, and the National Park Service is unlikely to handle your garden's installation. Don't feel ashamed if you need help. Before she got started less than seven years ago, Michelle was like many people: unfamiliar with gardening.

I can relate. Growing up in New York City, my experience with vegetable gardening featured the proverbial avocado pit stuck with toothpicks and partially submerged in a glass of water. I saw a pointy green thing at the end of a pallid stem once or twice, but that was it. A decade later I discovered permaculture, and my perspective shifted as I gained purpose, direction, and insight into the power of natural forces and phenomena.

Gardening is embedded in our genetic code. Our bodies, minds, and souls not only remember our agricultural roots, but people also seem to have physical,



United States Drivers Born Between 1936 and 1966 are in for a big surprise 

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emotional, and spiritual yearnings for planting, picking, prepping, serving, and eating — straight from the land — without the help of plastic, foil, cardboard, and Styrofoam.

But successful gardening starts with a thoughtful design, so, in honor of the Obamas, we'd like to help. Just contact us before noon (Eastern) on Friday, Jan. 20, 2017, and use the promo code, "I'm just following Michelle's example," and you will receive 33 percent off the cost of a typical one-hour landscape consultation. Don't worry. We won't let you spend unnecessarily on concrete, steel, and stone. The soil you build, the plants you establish, and the trees you leave behind will likely be much appreciated by whomever takes over your real estate when you're gone.

Ready? Your land is waiting. Future generations are begging, and Michelle's legacy wants you.

*Nate Downey started Santa Fe Permaculture in 1992, authored Roof-Reliant Landscaping (2008) and Harvest the Rain (2010), and is the president of PermaDesign, Inc. He can be reached via [www.permadesign.com](http://www.permadesign.com) or 505-690-7939.*

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