

Seminars

The Natural Mediterranean Garden

Week-end residential seminar
offering new insights to the
Mediterranean Garden

Dryland Permaculture Design

Residential seminar for designers
and land owners

Holistic Management

Residential seminar in sustainable
decision-making and management

Sustainable Stewardship

Residential seminar in a whole ap-
proach to creating a sustainable life,
landscape or livelihood

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Nutshell Series

1. The Savory Brittleness Scale
2. Carbon Sequestration
3. Ecosystem Processes
4. Grazing Animals
5. Run-off
6. Water Cycle
7. Root Cause
8. Plant Succession
9. Irrigation
10. What is Holistic Management®?

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Semilla Besada
Nutshell Series

Grazing Animals
and their importance to
dryland design and
management



Grazing Animals and their importance to dryland design and management

Grazing animals evolved in brittle landscapes and together with their predators, were responsible for the maintenance of healthy grasslands.

These grasslands supported millions of grazing animals in the African and American continent. Springs, rivers and waterholes were abundant. That is, until humans intervened.

Humans began to kill the animals that preyed on the grazing animals. This unbalanced the natural order in healthy grasslands. Then they began to kill the grazing animals that had evolved in these landscapes, creating further imbalance.

Finally, other grazing animals were introduced and unsustainably managed. The result has been the demise of the grassland ecosystems, the loss of springs, rivers and waterholes, salination of the soil and the collapse of the social and economic infrastructure.

We simply did not understand that nature creates complex communities of diverse creatures and plants, all of which have their part to play.

Grazing animals behave in a particular way in the presence of predators. They move nervously, bunch up tight, eat all plants uniformly and quickly move on. The impact on the land can look devastating, but in effect the soil surface has been broken up, the grass seed embedded, dead vegetation has been eaten and returned to the soil as fertility to nurture next year's growth. The result is abundant growth the following year.

These animals were designed to keep a brittle landscape healthy by providing the means whereby dead vegetation could be recycled to feed the soil and nurture seeds. When the predators were killed, grazing animals no longer behaved the same. They moved slowly through the grassland, leaving dead vegetation and only eating the youngest grass. The result was the beginning of the end for that ecosystem.

This understanding was brought to bear on the management of grazing animals by a conservation biologist and farmer, Allan Savory. He began to simulate the impact that predators had had on grazing animals using cattle. He increased the numbers, contained them densely in designated areas and moved them quickly. The result was the regeneration of grassland, improved animal condition and a sustainable economy.



Allan Savory realised that environmental degradation was not caused by the numbers of animals, but how they were managed. Overgrazing was a result of keeping animals in an area too long, rather than the numbers of the animals themselves.

Seventy per cent of the world's landmass is brittle and has evolved with grazing animals, but those animals have not been managed sustainably. In fact, most people believe that grazing animals damage the environment, but it's how they are managed that creates degraded landscapes.

Holistically managed grazing animals are being used in three continents to restore native perennial grasses, maximise on the health of the animals and create a sustainable livelihood.

For the first time in Europe, residential educational programmes at Semilla Besada consider new insights for sustainable design and management of dryland environments.

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