

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 approach to creating a sustainable life, landscape or livelihood

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www.holisticdecisions.com

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®?

*Semilla Besada
Nutshell Series*

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*Semilla Besada
Nutshell Series*

*Root Cause
and its implication for
the design and
management of dryland
environments*



Root Cause and its implication for the design and management of dryland environments

The value of looking for the root cause when addressing environmental 'problems' is that it provides a lasting solution. For example, we may find that we have a spread of Dallis Grass. If we simply look at ways in which we can eradicate it, and miss the root cause, Dallis Grass will continue to be an ongoing problem.

However, if we look at why Dallis Grass has proliferated, we will be able to tackle the problem from the perspective of the root cause, and ensure that we create a lasting solution. For example, we might find that there is a constant water supply which encourages the spread of this species. By diverting the water and not irrigating that area, we create a lasting solution.

Brittle landscapes are particularly vulnerable to the inappropriate use of northern temperate land management practices. The result is damage to the healthy function of the ecosystem processes. For example, the inappropriate use of rest has a vastly different impact on the environment. Unfortunately, conventional approaches tend to address symptoms rather than causes.

For example, the symptom of water shortages is treated through the building of dams. However, as the root cause of the problem has not been addressed, there will be no lasting solution and the problem will worsen. When we focus on the restoration of the healthy function of the ecosystem processes and when we sustainably manage natural resources, then we address the root cause of water shortages.

In Uganda, once known as the Eden of Africa, Lake Victoria has become choked with water hyacinth. Villagers are unable to fish, resulting in the loss of their staple diet. The symptomatic response offered by an American company was to use a herbicide to kill the water hyacinth.

The root cause of the growth of water hyacinth was the unsustainable land management around the lake. This had resulted in increasing bare soil and water run-off during the rains. The fertile top soil was being carried into the lake, together with the higher nutrient levels produced by the chemical fertilisers it contained. This created the conditions that favoured the proliferation of water hyacinth. By sustainably managing the surrounding land and ensuring year-round ground cover this problem would have been solved.



In addition instead of poisoning the water hyacinth, it could have been harvested and composted to provide humus to improve the denuded land around the lake. The sustainable management of the land would generate stable, humus rich soil, capable of retaining rainfall and producing year-round plant cover. The lake would no longer be so nutrient rich, which would result in non-proliferation of the water hyacinth. The villagers would again be able to feed themselves from the fish in the lake.

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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