



Bringing a Story to Life

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Tuesday, February 2, 2010

For me, the best thing about being a writer is the opportunity to explore diverse subjects and to get to know people. On occasion, the subject and the source changes my perspective or even ignites new goals for my future. That happened with my recent Hobby Farms article (January/February 2010) while exploring the art and science of permaculture.

In this and the following blogs this month, I would like to share some thoughts on the subject and resources I have found helpful.

Permaculture is...what you make of it. For some, it is looking at how one lives through a cultural lens that encompasses the big picture, how one's actions affect other people and the world around us.

For others, it is cultivating the best possible use of vertical and horizontal space in garden and yard, field and forest to maximize productivity and enjoyment with limited external inputs. For many like myself, it encompasses some degree of both.

Perhaps that was why I had an instant appreciation for Mark Shepard, one of the sources in my story.

For the past 16 years, he has made permaculture concepts central to how he farms and how he lives. From his multi-crop fields that combine orchards, nuts, herbs, flowers and vegetables to his production and use of biofuels and other alternatives to his activities in local soil and water conservation efforts and those practices on his farm, he truly walks the walk.

His down-to-earth dedication to the subject is one reason I turned to Mark for advice on further exploration of permaculture through books, classes and life.

Next week, I will share some of my thoughts and his on both.

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