

Permaculture Design Certification Course

Information Booklet



“Whether we continue, without an ethic or a philosophy, like abandoned and orphaned children, or whether we create opportunities to achieve maturity, balance, and harmony is the only real question that faces the present generation.”

--Bill Mollison, Permaculture Designers Manual



A Permaculture Design Certification (PDC) course is an internationally recognized curriculum first developed and taught by Bill Mollison in the early 1980s in order to disseminate the permaculture design system. Over the years the format of the course, its curriculum, and learning outcomes have changed depending on the instructors, as knowledge is introduced, and as new global and local patterns emerge. We have put together this document for potential students in order to clarify what the PDC at Rancho Mastatal entails. Not every PDC or instructor is a good fit for every student. We want to make sure you are investing your energy, time, and financial capital in a course that you are going to get the most out of.

What is a PDC? And What is it Not?

A PDC is a survey course that introduces students to the core curriculum as originally laid out in *Permaculture: A Designer's Manual* (1988). It features a minimum of 72 hours of instructor face-time. It is an introductory course which focuses on the theory of permaculture as a tangible and evidence-based applied design science. It is largely an academic course laid out to inspire, inform, and focus students on the needs of the land and human society.



Permaculture is something you use, not something you do. It is not a course on gardening, but rather on how to design a garden. While often hard/tangible skills are incorporated into the course, the learning outcomes evolve around understanding and applying the ethics, principals, and methodologies of design. In this regard students should not expect to gain 14 years of knowledge in 14 days; please remember that a PDC is a great place to start, but a poor place to stop learning. You will not finish this course as an expert or professional designer: rather, you will leave with an understanding of the broad patterns needed to regenerate our world, and the inspiration and knowledge about what steps to take next.



Porvenir Design

This PDC is organized and lead by one or more members of the [Porvenir Design](#) team. Porvenir Design is a landscape design firm based in Costa Rica that specializes in helping clients develop productive landscapes. They work with homesteads, organic farms, eco-villages, and communities to develop soil, water, plant and animal systems that align with permaculture principles.



The PDC at Rancho Mastatal

Without a doubt there are countless PDC's offered around the globe, with great teachers and sites to learn from. We believe our course fits right alongside the best of them for many reasons:



The Instructors

Our diverse teaching team brings ample enthusiasm, knowledge, and experience to the classroom. Having multiple instructors is a huge advantage for students. It means a diversity of opinions and teaching styles. We assure that our team has a strong gender balance and strive to have multiple Costa Rican instructors. Our teaching guild has been working together in various capacities for many years, and each individual brings a unique set of strengths to the course. These strengths encompass tropical and temperate agroforestry, homestead scale design, professional design work in Latin America, natural building, fermentation and food processing, project management, community building, and more!

There will be one lead instructor with students for the entire duration of the course, while the other instructors will be on site for a week each or teach specific sections throughout the two weeks. The lead instructor at Rancho Mastatal is Scott Gallant.



Translation

Our course is taught in English and translated simultaneously into Spanish by Jorge Salazar of La Iguana Chocolate . We require a minimum of two students to offer this service. *Este curso será traducido simultáneamente al español. Se requiere un mínimo de dos hispano hablantes para ofrecer servicios de traducción.* For many years we have been the only course in Costa Rica that offers Spanish translation, and we find it incredibly important to make this knowledge as accessible as possible.

The Design

Design is at the heart of permaculture and consequently we strive to put students in as many design scenarios as possible. In addition to smaller design charettes, students will spend extensive time on a large group design projects. Groups of four to six students are given a piece of land in Mastatal and a fictitious client; they are expected to create a base map of the property, complete a site analysis and assessment, interview the client, and create a design that is presented as a capstone project at the end of the two weeks. Approximately a quarter of the course will be devoted to this project.

Who should take this PDC?

You are a good fit for this course if:

- You want to learn from instructors who work as professional designers and live on the sites they have designed on a daily basis.
- You want to experience an established permaculture farm and education center, largely designed as a didactic site and living laboratory for experiential learning.
- You are interested in a residential course. This means you will be living, learning, eating, and working with your instructors, fellow students, and the Ranch community members every moment. It is an intense and fulfilling experience, that builds quick bonds and lends itself toward networking and community creation.
- You are able to sit in a classroom for approximately 4 hours/day. As a theory/survey course there is a significant amount of lecture and discussion daily.
- You are excited to learn a large amount of information over a two week period.



You may want to look for another course if:

- You have other affairs that may routinely distract you from the course. Consider a weekend course.
- You are looking for a retreat, vacation, or spiritual experience.
- You are not prepared to live in a tropical climate for two weeks.
- You are not prepared to disconnect from internet/phone to some degree. Both are available in our rural community, but often present connection challenges.



sessions throughout the course. In the past these have included topics such as: soap making, grafting, nursery work, earthwork construction, tree planting, fermentation, compost building, medicinal plant processing, and much more. The specifics of these workshops vary year to year.

The course schedule, [found here](#), details an itinerary from a previous years course.

What should I bring?

For general information on what to bring please see the Rancho Mastatal [website here](#). Students should come prepared with:

- notebooks and writing utensils.
- clothes they don't mind getting dirty.
- rain gear.
- closed toed shoes that can get dirty (old tennis shoes, rubber boots, etc).

In addition to this you may consider bringing:

- a camera.
- any special drafting or art supplies (we also provide these, but students have appreciated having their own in the past).
- a directional compass.
- any of your favorite tools such as: machete, pruning shears, grafting knife, etc.



What are accommodations and food like?

For more information on accommodations and food please see the Rancho Mastatal [website here](#).

How do I arrive at the Ranch?

For directions and bus schedule please see the Rancho Mastatal [website here](#).

What is included in the cost of the course?

Your course fee provides you with the following:

- A comfortable bed and bedding in our bunk house, which has full access to electricity, water, showers, composting toilets, and a clothes drying structure.
- Three meals a day, with the exception of Sundays when we only provide brunch and most students choose to eat dinner at the local soda (approximately 6USD for a meal). The food at the Ranch is locally sourced, made from scratch, and organic whenever possible. The ingredients often mirror the conversations we have during the course. You will be full and happy after every meal.
- Complete access to the Ranch's incredible library. We invest heavily in books and have every major text in the fields of permaculture design, agroforestry, natural building, homesteading, etc.

- Complete access to the Ranch's private wildlife reserve, including 14 km of trails, dotted with numerous swimming holes and waterfalls.
- If you are paying the full student rate, then a portion of your course fee goes to subsidize the course fee for Central American students. This is one of the most effective ways for us to practice people care while recognizing the different earning potential of different world regions.



Costs

Our PDC has the following costs, broken down by earning potential:

- Central Americans US\$850
- Residents and ex-pats US\$1350
- Foreigners (non-Central American) US\$1,500

We are open to discounts for professional photographers and videographers, but generally are not able to offer reduced rates. We do not offer work exchanges, as our apprenticeship program covers these needs.

Please inquire about scholarships for students from Central America. Our scholarship application can be found [here](#).

Students who cannot afford the course costs should consider working with [We The Trees](#), a permaculture crowd funding site.

Enrollment

For more information and/or to enroll in this course please contact Tim O'Hara at info@ranchomastatal.com, call the Ranch at 2200-0920 or sign up [Online Here](#).

