

Brick and Tile Permaculture

How a conventional house and garden were constructed with a permaculture slant.

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The energy efficient, solar designed display home now stands in a residential suburb of Port Macquarie, in northern NSW. The orientation of the house (on a north-sloping site) has main day use living areas to the north to receive maximum sun. Australian permaculture designer Geoff Lawton explains the design of the Port Macquarie garden:

Outside the House

Designing suburban permaculture gardens is often limited by the intrinsic factors of the site and this garden was no exception. The main elements we were asked to include were a vegetable patch, chickens, shade house, ponds, compost system, worm farm and a small lawn. The vine trellis and shade house were attached to the main building and the small poultry run was placed in the north east corner of the block. There was very little room for backup functions or elements.

Why a shade house on the western side of the house? It was so clearly a position that was shaded for most of the day by a large two-storey dark brick house built a minimum distance from the adjoining fence line. The vine trellis fitted well on the eastern side of the house with good morning light, and we could do very little else with this narrow alley. Dwarf clumping bamboo was strategically placed on the south end of the walk-through shade house and vine trellis as a plug to the wind.

The small deep-litter poultry pen and roost house were placed in the higher of the two north corners running down hill to the compost and worm farm area. Not far away is a dwarf Cavendish banana circle to take surplus prunings and shreddings. The roof water from the poultry shed was guttered and piped into the banana circle, which itself has an overflow into a micro swale.

Along the Garden Path

We positioned the mandala-shaped vegetable garden in the northeast sheltered corner and included a central tyre pond. On the shady south side of the house we put in a feature pond in view of a sitting area. The herb spiral and lemon tree are close to the kitchen for convenience.

A small lawn (20 square metres) is separated from a brick wall supporting the decks by a raised sleeper planting bed which takes advantage of the heat sink factor, changed soil conditions, and plenty of sunlight. Pawpaws and tamarillos enjoy this area.

We chose plants for the front garden that were wind-hardy and shade tolerant. The sides and rear of the block were fenced with capped wooden palings. Wire strung between the posts supports food vines such as chokos.

About 350 plants of some 111 species were planted over approximately 350 square metres. Three tons of newspaper and shredded prunings (200 millimetres thick) were used and hammer-milled pine bark placed on the paths as mulch. The whole garden took three of us five days to install. To make all our efforts more than, worthwhile, this home won a Certifi-

cate of Merit in the Master Builders Awards and HIA Outright Winner in the Energy Efficiency category. The garden was commended for its contribution to energy saving.

Geoff Lawton is Founding Director of the Permaculture Research Institute in NSW. More information can be found at <http://permaculture.org.au>

581 WORDS

