

#1

Sending name: Rob Avis @ Verge

Sending Email: community@

SUBJECT: WARNING: THIS EMAIL MAY SHAKE UP YOUR VIEW OF HUMANITY!

Preview Text: Congratulations! If you're feeling cynical about the impact of humans on the planet, you're about to discover an empowering new view of nature and your place in it!

Hi there!

Rob Avis here. Just wanted to thank you for downloading the Permaculture Foundations ebook! You've just taken the first step on a journey that has empowered thousands of our students with a completely new view of nature and their role in it. A view that replaces helpless doom and gloom with informed action...but I'm getting ahead of myself...

First, I'd like to tell you about Katie, an acquaintance who attended one of our yard tours a few years back and hung around afterwards to chat.

She admitted to me that in her twenties she had been an environmental activist. She attended protests about pipelines, was deeply concerned about peak oil, became vegetarian and helped organize environmental conferences.

Now, 10 years later, she has a mortgage and a respectable downtown job. Despite her financial success, she often questions if she's now just contributing to the consumerism and other problems she sees all around her - the same ones she used to fight against. She couldn't keep up her diet, doesn't even hardly know her neighbours and is very concerned about the world her children are going to inherit. A recent argument with her father-in-law about the validity of climate change and a recent trip to the city landfill because of a renovation project nearly had her in tears.

She came up to me, feeling hopeless and distressed, and she said, "With everything I'm seeing, I can't help feeling like human beings are a disease, a cancer of this planet, and a plague..."

It wasn't the first time I've heard this - it's a sentiment I see in the media, in movies, all around. It's the foundation of pervasive limiting beliefs and confirmation biases, one of which is "at best humans can be less bad, but we will always be destructive."

How can anyone respond to this? I keep coming back to a quote from permaculture pioneer Bill Mollison: "*Everything gardens.*"

But what does that mean? As I told Katie: *If you think of "gardening" as manipulating your environment to help yourself and your species, humans aren't the only species to do this. Wolves restore ecosystems by culling herd animals, beavers create dams and create wetlands, sea otters protect kelp forests by hunting sea urchins, the list goes on and on. Countless other species transform their surroundings **in a beneficial way** to create livable habitat.*

If they can do it, there's no reason why we can't do the same! In fact, to believe otherwise implies that we might not be of this planet.

So the real question is - how do we meet human needs while enhancing the ecosystem around us? And permaculture gives us the tools.

In a throwaway culture filled with isolation and competition, permaculture represents a path to connection, communication, respect, and cooperation – with our families, our neighbours, our communities, plants and animals, and the planet. It's downright subversive... *and* it's a shift in perspective that empowers our students with hope for the future!

The problem is not that humans are a plague on this planet. In fact, I whole-heartedly disagree with this statement because it implies that it is in our nature to destroy the planet & there's nothing we can do to change that.

The reality is that there are **three major barriers** that need to be solved for most people in order for them to be able to create a sustainable future and meaningful life:

1. Lack of hope.
2. Lack of knowledge.
3. Lack of a plan.

Our goal at Verge is to dissolve these barriers and that's why, over the next three days, I'm going to: tell you why I'm hopeful (and why you can be too!); share some knowledge (hint - for a sneak peak, check out the Permaculture Foundations e-book and lastly I'll give you some design tips (so that you can get started right away). If you share Katie's perspective and feel disillusioned about the state of the world... **know that you are not alone!**

Don't accept that humans are a plague. Take my advice and empower yourself with tools, knowledge & support to positively transform your land, your life and perhaps even your livelihood.

Cheers,
Rob Avis

p.s. Make sure you check your email tomorrow. I'll share some fantastic research that proves that the small-scale decentralized actions and solutions (stuff you can do in your own home & backyard) has huge impacts at the aggregate level.

p.p.s. Already ready to claim your role in the ecosystem? Find our next PDC dates [HERE](#).

#2

Sending name: Rob Avis @ Verge

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SUBJECT: HOPE FOR THE PLANET STARTS IN YOUR BACKYARD

Preview Text: If you're looking at the environmental news and wondering how you can possibly do anything to make a difference, we have an answer for you!

Hi there!

In my email the other day I promised that we'd look at the three major barriers to creating a sustainable future and a meaningful life, and see how you can dissolve them.

Today, I'm focusing on **Barrier #1: Lack of Hope.**

Let's start with some recent news headlines that I grabbed off the internet:

- A study by NASA climate scientists indicates the climate is not just getting warmer, but the rate of change is accelerating.
- More than 1/3 of the Amazon rainforest is degraded, with land clearing and degradation nearing a tipping point at which the forest will cease to support abundant life and buffer climate change.
- Microplastics are already showing up from Antarctic ice to newborn babies' first bowel movements; now they've been found in bottled water, in flecks small enough to cross the blood-brain barrier.
- Farms and forests across Canada could soon be sprayed with pesticides or planted with GMO seeds that haven't been evaluated for safety by the country's regulatory agencies.
- As the oceans continue to absorb atmospheric CO₂, acidification is threatening the foundation of the undersea food chain and disrupting the hunting and migratory abilities of larger fish and mammals.
- Nitrates in agricultural runoff pollute well water for millions of Americans, many of whom do not regularly test their water for contaminants.
- Earth's sixth mass extinction is underway and "rapidly accelerating," a study warns, with entire branches of species being lost, destroying the conditions that make human life possible.

Yikes. Faced with enormous world-threatening issues like these, many people numb out in hopeless overwhelm. I know because I've been there.

How can there possibly be hope for the planet and for future generations? How can you possibly do anything that will have any significant impact, given the scale of the issues above?

The reality is that we have been programmed to believe and buy into the traditionalist approach that the best solutions are at the single, centralized and massive scale.

An example of this: to combat carbon levels in the atmosphere we should build massive carbon capture and sequestration facilities... and that means only corporations and governments can impact change, right?

WRONG!

Independent research and on-the-ground action is showing that this is simply not true. In fact, small, decentralized solutions – e.g., stuff you can do in your own home and in your own backyard (or community) – are actually totally viable, completely relevant, and very important. Distributed, small-scale solutions *actually increase resiliency and performance* at both the individual and the overall system level.

There's not only hope, there's loads you can do, and it *will* make a difference.

To find out more, continue reading [HERE...](#)

And stay tuned -- in the next few days, we'll dig into Barrier #2, which is all about not having the right kind of knowledge.

Sincerely, Rob

#3

Sending name: Rob Avis @ Verge

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SUBJECT: TO SOLVE A HUMAN-MADE TECHNO PROBLEM, THINK LIKE AN ECOSYSTEM

Preview Text: You know the saying about how it's impossible to solve a problem using the same mindset that created it? Well, people have been using a human-focused mindset for a very long time...and there's a better way.

Hi there!

In my last email, I challenged the first major barrier to creating a sustainable future and a meaningful life: **Lack of Hope**. Centralized, monolithic institutional answers aren't necessarily the best; *independent research and on-the-ground action show that small, home-scale solutions are totally viable, completely relevant, and very important.*

So let's move on to the second biggest barrier people have: **lack of knowledge**.

In some ways, this is the most ironic of the three barriers, given how free and available information is on the internet. Want an answer to something, anything? Just Google it!

However, when we see something that humans have designed or implemented that is destructive to the natural world (which is everywhere we look), we can almost always identify the root cause as being a complete misunderstanding of this very basic truth:

"Nature is a totally efficient, self-regenerating system. If we discover the laws that govern this system and live synergistically within them, sustainability will follow, and humankind will be a success." - R. Buckminster Fuller

That's a lot to wrap your mind around.... let's put it more simply, this way:

To solve any problem at its root, you need to 1) understand the basic principles of ecosystems, natural patterns and processes; and 2) understand how systems work as a whole.

So wait a sec ... am I telling you that you need to learn about basic ecosystem processes, even if you are trying to solve a man-made technological problem?

Yes. That's what I'm saying.

If you'd like to find out why is this so important (and how to solve the knowledge gap), keep reading [HERE...](#)

Bye for now,

Rob

p.s. If you missed my previous email on dissolving the first barrier, lack of hope, you can catch up [HERE](#). It's the primary reason holding people back from taking action in the first place, so don't skip it.

p.p.s.: In a couple of days I'll be sending you the final barrier, which has to do with the importance of having a plan. We'll look at what it means to design something based on five simple criteria that you can start to apply in building more sustainability and resilience into any aspect of your life.

p.p.p.s.: Are you already fired up with enthusiasm to build your hope and budding knowledge into a real-world plan? Check out our upcoming Permaculture Design Certification course [HERE!](#)

#4

Sending name: Rob Avis @ Verge

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SUBJECT: FIVE KEYS TO DESIGNING YOUR PLAN FOR A RESILIENT LIFE

Preview Text: To design a property and lifestyle that work as harmoniously as a healthy ecosystem, just use nature's own rules!

Hi there!

Once you have some hope for the future and some knowledge about our place in it, the last barrier that you need to break is **“I have no plan”**.

This is where it all comes back down to design....so what is design, exactly? Wikipedia says: “Design is the creation of a plan for the construction of an object, system or measurable human interaction.”

Permaculture is a design approach to arrive at solutions that have the diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems. It is the harmonious integration of people into the landscape which provides their food, energy, shelter, and other material and non-material needs in a sustainable (and resilient!) way.

How can you start designing and planning your home, your land, your life and your livelihood differently? The great news is that it's actually not rocket science.

All you need to do is to start looking at the things around you as “systems” and then apply some basic criteria.

To design a system that is resilient, the design must include *redundancy* and be *efficient, productive, appropriate, and interconnected*.

The beauty of using these criteria in design is they are universal and can be applied at any scale. You can apply redundancy, efficiency, productiveness, appropriateness, and interconnectedness to the design of a school garden, or the design of a backyard composting system.

To see how a permaculture plan can take shape in real life, take a look at this short excerpt from our book, *Essential Rainwater Harvesting*, where it's applied to the design of an off-grid homestead. Check it out [HERE](#).

Bottom line? What we've found, over and over again, is that when folks regain *hope*, gain *knowledge*, and learn how to *plan/design*, they find more meaning and happiness in their life as well.

And so I'll reiterate that humans are not inherently destructive. Simply start designing your sustainable future and meaningful life so that you and your community will thrive.

Want to learn how to grow your hope, build your knowledge, and create a plan for your own property? Check out our upcoming Permaculture Design Certification course [HERE](#).

Here's to your empowerment,

Rob