



Answers to...

The Drylands Permaculture Farm

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### “Dryland Permaculture Design”

Aug 2016

#### 1. Can you do a Permaculture design my property?

Sorry we have limited time to offer design consultancy at the present. We will be offering in the near future, workshops which cover such topics as Permaculture design for urban and rural properties. These workshops will be listed on our [Learn](#) page or through our facebook pages [drylandsnursery](#) and [drylandsfarm](#).

Taking a farm tour will also give you the opportunity to see what we have done, how we have progressed and refined our work over the years. It will give you lots of new ideas for your own property.



Aerial photo of our Dryland Permaculture Farm

Our self-published book ‘Dryland Permaculture Garden Guidelines’ details many of our design ideas and recommended plant species. It will give you a great start if you embark on your own design. You can order it from us directly, for \$22.

#### 2. Can you recommend any landscape designers or gardeners?

As we do all our own work we don't have first-hand experience of the work of others. This doesn't mean there aren't professional and trades people out there doing great work. Try looking around at the homes and gardens in your neighbourhood for inspiration and ask them for contact details of landscapers and gardeners who helped them bring their property to life.

#### 3. How can I find out what plants to grow in my dryland garden?

There are thousands of plants you could grow but to help you answer this question you need to specify what you want them for and whether you are prepared to irrigate them. Our food gardens have been designed to retain moisture, have improved soil and are irrigated so they can grow an abundance of vegetable varieties. Whereas our paddocks are not irrigated with poor sand and require hardy local plant species.

Our nursery catalogue lists some of the many plants we have in our garden and sell through our nursery. These include local natives that usually form part of our outer wind breaks and provide useful fodder for our animals and bees, timber, and ‘bush foods’. Other non-Australian dryland or subtropical species that provide higher and different yields also can be grown if you can also create protected microclimates. We list these plants as ‘exotics’ on our nursery catalogue.

It is important to match your species requirements with your soil type, rainfall, humidity and climate. For example a semi-tropical plant adapted to a climate with summer rainfall is unlikely to grow well in a semi-arid area with the same rainfall.

Other local nursery's may also be able to provide you with advice. Make sure they have been sun hardened to suit your hot, dry climate. There is also usually a well-regarded gardener in your area. Make contact with them and more than often they will be happy to share their ‘growing stories’ with different plants, and their success and failures.



Local Jam Tree Acacia



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### 4. How do dryland permaculture designs differ from those in other climates of the world?

While permaculture principles are common across climates, the practices and priorities to implement them will differ across climatic regions, within different landscapes and cultures within those regions.

In drylands, our designs begin by understanding the larger natural patterns defined primarily by the limited water availability and as a consequence the limited accessible fertility of soils and ecologies.

These limitations are due to low natural rainfall events and higher annual evaporation rate than annual rainfall. This includes both cold and hot climates even though when we think of drylands as hot desert regions of the world.



Rainbow over Cactii

Water harvesting and storage becomes the most immediate priority for the Permaculture designer to consider along with the need to create a beneficial microclimate. Microclimates can retain humidity and nutrients, and provide protection from unwanted winds and the evaporative effect of the sun. Earthworks and built structures, such as basins for plants and water tanks are key elements in this process. So too is the use of pioneer plant species such as *Atriplex nummularia* as fire retardant wind break species and fodder for stock. Their success leads to improving the chances of other species surviving that provide varied or improved yields in a permaculture design.



A swale system designed by Julie on the lower slopes of the Morseby Ranges

People and their ability to work with dryland conditions are critical elements for success. We need to learn about water conservation, hydro-zoning plants and drought tolerant plants. We to learn to build environments that are allowed to fluctuate and tolerate both flood and drought.

### 5. Is Permaculture hard to do in dryland climates?

Nothing is too hard if you know how. It requires time to learn, and a consistent effort to start and keep going. The better your design and more appropriate it is for your climate, the easier it will be to manage and maintain. Part of our work, has been applying Permaculture design to our dryland climate so others can learn by our efforts, just as we have learnt from others.



Julie taste tests our Apple Fruit Cactii

In our dryland climate our failures will be more quickly exposed than those in a climate with higher rainfall and better soils. But each climate and location has its own challenges and patterns that need to be understood and worked with.

For us, our hot summer temperatures, strong winds and infertile sandy soils, test our capacity as designers and gardeners. But each property will have its own additional difficulties and opportunities no matter what the climate.

