



# CHILDREN IN PERMACULTURE

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## **Guidelines for Designing a Children in Permaculture Training Course**

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By Lusi Alderslowe, Tomislav Gjerkeš, Adela Hrubá and Lara Kastelic

With contributions from Gaye Amus

Children in Permaculture (CiP) is an Erasmus+ project in which seven European organisations are working together to improve the education of children in formal, informal and non-formal settings through the development of resources such as case studies, curricula, session plans, films and other resources. These resources will enable kindergarten and school teachers, permaculture practitioners, parents and other educators to engage in holistic, sustainable education with children based on permaculture ethics and principles.

## Project Partner Organisations



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## Introduction

“The future of our planet depends on a change of consciousness, in which the people and the resources of the natural world are no longer taken for granted and exploited without considering long term impacts. Supporting children from early childhood to develop a sensitive, compassionate and cooperative relationship with each other and the natural world is a crucial step in generating this new consciousness” (p. 1, Alderslowe, Amus & Deshaies, 2018). One way of doing this is to train school and kindergarten teachers and other educators to engage in permaculture education, as described in ‘Earth Care, People Care and Fair Share in Education: The Children in Permaculture Manual’ (Alderslowe et al, 2018).

This document outlines a two day training course that Children in Permaculture (CiP) trainers and course conveners can use to guide the development of their own CiP training courses adapted to the specific needs of the participants and unique characteristics of the place. It can also be useful for the educators to understand what they can expect of a CiP training course and thus whether and how to organise one in their locale. It contains guidelines for how to create a CiP course for educators, a list of materials which can be used during the courses and suggested course content.

Educators who may attend such a course include people working with children aged 3-12 years, such as school, nursery and kindergarten teachers, as well as those working in non-formal settings such as after-school or out-of-school club leaders (e.g. scout leaders), parents (whether natural, foster, adoptive or grandparents) and others who are aware of the importance of their role in children’s education.

The aims of a two day CiP training course are for educators to:

- Find out how permaculture can help them in their work with children.
- Learn ways to engage children in permaculture using a holistic, creative approach which involves children in the whole process as a partner in their learning.
- Get ideas about how to creatively design your school grounds to maximise the benefits of outdoor learning.
- Grasp the basics about permaculture principles and design and how they can be useful in education.
- Envisage how the permaculture ethics can be integrated into an educational setting.

# Guidelines for Designing a Children in Permaculture Training Course



- Learn about and use the CiP case studies, film and manual as it will support them in their work.
- See and hear examples of good practice and inspirational stories which will excite and encourage them to use CiP materials and to embed permaculture into their school (curriculum, gardens etc).
- Be inspired to take children outdoors for experiential learning.
- Meet other people who are interested in engaging children in permaculture
- Be interested to find out more about permaculture

The two-day CiP training course can be taught by anyone who has successfully completed a train the trainer Children in Permaculture course. A list of qualified trainers is available on the Children in Permaculture website: [www.childreninpermaculture.com](http://www.childreninpermaculture.com)

## Setting up the training course

Practical tips for setting up an effective course:

- **Venue:** A school or education centre, ideally with an outdoor learning space.
- **Dates:** It is possible to have two consecutive days or to have two separate days. The benefits of the former are that the participants keep up the momentum and reduce travel time and costs. The benefits of the latter are that participants may be able to apply their learning to their work with children and then return with concrete questions and feedback.
- **Finances:** There are likely to be costs associated with organising and delivering a training course, such as venue hire, trainer fee, travel, booking fees, food, advertising, organisers' time, materials and more. These costs can be covered in different ways such as participant fees, charitable fundraising, volunteering and in-kind contributions.
- **Materials:** All participants are supplied with a printed copy of the CiP manual, if available. Other materials may be given out in a printed or electronic format. Look for further inspiration from Janet Millington and Carolyn Nuttall's *Outdoor Classrooms* book<sup>1</sup>, Robina McCurdy's *Localising food* videos<sup>2</sup>, Roman Shapla's *Children's Permaculture Guild*<sup>3</sup> and others.

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<sup>1</sup> Nuttal, C and Millington, J. (2008) *Outdoor classrooms: A handbook for school gardens*. Hampshire, UK, Permanent Publications.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.localisingfood.com/index.php>

- **Surveying:** Inviting the participants to complete a survey in advance of the course will enable trainers to adapt the training to meet participants' needs.
- **Schedule:** It is important to design the course timetable in such a way that experiential learning and work in pairs and small groups is included, to directly demonstrate CiP pedagogy.
- **Permaculture ethics and principles:** It is essential that the permaculture ethics and principles are embedded into the design of the timetable and practical implementation of the course in order to provide practical examples of permaculture during the course itself.
- **Promoting:** Bearing in mind that the profile of participants may be wide (including teachers, parents, educators in non-formal groups), the advertising channels, media and style of communication will also need to vary to most effectively reach the various target groups.

Additionally, the following can be helpful:

- Advertising early, preferably at least three months before the start.
- Using social media including groups that are related to permaculture, outdoor education, forest pedagogy, alternative ways of schooling, homeschooling as well as individuals. Useful strategies for promoting on social media can be to regularly post relevant news and related information about the event to the same group(s).
- Printing posters and leaflets on recycled paper and distributing at the venue (if possible), as well as in surrounding schools, library, cafés etc.
- Contacting local organisations that either have a wide outreach (e.g. local news) or are specialised in the topic (e.g. education, outdoor pedagogy, environmental awareness) and request them to publish or share the course information in their printed and digital media. These organisations may be interested in a reciprocal partnership in which you also provide some benefit for their organisation during the event (for example distributing a flyer or printing their logo on materials).
- Sending a press release to printed and digital media with articles about CiP that also include an invitation to the course. A template for sending press releases is available to CiP trainers.
- Giving short talks and attending other events in the lead up to the course to spark interest and collect contacts of interested people.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.childrenspermaculture.com/> and <http://childrenspermacultureguild.webs.com/>

## Materials

Within the Children in Permaculture project the following materials and resources for educators were created that can be shared with the participants.

All of these can be downloaded from the website: [www.childreninpermaculture.com](http://www.childreninpermaculture.com).

### 1) SURVEY OF RESOURCES

The Survey of resources is a thorough review of existing resources of appropriate content about engaging Children in Permaculture. It reviews 316 resources (books, films, websites, lesson plans etc), including resources explicitly about engaging children in permaculture as well as resources relevant to that field. There is a full report and the most useful resources are listed in a catalogue, also available on the CiP website.

### 2) CASE STUDIES

The case studies can be used as an inspiration and motivation for participants, enabling them to find out about different examples of practical permaculture with children. Eight case studies are given in order to demonstrate a wide variety of settings and styles. A selection of these case studies can be presented to course participants, and the rest of the document referenced.

### 3) Earth Care, People Care and Fair Share in Education: The Children in Permaculture MANUAL

The CiP manual is a thorough guide which contains essential information for kindergarten and school teachers, leaders of non-formal groups, parents and other educators to share permaculture with children. The manual describes how to embed permaculture ethics and principles into education, the CiP curriculum, inspirations for activities, session plans, pedagogical guidelines, top tips for organising events and more.

### 4) ACTIVITIES' ONLINE PLATFORM

More than 400 inspirations for activities are given as ideas for leading an activity with children relating to the different themes of the CiP curriculum. They are presented in an online database which is searchable by keyword, topic or age.

## 5) VIDEOS

The following videos were made within the CiP project to inspire educators and share their experiences.

- a) A short (3 minute) film to promote the CiP training courses.
- b) Trip to Romania (11 minute): a group of pupils from Gatehouse School in Scotland visited Romania where they experienced how local people are doing permaculture. Children in Permaculture (7 minute): showcasing how children and teachers are experiencing permaculture in different schools and projects across Europe.

## 6) SHORT POWER POINT PRESENTATION ABOUT THE CiP PROJECT

## Delivery of the Course

The training course will be most effective if it reflects the CiP pedagogy in its design and implementation. In order to achieve this consider the following:

- Including a variety of experiential learning opportunities.
- Introducing theory in playful ways (include songs or games, for example to illustrate points).
- Demonstrating through practical activities, then reflect on the theory ('hand' then 'head').
- Utilising CiP materials as much as possible.
- Offering opportunities for participants to share relevant knowledge and/or skills.
- Revealing the metalevel of how CiP pedagogy was integrated in the course whenever possible or appropriate, i.e. speak about the thinking and aim behind an activity which the group has done.
- Harvesting the collective wisdom of the group and encourage participants to find their own solutions.
- Being sensitive to the energy level of the group when designing the flow and throughout the course, integrating different types of activities in order to facilitate learning in a variety of ways (e.g. through all the senses). Include icebreakers, energisers, and/or team building exercises as appropriate (for more information and examples see Clayfield<sup>4</sup> and Morrow<sup>5</sup>).
- More information about designing permaculture courses for adults can be found in Morrow (2015) which is freely available online <sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Clayfield, R. & Skye (1995) Manual for teaching permaculture creatively Maleny [Qld.] : Earthcare Education,

<sup>5</sup> Morrow, R. (2015) Permaculture teaching matters: A teaching course for permaculture teachers. Mountains Wildfire Press. Freely available online from <http://www.bluemountainspermacultureinstitute.com.au/new-book/>

## Course Content

Each course will be designed specifically to meet the needs and experience of the participants, and considering other aspects such as venue, culture, country, language(s) and national curriculum. Therefore, the suggested course content has been organised into blocks which can be covered, rather than into a specific timetable. Each block may be split into different sections and covered at different times throughout the course. Similarly, there may be additional content which is important to cover in particular situations. This enables trainers to adjust the timetable and training methods to deliver the content based on the trainers' skills and the needs of participants.

| Content for two day course  | Notes   |
|---|---|
| Preparation beforehand<br><br>Survey  | * Knowing the profile, motivation, previous experiences, challenges and needs of the participants in advance of the course will enable trainers to adapt the training which suits the people and place.                     |
| Arrivals  | * Plan for some people to arrive late.<br><br>* Offer tea, coffee and healthy snacks.   |
| <b>A. GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER</b><br><br>Welcome!<br><br>Introductions<br><br>Expectations and motivation of participants<br><br>Domestics such as kitchen, toilets, fire exits etc.<br><br>Agenda and course aims | * Group building and learning about the skills and knowledge of the people in the group.<br><br>* When presenting the proposed schedule to the group, ask if there is anything which needs changed to adapt to their needs. |

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| <p><b>B. INTRO TO PERMACULTURE AND CiP</b></p> <p>Introduction to permaculture</p> <p>Presentation of Children in Permaculture project and materials</p> <p>Introduction to the CiP Pedagogy</p> <p>Showcase good practice</p> <p>Find solutions to challenges participants face in engaging children in permaculture.</p> <p>Links with the national curriculum</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Permaculture ethics, principles and key ideas are explained and explored in a way that participants can use later when working with children.</li> <li>* Showcase examples of good practice and share inspirational stories (see the CiP case studies and videos).</li> <li>* Find out what the participants' experiences and challenges are and discuss how CiP can help them.</li> <li>* Find ways to explore how teachers can demonstrate that children are learning about the school curriculum through the CiP approach.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>C. EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OUTSIDE</b></p> <p>Tour of the Outdoor Learning Space</p> <p>Benefits of outdoor and experiential learning</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Wherever possible, the sessions should be outdoors, inspiring and experiential.</li> <li>* Visit and explore the venue beforehand, make use of the elements and other local resources.</li> <li>* Exhibit the CiP pedagogy including holistic planning, natural flow, ethics and principles. See the CiP manual for examples.</li> <li>* Role plays can be helpful in which participants are invited to become a child and the trainers lead an outdoor session which is relevant for that age group. Time for reflection and feedback from the role is essential in order for participants to integrate</li> </ul> |

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|  | <p>the learning.</p> <p>* Invite participants to create session plans, games, songs and/or other activities which meet the CiP pedagogy potentially based on an Inspiration for an activity from the manual.</p>  |
| <p><b>D. DESIGNING OUTDOOR LEARNING SPACES</b></p> <p>Short session on how to design an outdoor learning space.</p>                                | <p>* Discuss an example of a well-designed outdoor learning space, by walking around and/or with pictures.</p> <p>* Introduce how to including children, parents, teachers and other stakeholders in creating a permaculture design through a simple design process e.g. SADIMET.</p>   |
| <p><b>E. CLOSING THE DAY</b></p> <p>Review learning</p> <p>Questions from participants</p> <p>Next steps</p> <p>Feedback</p> <p>Closing circle</p> | <p>* Allow time for questions which have arisen over the course.</p> <p>* Discuss opportunities for future collaborations and mentoring.</p> <p>* Find out if participants would be interested in follow-up courses, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploring a particular theme of the CiP curriculum</li> <li>• Designing an Outdoor Learning Space</li> <li>• Introduction to Permaculture</li> <li>• Social Permaculture for Educators</li> <li>• Integrating the CiP curriculum into the national curriculum</li> <li>• Permaculture Design Course for Educators</li> </ul> <p>* Invite participants to complete the CiP feedback form.</p> |

## After the course

In order to continuously develop and improve CiP trainings it is necessary for trainers to share their feedback, by giving a short report which includes:

- A survey of participants
- Financial details (cost of course, income, expenditure)
- Timetable
- Venue details
- Feedback from participants (preferably collated and digitalised)
- Personal reflections (what went well, what didn't, "aha" moments etc.)

If an article is written about the course, it can be published on the CiP website and shared on social media.

If participants expressed an interest in further training, this can be tailored to their needs, potentially with experts brought in from further afield.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the Children in Permaculture trainers are experts with years of experience leading permaculture with children who will ensure that the CiP approach is integrated into the course, making the course a fun, engaging learning experience for participants and trainers alike. To organise a training course near you contact the CiP team to find a trainer who can deliver it.