THE INDEPENDENCE SERIES

PERENNIAL FOOD SYSTEMS FIELD GUIDE

A real-world implementation resource for designing food forests, agroforestry systems, perennial homestead production, pollinator systems, livestock integration, and community-scale resilience.

Webinar teaching context: practical, family-centered, regenerative food system design.

Presented by Jamon Mysliwiec
The Independent American Gardener

Learn More and Get Involved:
TIAGCommunities.org | HavenPermaculture.com | LulusGarden.com

Use this like a field workbook.

Do not read it once and file it away. Instead:

- Print the worksheets
- walk your property with them
- mark up your map & Notes, and
- pick the next right action.

GET SERIOUS ABOUT PERENNIAL FOOD SECURITY:
The goal is not inspiration. The goal is a design you can actually install, maintain, and improve over time.

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What this resource is designed to do:

This guide combines the webinar teaching at www.TIAGcommunitie.org on “Perennial Food Systems” from the "Independence Series”, with the researched practitioner sequence by Haven Permaculture, and the slide system library presented by Jamon Mysliwiec, into one application tool.

It keeps the big idea simple: start with purpose and place, order the mainframe correctly, plant in layers and phases, then manage the system until it can carry more than its own weight.

You’re family, farm, and community can use this resource to establish exactly that.

A system that carries MORE than its own weight.A Regenerative Design.

1. The Core Shift: From Annual Dependency to Perennial Production

First things first, what's this all about, why we're doing it all wrong in America, and how we can change it at home.

The long-term vision is not only household food. It is food, water, shelter, and surplus at the family and community scale.

Modern food production is built around Multiple Single Points of Failure.

annual reset: annual planting, imported fertility, irrigation, fuel, chemicals, machinery, and supply chains. When one of those points fails, the whole system fails. And that fragility is also your family's fragility. Your car, your groceries, your water at the faucet, your electricity that runs it all, your paycheck, and the systems that provide it, your internet, education…

Perennial agricultural systems ask a different question than most people in the spring and fall. Instead of only asking what you can grow this year, ask what you can plant, establish, and steward so your children can harvest from it after you are gone. The question should never be "What can I plant this year?", like a normal gardener today. But rather: "What productive system element(s) can I add this year?". That changes the way you look at your whole landscape, garden bed, farm, acreage, business, community, and even family. Everything is operated at a level of a system already. So Upgrade It.

A perennial food system is not just a bunch of fruit trees. Through a permaculture lens, it is a designed relationship between water, access, structures, soil biology, trees, understory crops, livestock, pollination, labor, harvest, family and community use.

The webinar question to keep in front of you.

What can I plant once, establish correctly, and harvest for generations?

Annual-dependency question	Perennial-system question
What can I plant this spring?	What should be established first so the system becomes easier every year?
How do I fertilize this crop?	What species, mulch, livestock, compost, and biology will cycle fertility inside the system?
How do I irrigate this bed?	Where does water already move, collect, infiltrate, or leave the site?
How do I stop pests?	Where is the system too simple, stressed, exposed, or out of balance?

How much can I harvest right now?	What will this system produce in year 1, year 3, year 7, and year 20?

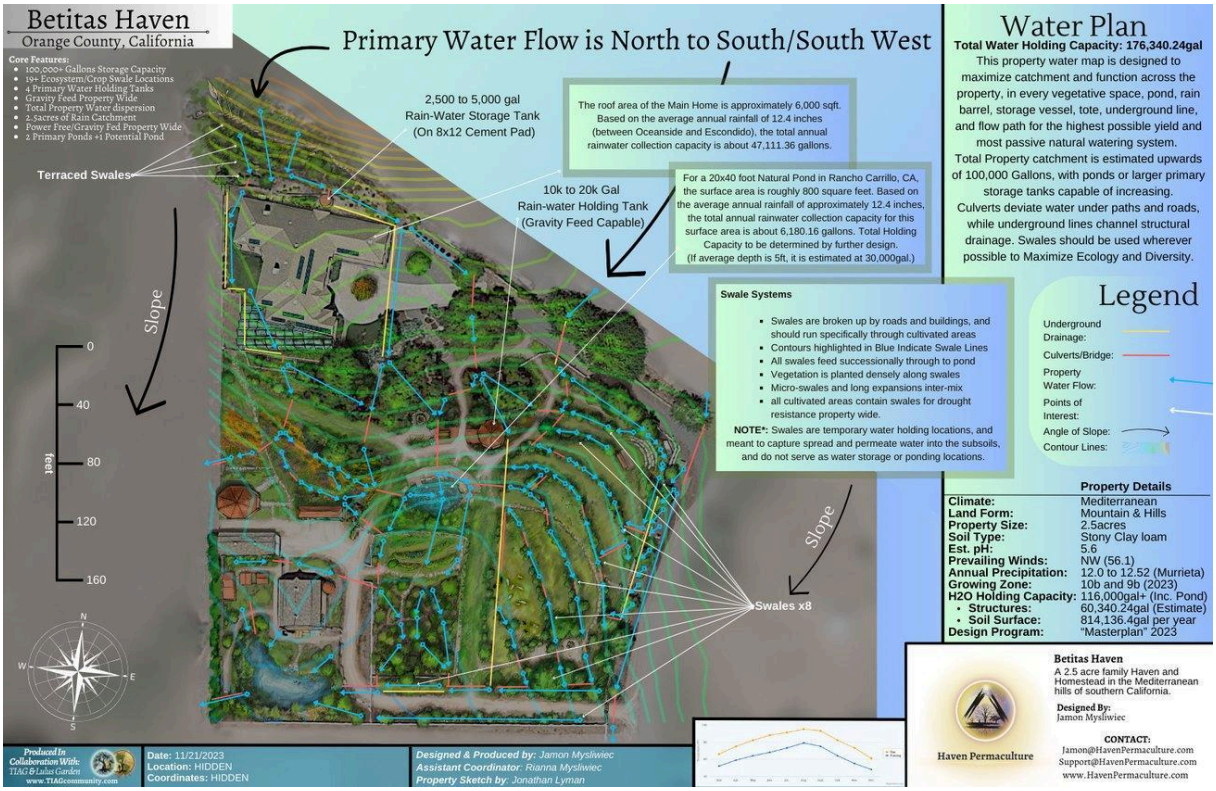
2. The Real Design Sequence

The practical sequence below reconciles the webinar sequence with the broader practitioner record. The webinar emphasized Water - Access - Structures, followed by ecology, trees, agroforestry, livestock, pollination, and community. The research review adds the work that must happen before the shovel goes in the ground: purpose, governance, legal due diligence, mapping, and observation.

Do not skip water.

If you already planted trees, built beds, brought in animals, or started bees but never mapped water, you are not past water. You are at water.

Phase	What happens	The practical output
0	Purpose, users, decision criteria	Write the reason the system exists, who it feeds, who maintains it, and what success means.
1	Legal, tenure, and governance due diligence	Check zoning, utilities, easements, setbacks, livestock rules, water rules, public access, and stewardship agreements.
2	Base map and fixed-site data	Gather boundaries, aerial imagery, contours, soils, utilities, buildings, fences, roads, septic, wells, and existing vegetation.
3	Seasonal observation	Walk the land in rain, heat, frost, wind, dormancy, bloom, harvest, and drought. Record what changes.
4	Mainframe: water, access, structures	Place water systems first, then roads and paths, then buildings, fences, tanks, gates, sheds, and work areas.
5	Zones, sectors, microclimates, edges, clearings	Identify daily-use areas, wind, sun, shade, frost pockets, fire risk, runoff, wildlife pressure, and high-value edges.
6	System pattern and species palette	Choose the system form before choosing every species: forest garden, orchard guild, alley cropping, silvopasture, hedgerow, etc.
7	Soil and site preparation	Prepare access, mulch, compaction relief, weed suppression, animal exclusion, irrigation support, and staging areas.
8	Phased planting	Plant the backbone, then support species, then understory, then fill gaps as the canopy and water pattern mature.
9	Establishment and adaptive management	Mulch, water, prune, thin, replace, protect, graze carefully, track harvests, and redesign from real feedback.



Base maps and site reading keep the design grounded in the real property instead of generic plant lists.

3. The One-Page Perennial System Roadmap

Order	Design layer	Question to answer	Deliverable before moving on
1	Purpose	What is this system for: family food, market crops, education, medicine, livestock feed, habitat, beauty, surplus, or all of the above?	Written purpose statement and success criteria.
2	Water	Where does water come from, move, concentrate, infiltrate, flood, dry out, and leave?	Water map with flow paths, catchments, storage points, overflow routes, and risk zones.
3	Access	How will people, tools, equipment, animals, carts, firewood, mulch, harvest, and emergency access move?	Paths, lanes, gates, service loops, and harvest access marked on map.
4	Structures	Where do buildings, tanks, fences, compost, sheds, chicken systems, apiaries, and utilities belong after water and access are placed?	Infrastructure map with permanent and temporary structures.
5	Ecology	What is already growing, what is already feeding soil life, and where are the useful edges?	Existing ecology inventory and protect/remove/repair list.
6	Trees	Which tree crops anchor long-term food, shade, mulch, mast, pollination, and income?	Canopy and subcanopy plan.
7	Agroforestry	How do trees combine with crops, livestock, or alleys to produce in multiple time horizons?	System pattern selected: alley, silvopasture, orchard polyculture, forest garden, etc.

8	Livestock	Where can animals improve fertility without destroying young systems?	Grazing, fencing, rest periods, and protection plan.
9	Pollination	What blooms from early spring to late fall, and where do bees and wild pollinators live?	Bloom calendar, habitat, and apiary placement.
10	Community	Who helps, who learns, who harvests, and how is surplus shared, sold, or stewarded?	Community activation, workday, harvest, and surplus plan.

4. System Cards: What Each Perennial System Actually Does

Use these cards as a practical index. The point is not to install every system. The point is to recognize which tool fits your actual site, scale, and maintenance capacity.

System	Real-world function	Best first move / conventional contrast
Keyline design	A broadacre water-distribution pattern that uses landform and cultivation lines to move moisture from wetter valleys toward drier ridges.	First move: map ridges, valleys, slope, and keylines. Contrast: drainage systems that remove water instead of distributing it.
Swales	Level ditches on contour that slow, spread, and sink runoff into the soil profile, often feeding tree rows on the berm.	First move: test contour, infiltration, overflow, and slope safety. Contrast: ditches that export water and increase downstream pressure.
Hedgerows	Multi-species linear plantings that create wind protection, habitat, pollinator forage, biomass, food, and boundary function.	First move: plant one high-value edge. Contrast: fence rows with no ecological function.
Orchard guilds	Plant communities around a central tree that provide fertility, mulch, groundcover, pollination, pest balance, and secondary harvests.	First move: convert one tree into one guild. Contrast: herbicide strips and bare soil under orchard trees.
Orchard polycultures	Diverse fruit and nut plantings that extend bloom, harvest, root use, pollination, and disease resilience.	First move: diversify one row or block. Contrast: single-species orchard blocks with narrow harvest windows.
Food forests	Layered perennial polycultures designed to produce food, medicine, habitat, mulch, fertility, and microclimate over time.	First move: design water/access first, then plant in phases. Contrast: annual beds that must be restarted every season.
Forest gardens	Home-scale food forests shaped for beauty, daily harvest, family use, and close-to-the-kitchen management.	First move: convert a high-use landscape bed near the home. Contrast: ornamental landscaping that consumes inputs but produces no food.
Agroforestry	Intentional integration of trees with crops and/or livestock on the same land unit.	First move: perennialize a margin, alley, shelterbelt, or paddock division. Contrast: open annual fields with no tree structure.
Alley cropping	Rows of trees with crops, forage, herbs, or annuals grown in alleys during tree establishment.	First move: design tree-row spacing around light and equipment. Contrast: continuous annual row crops with no long-term tree income.

System	Real-world function	Best first move / conventional contrast
Chestnut systems	Tree-based staple calories that can function as a long-term grain-like food and livestock feed system.	First move: confirm cultivar, spacing, harvest, processing, and long-term land control. Contrast: annual grain with yearly tillage and soil exposure.

Hazelnut systems	Shrub-scale nut production for protein, oil, hedgerows, biomass, habitat, and small-farm income.	First move: plant a productive hedge or small block. Contrast: annual oilseed crops dependent on yearly planting.
Successional agroforestry	A system that plants multiple life stages together and guides the transition through pruning, biomass, and replacement.	First move: combine fast support species with slower long-term crop species. Contrast: holding land in one artificial stage with mowing or herbicide.
Syntropic agriculture	High-biomass managed succession using dense planting and regular pruning to build soil rapidly.	First move: start small where biomass and management are realistic. Contrast: fertilizer-dependent production with repeated soil disturbance.
Silvopasture	Trees, forage, and livestock integrated for shade, mast, welfare, manure cycling, and multiple yields.	First move: protect trees before animals arrive. Contrast: open pasture with no shade or tree income.
Adaptive multi-paddock grazing	Frequent animal movement with long recovery periods to rebuild forage, roots, soil cover, and infiltration.	First move: create a simple paddock and water plan. Contrast: continuous grazing that overuses preferred plants.
Apiary integration	Managed bees placed into perennial systems for pollination, honey, wax, propolis, and ecosystem feedback.	First move: build a bloom calendar and safe hive placement. Contrast: migratory pollination dependent on external trucked-in colonies.
Community food forests	Public or shared perennial landscapes that provide food, education, habitat, and neighborhood stewardship.	First move: write governance and harvest rules before planting. Contrast: parks with ornamental plantings and no food production.

How to choose from the system cards.

Pick the system that solves the highest-leverage problem on your property. If water is wrong, pick a water tool. If wind is destroying crops, pick hedgerow or windbreak. If you have an orchard, upgrade one row. If you have livestock, prepare silvopasture. If you need community, write the stewardship plan before planting.

5. Field Assessment: How to Read Your Property Before You Redraw It

A strong design starts before design. The first job is to read the land accurately enough that the first installation makes the next installation easier.

Field walk	What to observe	What to mark on your map
Rain walk	Sheet flow, gullies, ponding, roof runoff, road runoff, erosion, wet spots, overflow paths.	Blue arrows for flow, blue circles for ponding, red marks for erosion risk.
Sun and shade walk	Morning sun, afternoon heat, winter sun angle, existing canopy shade, building shade.	Yellow for full sun, orange for heat, gray for shade, note season.
Wind and frost walk	Prevailing wind, cold air drainage, frost pockets, snow drift, heat pockets, sheltered areas.	Wind arrows, frost pockets, windbreak needs, protected microclimates.
Soil and biology walk	Compaction, bare soil, earthworms, fungi, leaf litter, invasive pressure, pioneer species.	Soil test locations, mulch needs, compaction zones, existing fertility pockets.
Access and labor walk	Daily routes, gates, tool storage, cart access, mower/tractor width, harvest movement.	Paths, work zones, material staging, no-go zones.

Human use walk	Kitchen access, children, elderly access, public/private boundary, beauty, noise, neighbors.	Zones 1-5, views, seating, education areas, family use areas.

Do not design from one walk.

A site can lie to you if you only see it once. A dry summer visit will hide wet-season problems. A spring bloom visit will hide summer heat stress. A winter visit will hide wildlife browsing pressure. Keep walking.

6. Water First: Hydrology, Keyline, Swales, Roof Catchment, and Safety

Contour, slope, and access relationships determine where water work belongs.

Water is the first mainframe layer because every later decision inherits it. Tree survival, soil biology, livestock patterning, lane placement, apiary health, and long-term resilience all depend on how water moves through the system.

Water tool	Best use	Real-world first step	Watch out for
Observation and mapping	Every property, every scale.	Walk during rain. Draw flow arrows, puddling, erosion, roof discharge, culverts, ditches, and dry ridges.	Designing from aerial imagery alone.
Roof catchment	Homes, barns, sheds, chicken systems, greenhouses, nurseries, and Zone 1 plantings.	Calculate roof area and identify the first practical tank, barrel, or gravity-fed line.	Overflow must go somewhere safe. Do not create foundation problems.
Swales	Gentle to moderate slopes where water can be safely spread and infiltrated on contour.	Mark true contour. Test soil infiltration. Start small before cutting large earthworks.	Steep slopes, unstable soils, shallow hardpan, utilities, septic areas, and poor overflow planning.
Keyline patterning	Broadacre slopes where water should move from wetter valleys toward drier ridges through cultivation pattern.	Map ridges and valleys, identify keypoints/keylines, then plan ripping/cultivation only when conditions are right.	Requires accuracy. Do not treat it as random contour ripping.

Ponds and dams	Storage, habitat, irrigation reserve, livestock water, aquaculture, and fire resilience.	Confirm legal, engineering, watershed, overflow, and safety requirements before excavation.	Unpermitted dams, failed spillways, downstream liability, and seepage.
Riparian buffers	Creeks, streams, seasonal drainages, erosion-prone edges, and water-quality improvement.	Fence or protect the edge, stop erosion, plant deep-rooted native/perennial buffers.	Do not overclear a stream edge to make it look tidy.

When to get professional help.

Bring in qualified local help before large earthworks, ponds, dams, work near structures, work near septic or utilities, road drainage changes, floodplain work, steep-slope swales, or anything that could affect a neighbor downstream.

7. Ecological Infrastructure: Edges, Hedgerows, Guilds, and Soil Life

Hedgerows are not just boundaries. They are habitat, wind moderation, biomass, pollinator forage, and edge productivity.

Before you install heavy production, build the living infrastructure that makes production easier: wind moderation, pollinator habitat, biological pest balance, soil cover, fertility cycling, and shelter for beneficial life.

System	What it does	First installation move	Conventional contrast
Hedgerows	Create permanent ecological boundaries, windbreaks, wildlife corridors, pollinator forage, biomass, and field-edge stability.	Plant a mixed row along the highest-value edge: wind side, road edge, field edge, livestock division, or pollinator corridor.	Fence rows that divide land but produce no food, habitat, fertility, or biomass.
Windbreaks	Slow wind, reduce desiccation, protect crops, shelter animals, capture snow, and create microclimate.	Identify prevailing wind and plant layered protection: tall trees, shrubs, dense lower plants.	Open exposure plus irrigation and inputs to compensate.
Orchard guilds	Place fertility, pollination, pest balance, groundcover, mulch, and harvest around a productive tree.	Start with one tree. Add living mulch, flowering plants, fertility plants, aromatic plants, and access space.	Herbicide strip beneath orchard trees.
Living mulch	Keep soil covered, cool, biologically active, and protected from erosion.	Replace bare soil with low-growing perennial or self-seeding plants that can handle traffic and shade conditions.	Bare soil, repeated tillage, and herbicide.
Support species	Feed soil, produce biomass, fix nitrogen where appropriate, attract beneficial insects, and nurse young trees.	Plant fast-growing support near slower crop species, then prune/chop/drop as the system matures.	Imported fertilizer as the primary fertility plan.

The edge principle.

The edge between systems is often where life concentrates: field and forest, wet and dry, shade and sun, garden and path, pasture and tree row. Design edges on purpose.

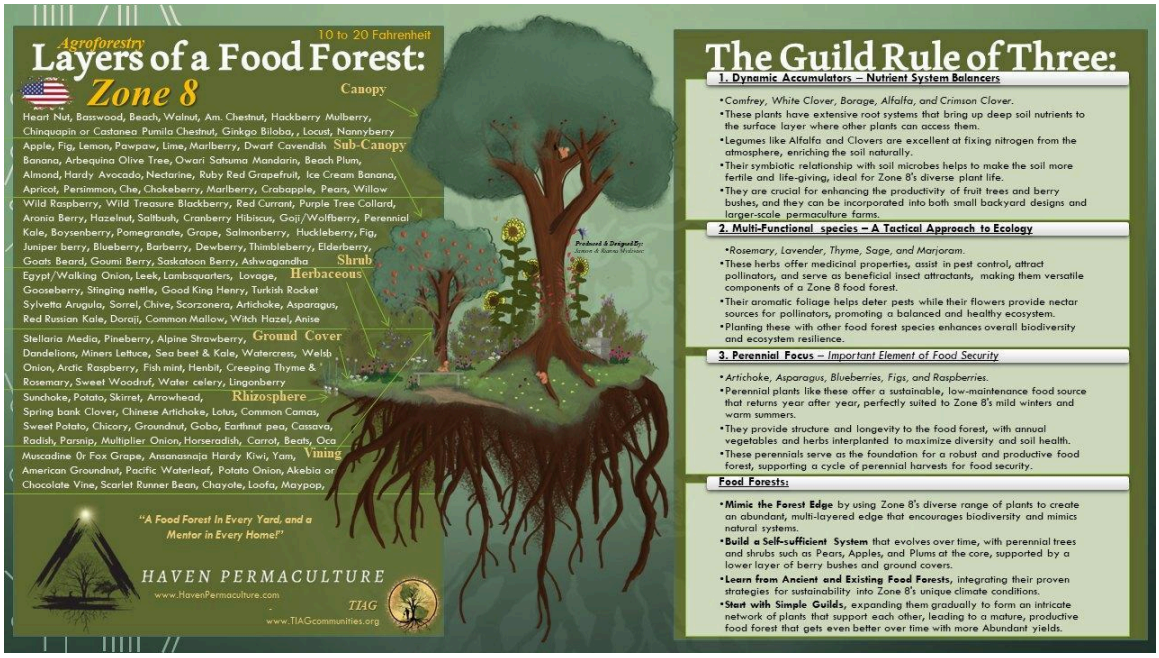
8. Tree Production: Orchards, Polyculture Orchards, Food Forests, and Forest Gardens

Existing orchards can be upgraded from single-layer production into layered perennial systems.

Trees are long-term infrastructure. Annual crops can feed you this year; trees can feed your grandchildren if they are placed, protected, and supported correctly.

System	Use when...	What to install first	Mistake to avoid
Orchard polyculture	You want fruit and nut production with more resilience than a single-species orchard block.	Diverse tree varieties, pollination partners, understory strips, wind protection, and harvest access.	Planting only the tree row and leaving bare or sprayed understory.
Food forest	You have enough space and labor to manage multiple layers through establishment.	Water/access mainframe, canopy and subcanopy, shrubs, herbs, groundcovers, roots, vines, and support species in phases.	Thinking mature closed forest is the model. In temperate climates, light and glades matter.
Forest garden	You want a residential-scale version near the house or within daily life.	Kitchen-distance paths, family harvest species, beauty, child access, pollinator plants, and easy maintenance routes.	Putting high-maintenance harvest too far from the house.
Orchard-to-food-forest conversion	You already have trees but low diversity, poor soil cover, pest	One test row or one test tree guild. Add flowering strips, mulch,	Converting everything at once without proving the maintenance pattern.

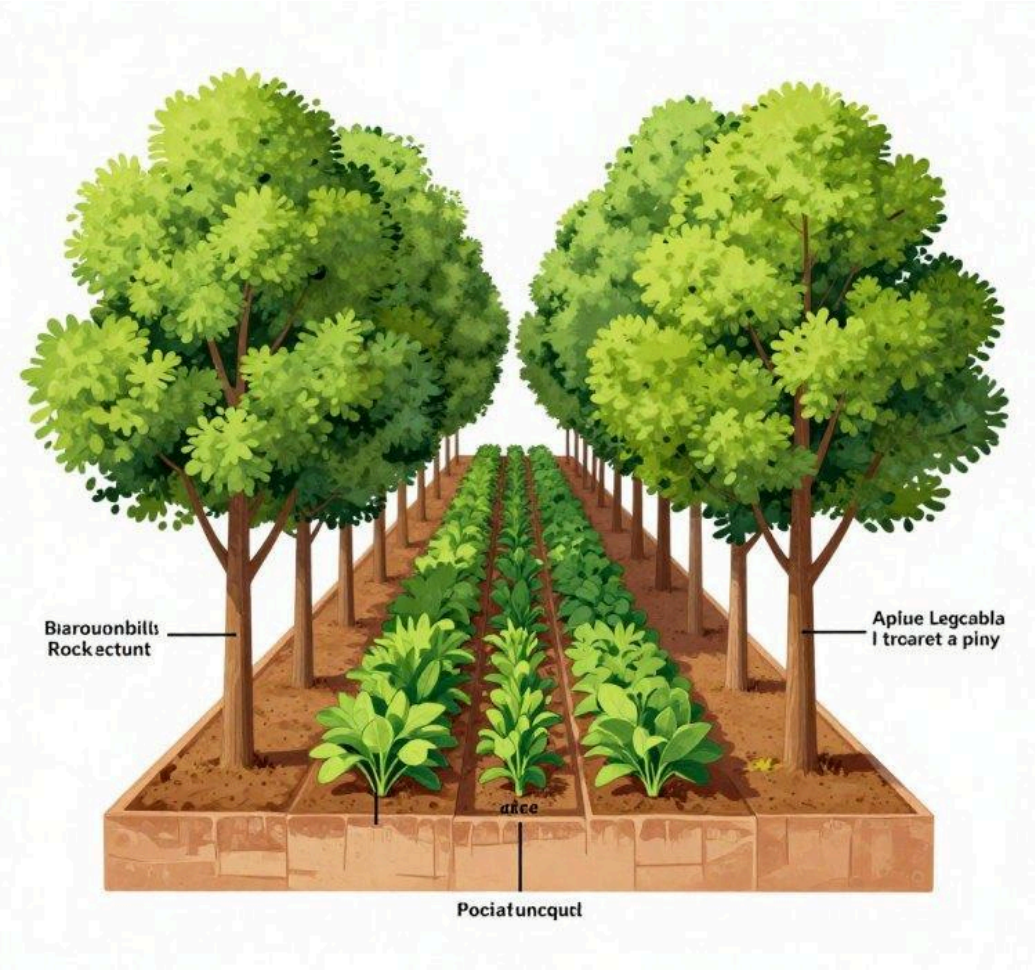
	pressure, or narrow harvest windows.	berry shrubs, herbs, and living groundcover.	



Layering is a design tool, not a generic template. Light, water, access, and climate decide how dense the layers should become.

Layer	Primary function	Examples of roles to fill
Canopy	Long-term staple, shade, mast, timber, fruit/nut yield, climate moderation.	Chestnut, walnut, pecan, oak, larger fruit/nut trees where appropriate.
Subcanopy	Fruit, pollination diversity, harvest extension, moderate shade.	Apples, pears, plums, pawpaw, persimmon, serviceberry, smaller nut trees.
Shrub	Berries, medicine, habitat, wind buffering, edge productivity.	Elderberry, currant, gooseberry, aronia, hazelnut, blueberry in the right soil.
Herbaceous	Pollinator support, medicine, mulch, fertility, pest balance, food.	Yarrow, comfrey, perennial alliums, culinary herbs, perennial vegetables.
Groundcover	Living mulch, weed suppression, soil cover, edible carpet.	Strawberry, clover, creeping herbs, shade-tolerant living mulch.
Root	Below-ground harvest, soil opening, nutrient cycling.	Sunchoke, skirret, groundnut, horseradish, regional perennial roots.
Vine	Vertical production where support exists.	Grapes, hardy kiwi, passionflower, hops, groundnut vines where appropriate.

9. Agroforestry and Staple Perennials: Alley Cropping, Chestnuts, Hazelnuts, and Succession

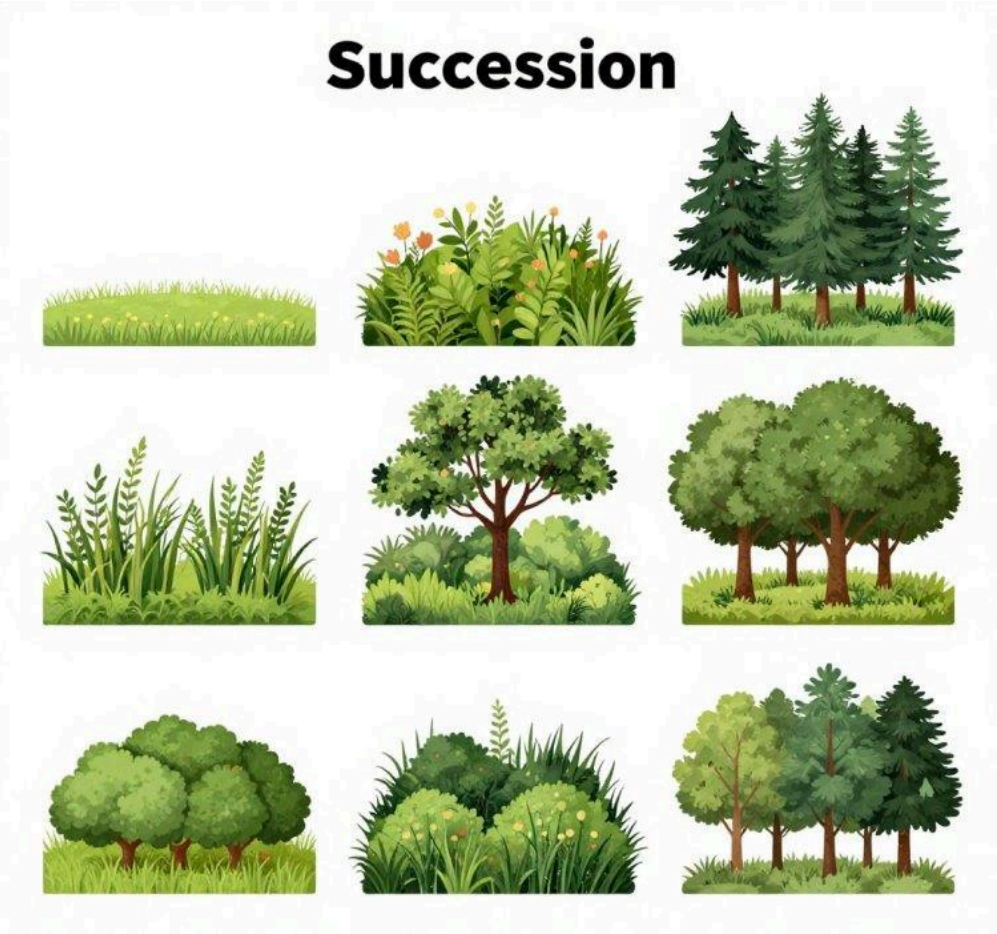


Alley cropping gives a transition path: short-term crops or forage between long-term tree rows.

Agroforestry is agriculture with trees intentionally integrated into crop and/or livestock production. It is often the most practical bridge between conventional field agriculture and full perennial complexity.

System	Practical application	Short-term yield	Long-term yield
Alley cropping	Tree rows with annuals, perennials, forage, or market crops in alleys.	Vegetables, grains, forage, herbs, berries, pollinator strips.	Nuts, fruit, timber, biomass, microclimate, soil organic matter.
Chestnut systems	A perennial staple-calorie system that can function more like tree-based grain.	Intercropped alleys, livestock forage, support crops during establishment.	Chestnuts for flour, livestock feed, direct sales, multi-generational tree production.
Hazelnut systems	Shrub-scale nut, protein, oil, hedgerow, wildlife, and windbreak production.	Hedgerow function, biomass, habitat, early nut yields as shrubs mature.	Nuts, oil, value-added products, livestock/wildlife feed, boundary plantings.
Successional agroforestry	Plant multiple life stages together and manage the transition through pruning, biomass, and replacement.	Annuals, biennials, fast support species, market crops.	Stable tree, shrub, understory, biomass, and fertility cycles.
Syntropic agriculture	High-biomass, densely planted, managed-succession system	Fast crops and biomass from early layers.	Soil creation, canopy development, diverse perennial yields.

	using timed pruning and rapid organic matter cycling.		



Perennial design works with succession: grassland to shrubs to young forest to mature productive canopy, while harvesting along the way.

Transition principle for farms.

Do not start by trying to replace the whole farm. Perennialize the margins and interfaces first: field edges, riparian strips, shelterbelts, hedgerows, paddock divisions, orchard alleys, and high-use homestead zones.

10. Livestock and Pollination: Silvopasture, Adaptive Grazing, and Apiary Integration

Silvopasture combines trees, forage, and animals on the same land unit when protection and recovery are planned.

Animals can become fertility machines when they are timed, protected, and moved correctly. They can also destroy young perennial systems if they are introduced before the system is ready.

Integration	What it gives the system	When to introduce it	Protection required
Silvopasture	Shade, animal welfare, manure cycling, forage diversity, mast, tree crop income, better land use.	After tree rows, fencing, water, recovery periods, and browse protection are ready.	Tree tubes, guards, electric fencing, rest periods, lane control.
Adaptive multi-paddock grazing	Rest-recovery cycles, soil cover, manure distribution, hoof impact, higher forage diversity.	When paddocks, water points, movement plan, and recovery tracking are prepared.	Do not overgraze. Time the move to plant recovery, not the calendar alone.
Poultry in orchards	Pest interruption, manure, scratching, fallen fruit cleanup, eggs/meat.	After trunks and roots are protected and flock pressure is matched to system age.	Short duration, predator protection, trunk protection, recovery period.
Apiary integration	Pollination, honey, wax, propolis, ecosystem indicator, education, income.	As soon as the surrounding bloom calendar and hive access are realistic.	Reliable forage, water, wind protection, safe human routes, bear/livestock protection where needed.

Bees belong in perennial food systems because pollination connects the entire harvest chain.

Apiary placement checklist.

Morning sun. Wind protection. Nearby clean water. Sequential bloom. Dry hive stands. Safe path access. Distance from heavy traffic. Consider neighbors, livestock, bears, mowing, and children before placement.

11. Community: Turning a Private Food System into Local Resilience

A perennial food system eventually creates surplus. Surplus needs a plan before it arrives: who harvests, who processes, who stores, who trades, who teaches, who manages, and who shows up when work has to get done.

Community layer	Purpose	Action
Workdays	Move labor bottlenecks: mulching, planting, pruning, fencing, harvest, processing.	Schedule one seasonal workday around a real job, not a vague gathering.
Skill nights	Turn your system into a teaching tool.	Host short sessions on pruning, grafting, seed saving, bee checks, food preservation, or water mapping.
Harvest rules	Prevent confusion and resentment.	Write what is private harvest, shared harvest, donation harvest, and sale harvest.
Surplus exchange	Build local economic resilience.	Track what each household produces and what they need. Start with simple barter or seasonal swap days.
Neighborhood demonstration	Make perennial food visible and normal.	Choose one front-yard, church, school, or community site where people can see the system working.

Community is a design layer.

If community involvement is not written into the plan, it will usually become an afterthought. Decide who is invited, what they are helping with, what they receive, and how stewardship continues.

12. North American Adaptation: Climate, Scale, and Site Type

The sequence stays the same, but emphasis changes by climate and scale. USDA zone is only a starting point. Microclimate, soil moisture, wind, slope, frost, disease pressure, and maintenance access often matter more than the zone number alone.

Context	Design emphasis	Practical adjustment
Cold / continental climates	Wind protection, south-facing exposure, frost drainage, snow capture, and open canopy for light.	Do not over-densify. Use glades, shelter, hardy species, and protected microclimates.
Humid temperate regions	Airflow, disease resistance, fungal balance, edge management, and careful spacing.	Choose resistant cultivars, avoid stagnant air, and maintain access for pruning and harvest.
Warm temperate / subtropical regions	More vertical stacking is possible, but water, heat, and storm resilience still lead.	Use denser layers where light allows, but design overflow, shade, and hurricane/storm access where relevant.
Semi-arid / Mediterranean regions	Water capture, mulch, spacing, drought-adapted species, and soil cover become dominant.	Do not plant high-water species before storage, infiltration, shade, and mulch are in place.
Homestead scale	Zones 1-2, daily use, kitchen access, family harvest, beauty, tools, water, and maintenance simplicity.	Keep the most managed species close. Distance kills maintenance.
Small farm scale	Water/access/mainframe, equipment flow, market plan, labor windows, and phased enterprise development.	Start with edges and test strips. Prove management before scaling.
Community scale	Governance, harvest policy, volunteer continuity, signage, education, public access, and maintenance.	Write stewardship rules before planting. Education may be the most reliable yield.

Common Mistakes and Fast Fixes

Mistake	What it usually causes	Fast fix
Starting with a plant list	Plants go into the wrong water, light, access, or maintenance context.	Start with purpose, map, water, access, and structure before final species.
Skipping overflow planning	Erosion, flooding, neighbor problems, foundation problems, or tree loss.	Every water-holding feature needs a safe overflow path.
Planting too dense in cool climates	Overshading, poor understory yields, disease pressure, and harvest frustration.	Design glades, edges, and thinning plans from the beginning.
No animal protection	Deer, rabbits, livestock, poultry, or rodents destroy young systems.	Budget for cages, guards, fencing, and recovery time as part of planting cost.
No access plan	Harvest and maintenance become too hard, so the system declines.	Map paths, cart routes, gates, and tool storage before planting.
No establishment budget	Trees survive the planting day but fail in years 1-3.	Budget mulch, water support, protection, replacement plants, and maintenance checks.
No community/stewardship agreement	Shared projects become neglected or disputed.	Write responsibilities, harvest rules, and workday rhythm before installation.

13. System Selector and Transition Pathways

Use this section to decide where to start. The right system is not the most impressive one. The right system is the one your land, budget, time, water, and maintenance capacity can support.

Your situation	Start here	Avoid starting with
Small backyard or suburban lot	Forest garden, rainwater catchment, one to three guilds, edible hedge, pollinator strip.	Large pond, dense canopy design, livestock before infrastructure.
Existing orchard	One-row conversion, guilds under selected trees, pollinator strips, living mulch, diversity insertions.	Removing all management at once or underplanting without access.
Open pasture with livestock	Silvopasture plan, paddock design, tree protection, water points, forage diversity.	Planting unprotected young trees directly into livestock pressure.
Conventional row-crop field	Field edges, alley-cropping test strip, shelterbelt, riparian buffer, keyline/soil-water assessment.	Whole-field food forest conversion with no market or labor plan.
Church, school, or community site	Governance, harvest rules, simple forest garden, visible signage, volunteer calendar.	Complex plantings with unclear maintenance responsibility.
Semi-arid or drought-prone property	Water mapping, roof catchment, earthworks where appropriate, mulch, drought-adapted hedgerows.	High-water species before water storage and soil cover.
Wet/clay property	Drainage reading, safe infiltration, raised berms, wet-tolerant species, elderberry/willow/aronia-style niches where appropriate.	Assuming all puddling is a problem or planting dry-site trees into wet holes.

14. Installation Calendar: 30 Days, 90 Days, Year 1, Years 2-5, and Beyond

Timeframe	Priority	Concrete actions
First 30 days	Stop guessing. Start observing and mapping.	Print aerial map. Mark water, sun, wind, access, existing species, utilities, structures, problems, and opportunities. Write your purpose statement. Check rules and constraints.
First 90 days	Choose the first practical system.	Select one starting area. Decide the pattern: guild, hedgerow, forest garden, orchard upgrade, alley test strip, apiary, or silvopasture prep. Build budget and material list.
Year 1	Prepare and plant backbone.	Fix water/access issues. Mulch. Protect from animals. Plant trees, windbreak, support species, and initial understory. Install labels and maintenance schedule.
Years 2-3	Fill, correct, and stabilize.	Replace losses. Add shrubs, groundcovers, vines, flowers, fertility plants. Adjust irrigation. Prune lightly. Start measuring harvest and maintenance.
Years 4-5	Shift toward production and management.	Thin where needed. Expand to next zone. Add careful livestock integration if ready. Strengthen apiary, processing, community, and surplus plan.
Year 5+	Manage succession.	Prune, thin, harvest, graze, propagate, teach, expand, and redesign based on what the system actually became.

A realistic first-year win.

A good first year is not always a full food forest. A good first year may be a correct water map, one finished hedgerow, one protected guild, one converted orchard row, or one silvopasture test paddock that actually survives.

15. Worksheets and Templates

How to use the worksheets.

Print these pages. Fill them out by hand. Then transfer the best notes onto your property map. The map is where decisions become real.

Worksheet 1: Purpose and Success Criteria

Field	Your notes
Property or project name	
Who this system is meant to feed or serve	
Primary goal: family food, market crops, medicine, livestock feed, education, habitat, beauty, surplus, other	
What would make this project successful in 1 year?	
What would make this project successful in 5 years?	
What would make this project successful in 20 years?	
Available weekly maintenance time	
Available installation budget this season	
Who makes final decisions?	

Who helps maintain the system?	

Worksheet 2: Legal, Utility, and Constraint Check

Check	Question	Status / Notes
Zoning	Are food production, sales, livestock, farmstand, classes, or public events allowed?	
Easements	Are there access, utility, drainage, or conservation easements?	
Utilities	Where are buried electric, gas, water, fiber, septic, sewer, and overhead lines?	
Water rules	Are ponds, dams, wells, diversions, creek work, or rainwater harvesting restricted?	
Setbacks	How far must plantings, fences, animals, compost, and structures be from boundaries?	
HOA / neighborhood	Are there landscape, livestock, fence, or front-yard restrictions?	
Public access	If public-facing, who carries liability and who governs harvest?	

Worksheet 3: Base Map Checklist

- [ ] Aerial image with property boundary
- [ ] Contour/topography map
- [ ] Existing buildings and structures
- [ ] Driveways, lanes, paths, gates, and fences
- [ ] Septic, wells, utilities, drainage lines
- [ ] Creeks, ponds, ditches, culverts, wet spots, erosion
- [ ] Soil types and soil test locations
- [ ] Existing trees, shrubs, weeds, grasses, invasive pressure
- [ ] Sun/shade zones by season
- [ ] Prevailing wind and frost pockets
- [ ] Animal pressure: deer, rabbits, livestock, poultry, wildlife
- [ ] Areas you will not disturb

Worksheet 4: Water Walk

Field	Your notes
Date and weather conditions	
Where water enters the property	
Where water leaves the property	

Where water moves too fast	
Where water ponds or sits	
Where erosion is visible	
Where soil stays driest	
Where roof water currently goes	
Where overflow could safely go	
Possible water storage or infiltration locations	

Worksheet 5: Zone and Sector Planning

Design concept	Use it to decide...	Your notes
Zone 0	Home, kitchen, daily patterns, observation center.	
Zone 1	Daily harvest, herbs, nursery, compost, small animals, rainwater, kitchen garden.	
Zone 2	Orchard, forest garden, berries, bees, poultry, high-value perennial crops.	
Zone 3	Market crops, alley cropping, larger orchards, silvopasture, grazing.	
Zone 4	Woodlot, forage, wild harvest, managed woodland, low-frequency use.	
Zone 5	Observation, wild ecology, minimal intervention.	
Sectors	Sun, wind, fire, views, noise, wildlife, neighbors, flooding, frost.	

Worksheet 6: System Pattern Selector

Candidate system	Why it fits this site	What must be true before installing	Start / wait
Hedgerow		Edge selected, species matched to light/water, access maintained.	

Orchard guild		Central tree healthy or selected, mulch/protection ready.	
Forest garden		Water/access clear, maintenance close enough, phased plan written.	
Orchard polyculture		Pollination plan, spacing, disease resistance, harvest access.	
Alley cropping		Equipment width, tree row spacing, market/forage plan.	
Chestnut/hazelnut system		Long-term land control, spacing, cultivar, harvest/processing plan.	
Silvopasture		Fencing, water, tree protection, rest periods.	
Apiary integration		Forage, water, stand location, access, neighbor/livestock safety.	

Worksheet 7: Guild Design Template

Field	Your notes
Central tree or primary crop	
Water source and soil moisture pattern	
Sun/shade pattern now	
Expected shade pattern in 5-10 years	
Fertility/support species	
Pollinator species by bloom season	
Aromatic/pest-balancing species	
Living mulch/groundcover	
Root or vine layer if appropriate	

Access path and harvest reach	
Mulch and protection plan	
What gets pruned, chopped, dropped, divided, or removed over time	

Worksheet 8: Species Selection Matrix

Species	Layer / role	Light	Moisture	Harvest / function	Notes

Worksheet 9: First Installation Sprint

Task	Owner	Due date	Materials / cost	Done
Print map and mark water/access/structures				
Check utilities, rules, and no-dig zones				
Choose first installation area				
Order/propagate plants				
Source mulch/compost/woodchips				
Install protection: fence, guards, cages, labels				
Prepare soil and water support				
Plant backbone species				
Install understory/support species				

Schedule first maintenance check				

Worksheet 10: Community Activation Plan

Field	Your notes
Who should see or help with this project?	
What is the first simple workday task?	
What can people learn by participating?	
What surplus might exist in year 1?	
What surplus might exist in year 5?	
What is private harvest?	
What is shared harvest?	
What could be traded, sold, donated, or taught?	
Where will updates, photos, and lessons be shared?	

16. Practitioner Backbone and Further Study

This resource is built from the webinar teaching and the practitioner sequence review. The strongest shared pattern across the reviewed practitioners is not "plant a guild and hope." It is: purpose, people, place, mapping, observation, mainframe, pattern, species, site preparation, phased planting, establishment, and adaptive management.

Practitioner / source	Best contribution to this guide
Lucian Toma	Front-load mission, people, regional context, site information, constraints, opportunities, concept design, rationale, and implementation roadmaps.
Rob Avis / Verge Permaculture	Mainframe ordering: base map and contour understanding, then water, access, structures, then planting details.
Geoff Lawton / Zaytuna Farm	Food forest sequence: water/access/structures, orientation, stacking, guilds, diversity, patterning, microclimate, ground prep, succession, soil building, animals, and maintenance.
David Holmgren	Observe and interact; design from patterns to details; use zones, sectors, infrastructure, and household proximity to order design.
Dave Jacke and Eric Toensmeier	Temperate forest garden process: goals, site assessment, paper design, site preparation, planting, management, harvest, and coevolution.
Martin Crawford / Agroforestry Research Trust	Temperate forest gardens need light, glades, wind protection, clearings, layered planting, and maintenance.
University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry	North American agroforestry planning, phased implementation, market thinking, and activity schedules.
University of Minnesota Extension	Community food forests require partnerships, policies, maintenance, and harvest governance.
USDA Agroforestry and Plant Hardiness Zone Map	Baseline tools for agroforestry definition, climate adaptation, and plant hardiness selection.

Final Field Note

Perennial food systems are not installed by copying somebody else's plant list. They are installed by reading the land, ordering the design correctly, and building in phases your family can actually maintain.

Start with water. Respect access. Place structures after those are understood. Build living infrastructure. Plant trees with support. Add layers as the system proves itself. Bring animals in only when protection and recovery are ready. Add pollination. Then organize community around the surplus.

The goal is not just food in the ground. The goal is a system that becomes more productive, more useful, and more rooted every year.

Selected Reference Links

- Verge Permaculture - Mainframe design and food forest design resources
- Geoff Lawton / Zaytuna Farm - Food Forest Course outline
- David Holmgren - Essence of Permaculture
- Dave Jacke and Eric Toensmeier - Edible Forest Gardens
- Martin Crawford / Agroforestry Research Trust - Forest gardening resources
- University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry - Agroforestry training manuals
- University of Minnesota Extension - Planting a community food forest
- USDA Agroforestry and USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map

THE INDEPENDENT AMERICAN GARDENER

Food - Water - Shelter - Surplus

About the author:

Jamon Mysliwiec is known as **The Independent American Gardener** and is the founder of the **TIAG Community**. He is a Certified Permaculture Designer, natural beekeeper, husband, father of seven, and the lead designer behind Haven Permaculture's professional land consultation and regenerative property design work.

His work focuses on helping families move from scattered ideas into practical, ordered action across the four pillars of family self-sufficiency: **Food, Water, Shelter, and Surplus**.

Through Haven Permaculture, Jamon walks properties with landowners, reads the patterns already present on the site, and helps them understand what their land can actually do before they spend thousands of dollars on plants, infrastructure, animals, earthworks, or improvements in the wrong order.

An on-site consultation is for families, homesteaders, landowners, churches, farms, and community projects who want direct, practical guidance from someone who has designed these systems professionally and lived them personally.

During an on-site consultation, Jamon evaluates water movement, access, structures, food production potential, soil, vegetation, microclimates, livestock opportunities, perennial systems, and the right order of implementation for your property.

Before you guess, spend, plant, build, or clear — walk your land with someone who can help you see the whole system.

Book an on-site permaculture consultation with Jamon through www.HavenPermaculture.com

Make your home a haven. Build the system in the right order.

PRICING & TRAVEL

On-Site Consultation
$500 / visit

With 5-Page Follow-Up Report
$1,000 / visit

Travel from Ava, MO: $1.25/mile round trip
+ $150/night lodging when required

Virtual consultation available — included
U.S., territories & Canada on request

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Want a consultation or Property Design Support?
Just shoot us a quick text and follow the prompts to get connected with Jamon!

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