

Design/Build Studio 4:
ARC 407-510, 607-609, Design VII-X,
RSFP/ Rural Sanitary Facilities Prototype
MWF 2:00-5:00, Spring 2013
Adamson/Ceo

Earth Learning:

Earth Learning was founded in 2003 in response to a grassroots need to put Earth literacy into action. Earth Learning emerged as a result of the work of the Earth Literacy network between Miami Dade College's Earth Ethics Institute (Miami), Genesis Farm (Blairstown, NJ), St. Thomas University's Center for Healing the Earth (Miami), and the Narrow Ridge Earth Literacy Center (Washburn, TN), which all continue today.

As a budding organization, Earth Learning's history is fed by the deep roots of these long-established organizations to reflect Earth as the model for learning and functional sustainability. Through this history, Earth Learning also fosters an awareness of global interdependence, ecological integrity through biological diversity, and the natural processes that sustain life.

Through its more local historical lineage, Earth Learning carries forward the vision of Mac Smith Jr. and the programs he founded at MDC including Life Lab, the Environmental Demonstration Center at Kendall Campus, Earth Literacy, and the Earth Ethics Institute. As a result of these programs, a growing need for avenues of action in the larger community arose, and hence the vision for Earth Learning, creating a place where society and nature can meet in a mutually-beneficial, restorative manner.

Earth Learning's earliest projects began with weekly gatherings to dream, express, share, process, create and plan; establishing a library of earth-related literature; offering ecology fieldtrips and workshops; planning community ventures and partnerships; planning and initiating restoration projects and assessing feasibility of establishing a learning center.

We are now at a pivotal moment in our history, where we have begun to realize our organizational dreams!

Vision

Earth Learning is a collaborative that inspires people, ventures, projects, and activities through ecological learning experiences and is dedicated to growing a life-sustaining culture in the Greater Everglades bioregion

Special Focus

We are part of a global movement that is transitioning us toward an ecologically sustainable world. Earth Learning believes that our food culture is at the core of our relationship with Earth, as individuals and communities. For this reason, Earth Learning has begun to fashion its programs around inspiring the birth of a local, just, and sustainable food shed in the Greater Everglades.

Mission

Earth Learning is a 501c(3) non-profit community-based ecological awareness organization whose mission it is to be a catalyst in the transition toward a life-sustaining culture in the Greater Everglades Bioregion by:

- Creating a space for global ecological movements to unfold locally;
- Forming a container to accumulate collective wisdom and for holding a shared vision;
- Creating capacity through events, courses, workshops, and trainings; and
- Facilitating social entrepreneurs and ventures.

Earth Learning Demo Kitchen

The site is both static and dynamic. Students will be limited by the constraints of designing for the road, but must consider the fixed operation of the structure set in a variety of different sites from street edge to open agricultural field. The site is currently leased by Earth Learning, work patterns may shift, and thus, the structure must be mobile. Additionally, the owner also owns and operates *Guara Ki Eco Farm* in Redland, Florida. *Guara Ki Eco Farm* is an instructional sustainable agricultural grove. The structure must therefore be able to work in a variety of site locations.

Programmatic Foundations

- **The Bioregion** is a useful container defined by nature to encompass what is local. Instead of arbitrarily imposed, political boundaries, bioregions offer us a scale for everything local to unfold that is aligned with natural systems, such as watersheds or drainage basin. In southern Florida, this is the Greater Everglades ecosystem.
- **Relocalization** is a strategy to build societies based on the local production of food, energy and goods, and the local development of currency, governance and culture. The main goals of relocalization are to increase community energy security, to strengthen local economies, and to improve environmental conditions and social equity. The relocalization strategy was developed in response to the environmental, social, political and economic impacts of global over-reliance on cheap energy. The term can be applied to entire economies as well as sub-systems, such as local food systems. (see www.relocalize.net)
- **Permaculture Design** is an approach to designing human systems that mimic the relationships found in natural ecologies creating abundance, diversity, and resilience. Central to permaculture are the three ethics: care for the earth, care for people and fair share. Permaculture Design can be applied at any level from backyard gardens to whole bioregions, from personal finances to entire economic systems and communities. (see <http://www.permacultureprinciples.com/index.php>)
- **The Transition Movement** is a vibrant, grassroots movement that seeks to build community resilience in the face of such challenges as peak oil, climate change and the economic crisis. It represents one of the most promising ways of engaging people in strengthening their communities against the effects of these challenges, resulting in a life that is more abundant, fulfilling, equitable and socially connected. (see www.transitionculture.org, www.transitionnetwork.org, www.transitionus.org)

Our Approach to Learning:

- **Ecology**, broadly-defined, is the understanding that everything is tied to everything else.

- **Ecological Learning** presents learning experiences that enable and encourage participants to see beyond the visible in the physical world, using their imagination and intuition to see all the hidden connections that tie everything to everything else. Through Ecological Learning we gain a deeper understanding of how our actions or inactions affect our natural ecosystems and our planets' life support systems. Ecological Learning strives to widen the participant's circles of compassion to include the entire community of human and non-human beings.
- **Action-based Learning** is not a simple, one-way transfer of information, but a method of learning by doing. Participants are engaged in the learning conceptually (head), emotionally-invested (heart) and physically (hands). The end result is that participants have moved through the process and have begun to internalize it, rather than just intellectualize it.

Learning Experiences

The advent of chemical-based factory farming and long-distance food travel enabled by an era of cheap oil, is coming to a close. This presents various imminent challenges: Many of the sub-tropical fruit, vegetable, and nut varieties that grow well here, are not well known to most people. A healthy, just, and sustainable **local** food movement is possible when people learn the myriad of ways to prepare, eat and store the bounty of local foods that grow here; a whole new local food culture is needed. Likewise, the art of preserving food to last beyond any particular growing season will also become necessary. People will need to learn many basic skills and invent a local food culture if they are to begin re-localizing their economies and strengthen their communities to be resilient in the face of inevitable changes and challenges that lay ahead.