

Assessment and Recommendations for the Karges Property

Just as an engineer would create the vision for a project and then think backwards to the smallest detail so must the gardener. Step it out. Proceed slowly and with thought. The biological world works differently than a machine but both systems will provide feedback over time. Pay attention to this. The garden will tell you what it needs whether you give it daily focused attention or not. The difference between machines and gardens is that the natural world is intrinsically complex and not as cut and dry. The biology of life is in a constant state of change. We never step in the same river twice. Get to know the natural cycles and utilize the biological intelligence as efficiently as possible. The key here is that this is an ongoing process it doesn't stop. If you don't take care of you natural surroundings, nature will ultimately self-select for you.

Your site has many varied features that need attention: heavily shaded by large oak trees (including the neighbors), black locust, elm, etc. The soil is compacted and needs work. To track the movement of the sun to harvest it's energy, you will need to observe and use sector analysis. This will guide you in discovering the proper niche for each plant. Observe!

Your project is very ambitious. The key here is management and maintenance. I recommend that you hire local permaculture practitioners to work with you. Stage it out. It makes sense to work in the greenhouse and on the green roof first. Also, plant perennials and trees and their nurse plants so they will have a jump-start.

Explore your resources deeply. How many functions can you find for what you have in place and for what you intend to place on the property. Don't simply find them, make use of them. Review your 150 questions from the course to give you ideas on how to proceed. Become a gardener. Do what is doable. Stage it out step by step. Go slow and give it time. Educate yourself on the care of annuals, perennials, etc. Use resources given in the course. Take a year to work on your annual gardens from seed to seed. Understand the yearly cycle by tending to the soil and plants in the greenhouse and on the green roof.

Extend your season through the year by learning how to preserve your harvest. Should the power go down, you need to develop a back-up plan. By putting up food, this will insure that you have something to eat.

Understand soil preparation, seed varieties, and growth characteristics, plant needs, water needs, temperature fluctuations, sunlight, fertilization, etc. Take copious notes everyday – what you experience with your senses, take pictures, record everything for future reference, and get the entire family involved.

It is possible that in order to have a high-yielding landscape some of the larger trees need to be harvested in the future to bring in more sunlight.

Chickens, bees and rabbits should wait. They require constant care. Bring the animals in slowly, one at a time, to see if it's right for you.

Some recommended easy projects to get you and your family started are:

- Vermicompost in the greenhouse
- Compost tea set-up
- Outdoor compost bins

Bring as much organic matter to the site as possible. The key here is to build healthy soil. All of these practices are geared toward doing this. I'll provide some instructions sheets.

PLANS

We have put together a basic mock-up of some of the perennials that should be included in the plan. We will create drawings of two or three recommended guilds. Should you want a master plan and narrative, we can discuss the parameters and options. It is possible for me to make seasonal trips to work with you personally to monitor your progress. But it is also important to tap into the local permaculture community to work with inspired people to build a support network. We know that plants need attention everyday.

RECOMMEDED STEPS

Complete design

Infrastructure:

Soil

Bring in topsoil and compost to loosen and incorporate in to the soil.
Get a comprehensive soil and test and acquire necessary amendments.

Swales

Dig swales to retain as much water on the site as possible according to perk test.

Layout and Borders

Follow the specifications provided by the landscape architect with our modifications.

Irrigation

Use drip irrigation according to final master plan.

Compost

Install compost bins and start making compost.

Plants:

Annuals

Select plant varieties and acquire seeds and starts.

Perennials (Trees and shrubs)

Acquire and install plants indicated. Many of the plants are difficult to acquire from traditional sources. We'll provide local contacts and mail order sources to

help you find the plants.

Seeds- Other seeds, such as cover crops, wild flowers and native grasses can likely be acquired from your brother-in-law or from local or mail order sources.

Equipment:

Acquire a set of standard, top-of-the-line hand tools.

Greenhouse:

We suggest you create a functional design for the greenhouse based on your goals and objectives. Important design considerations should include: workflow, automation maintain ace, general care, planting regimes and esthetics. A process for documenting the greenhouse operation should also be incorporated in the plan. The plan will also suggest the necessary materials, supplies and equipment necessary. We also suggest that vermicoposting be incorporated into the greenhouse operation. Observe and have fun!

Labor:

Planning. I recommend that you take the next step and do a detailed master plan based on the assessment and recommendations outlined above. However, important work can be started based on much of the existing landscape plan and best practices for landscape development.

Implementation

Maintenance

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