

FAQs

Barking Frogs Permaculture Center

Internships

Q. What is an FAQ?

A. A FAQ is Internet jargon for a Frequently Asked Question.

Q. What do you charge for intern training?

A. There is no charge. We provide training in exchange for work done at Barking Frogs Permaculture Center. The work relates to the implementation and management of our permaculture design. The training is for the task assigned.

Q. Do you provide a stipend?

A. No. While there are some projects where we would provide a stipend if possible, there just isn't any money to do so. If you have paid tuition at a college or university lately, you know just what training costs. We have designed a program that anyone can afford, but we can't further subsidize your training. In the past, we have been able to help some interns find part-time work to earn their spending money.

Q. Do you pay transportation costs?

A. No. All your personal expenses are your own responsibility.

Q. Will you accept interns from other countries?

A. Yes, in theory. But this as never worked out. Interns need to have sufficient English language skill to follow instructions accurately.

Q. Will you pay our airfare to the USA?

A. No. Unfortunately, we do not have funds to that. Some groups will help you with transportation, provide a small stipend, and place you in internships with grass roots programs such as ours. We do not maintain a list of such programs.

Q. Can you help me obtain a visa to be an intern at your center?

A. No. We have no official status with the US government. Obtaining a visa is between you and immigration officials. We cannot assume official responsibility for anyone who comes to the USA.

Q. Can I earn money if I come to the USA to intern at Barking Frogs Permaculture Center?

A. This is a difficult matter. Anyone visiting the USA on a visa requires a green card to legally receive pay for work. These are difficult to obtain. You also would need an automobile to commute to and from your job. Assume that the only money you will have in the USA is the money that you bring.

Q. How much work will I have to do each week?

A. Typically, we expect interns to do 40 hours of work, including any training required to do that work. We are very flexible about scheduling to allow interns to have part-time jobs or commute efficiently, etc.

Q. What skills do I need?

A. You must be able to understand spoken English well enough to follow instructions. No other skills are required, though we do like to know what other skills you bring as we may employ them from time to time.

Q. Will I have to work very hard?

A. We are far more interested in efficiency, quality of work done, and enjoyment of the work and the setting, than in how much energy you expend. Lethargic people, however, do not fit here. If you want to do the minimum of work for what you can get in training, you are not thinking in a way that fits here. Neither is it useful to obsessively work. We want everyone to "have a life," as the expression goes. The work should be a part of that good life to the extent that is reasonable.

Q. What work will I be doing?

A. That's a good question, but not one simply answered. We have so many useful things that can be done here that it is very easy for us to tailor a large part of an intern's work assignments to meet the intern's

goals. Everyone here shares in the routine tasks, also, and not all of them are equally interesting. Sometimes work on a project that is allied to an intern's goal has very tedious aspects. For example, building chinampas requires a lot of routine work. Once built, the investment of work pays off. We would not be doing the intern a favor by letting him/her play with an existing chinampa, for example, without the experience of what it takes to create one.

Q. How much decision-making leeway would I have as an intern?

A. Initially, very little. Dan Hemenway will assign your tasks and provide whatever training is needed for you to complete them. As you become more attuned to our work, probably we will assign a project that will be mostly your responsibility. This requires that you plan to be here long enough to complete the project. You will have some decision making input if you are assigned a project. The less supervision you require, the better it is for us, too, as we have other work to be doing. Whenever practical, we like to give an intern a project, even if it is just building one raised bed or managing a certain area of newly planted trees. This gives a feeling of pride in accomplishment. That is good for both the intern and the project itself. Where a certain type of project would be helpful on your resume, we will make reasonable adjustments to give you some responsibility for it.

Q. Will I learn Permaculture Design as an intern?

A. Not directly. Internships provide training for tasks that the intern performs. To even begin participating in the design process, one needs a certificate course in permaculture. Only interns who have such training will be assigned design work and given additional training as required. However, all interns are welcome to attend our online Permaculture Design Correspondence Course **as monitors** to the extent that the course schedule overlaps their internship stay. For legal reasons, we charge active interns who monitor the course \$1.00 tuition. If you monitor the entire course, you get to keep the course CD. (Other reading materials are your own responsibility.) The course schedule varies from year to year at our convenience. However, it has never been offered in our summer months. So

summer internships usually do not include this benefit. **We will not teach permaculture design to interns outside of the course structure.**

That is what the course is for. We offer Advanced Permaculture Training (APT) and apprentice mentoring programs for graduates of our certificate course. Our reason for providing this scholarship is to underscore that the internship itself is not the place to learn permaculture design, and to head off questions that we cannot justify answering individually.

Q. Will I learn anything else.

A. We are always willing to explain the reasons for an assigned task. If you are here long enough, you start to see how the various features at Barking Frogs Permaculture come together, and how they become more integrated as we complete each stage of implementation. This will be a great help to you when you come to study permaculture design.

Q. Will I be able to use your library?

A. Not generally. We sometimes lend interns books that match a particular interest or project. Usually, these are books for which we have duplicates. We have not had good experiences with people using our books. The University of Florida in Gainesville has extensive collections.

Q. Will I have free use of a computer for online work? What about phones?

A. If you bring a computer, you will have free use of it. We will assign a desk space for your use on a scheduled basis. We have discontinued telephone service to the permaculture center because we never used it. Therefore, you must have something like a Blackberry, or you must use computer facilities in a local library.

I will need some income if I intern at Barking Frogs Permaculture Center. How can I earn it?

A. Mainly, there are three ways.

- 1) The most obvious one is to get a part time job. We have no problem adjusting the work schedule of an intern to fit the requirements of a part-time employer.

2) Over time, an intern can develop a profit sharing enterprise at Barking Frogs Permaculture Center. When the income that the intern develops exceeds our accumulated costs in having the intern, we begin profit sharing. This can develop into something called commonworks, an actual livelihood in which the former intern is now a kind of partner in a business. This route to self-employment requires no capital or startup expertise on the part of the intern, because we already have the land base and can share expertise. Eventually, a commonworks business may separate and become a distinct enterprise, located elsewhere, or it may continue indefinitely allied with Barking Frogs Permaculture Center.

3) A third route is to write grants for various projects that we do not yet undertake due to lack of funds. The intern writes him/herself into the grant as some kind of assistant. We have material on grant writing, can sometimes support the intern attending courses on grantsmanship, and can support the writing of the program narrative and budget portions of the application.

If you need money, you will need a part-time job for a while as the other options take some time to develop. There is no point in thinking about options 2 and 3 in, say, an internship of only three months.

Q. Can I get college credit for the internship?

A. That depends on your college. If your major field of study is somehow allied to permaculture, you may even be able to arrange special credit even where no formal internship credit policy exists. Moreover, if you take the full design course during the internship, that in itself should be worth about a semester's credits. The online course runs about 6 months.

Q. Can you help me go further in permaculture after the internship?

A. Probably. For one thing, we are open to people who join us as collaborators in the programs of Barking Frogs Permaculture Center. There is more to do than we can accomplish. Moreover, we have contacts in other countries where we need Permaculture Corps people to help in the establishment of permaculture in those regions.

We are frequently contacted by people in such places, where such work would be useful if we had the people available. You would need to acquire our basic permaculture certificate to move toward any of these options.

Q. Will you house and feed me?

A. Not as part of the internship. However, we expect most interns to need a place to stay and we have room in the Permaculture Center building for that.* People stay as our personal guests, not in exchange for any work. This must be very clear or we are in a difficult legal position. In any case, we do not require interns to stay with us nor are we required to provide them with a place to stay. That is a separate matter that we can discuss when the time comes. Likewise, daily meals are not a feature of the internship. However we will not let anyone go hungry, and we have basic staples available for people who want to prepare meals for themselves. The Permaculture Center building is a doublewide mobile home that originally served as a residence, so it has a full kitchen. In keeping with the permaculture principle of sharing surplus, we may have vegetables from the garden, eggs, etc., to give away from time to time. Interns with us for several months can also have private gardens, there is often game (squirrel, raccoon, possum, etc.) and sometimes fish available, etc. Once a week everyone on site shares a dinner, for which we provide the food.

***UPDATE ON HOUSING:** The guest room in the permaculture center needs major repair and will not be available until this is done. We have greater priorities at present. An intern could put part time work into moving these repairs forward. Meanwhile, an intern could live off-site or bring a tent for camping. Of course we provide emergency shelter to campers in the case of severe storms. 5/1/06

Q. What are the most attractive features of the internship?

A. • First of all, you will be receiving training from Dan Hemenway. In the early 1980s, Bill Mollison approved the first three people in the Western Hemisphere to serve as permaculture teachers. Of those three, only Dan Hemenway remains an active teacher today. He has had extensive experience with training and supervision of comparable projects.

- Each internship is customized to the interests and needs of the intern, to the extent possible. At least half, probably more, of the work you do will further your training needs and goals.

- We moved here because of the beauty of the place. There are many kinds of beauty on the Earth, but we have found none that surpass the beauty of this setting. It is perfect for people of a reflective frame of mind, in particular.

- Obviously, if you are in a position to take advantage to monitor the design course and/or the commonworks options, these are tremendous advantages that may not be attainable any other way.

Q. OK, what are the drawbacks?

A. Well, that partially depends on the person.

- We do not want illegal drugs or tobacco on our property, period. This is not a judgment regarding people who use these substances, simply what we want for what is, after all, our personal space.

- If you like quiet and are self-motivated, you will not find the isolation and lack of social interaction here a problem. Dan is reclusive and Cynthia is getting that way. We are happy to provide training and supervision where needed. Dan otherwise likes to work alone almost invariably. Cynthia usually is not here during the day. You might be the only intern. Dan will probably shoot you or at least your radio if you play loud music. If we have two interns (our self-imposed limit), each will have different work assignments. Dan is of the philosophy that the best way to double the output of a team of two people is to send one of them away. So, if you have a large need for social interaction, stop reading. You will not be happy here.

- Curiosity is a great trait, but it has its down side. If you like to rummage and wander where you haven't been invited, you had best do it elsewhere.

- You really need your own transportation, a car, motor scooter, (dangerous on our access roads) etc. One intern did use a bicycle to get into town (a crossroads with a gas station and a feed store), but we regard the causeway to the paved road too dangerous to bicycle. It is narrow, rough, unpaved, and drops steeply into a marsh well stocked with alligators, poisonous snakes, etc.

Q. What kinds of people are you looking for?

A. The most important traits are

- 1) Absolute honesty and forthrightness and
- 2) Deep respect for private space and boundaries.
- 3) Almost as important is motivation and the desire to learn what we can teach.
- 4) As we have already suggested, the lazy person and the workaholic are equally inappropriate here.
- 5) We will probably become friends if you also have a sense of humor and a deep appreciation of beauty. A reverence for life would not hurt.
- 6) If you have the knack for knowing when to take initiative and when to come back for guidance, that is great, but a willingness to acquire this rare skill is almost as good.
- 7) We do not much care about race, color, sexual preference, etc., and we would not enjoy the company of people who make an issue of these matters.
- 8) We will rejoice in any skills you happen to bring, but we do not weigh them a whole lot in screening applicants. Your quality of character is our major interest, seconded by your motivation.
- 9) All interns **must** be 18 years of age or older at the time they begin an internship here.

Q. What are the other considerations that I should know about?

A.

- **First, if you are allergic to insect bites, you should not come here.** No one escapes the fire ants.
- We have a goodly number of poisonous snakes on the place and we do not allow any harm to come to them. Mostly these are water moccasins, which are not afraid of people and will neither get out of your way nor change course if you happen to be in their way. Some are very large. You need to be aware of where you put your hands and feet. Every few years we see a coral snake and there are rattlesnakes around. We have seen no scorpions, but they could be here. And, of course, there are alligators. You are more likely to be struck by lightning than bit by a poisonous snake or alligator, but this is no place for a space-shot.

- The summer climate is hot and humid and the central air conditioning in the permaculture center died of old age.

Q. Sounds great! How do I sign up?

A. We have a fairly formal screening process. Screening is mutual and we put all the negative stuff we can think of out front so that we can avoid wasted time. If you remain interested, first you write two essays, **each no more than 500 words.** The first essay should introduce yourself as a person, so we can get a sense of with whom we are talking. We can send you our annual letter that is sort of the same thing, if we managed to get one out recently. The second essay should state your goals for an internship with us. Do not waste space on goals that we clearly cannot help you meet. We will review the goals and tell you candidly our assessment of the likelihood that an internship of the duration you propose can meet each individual goal. This is your chance to back out if we just are not going to meet, for whatever reason, goals that are central to you. The statement of goals will be later used by Dan in designing your work program. Therefore, think them through carefully.

If we are all jolly about the essays, we will schedule an interview. This is our last chance to check each other out before a go/no-go decision. **Do not hold back questions for the interview that you could ask in advance.** If we suspect that someone has done this, we may nix the internship for that reason alone. We don't have time for mind games. Before the internship interview, you must return to us a signed copy of our liability waiver. We will only send directions after we receive the waiver. Sometimes we schedule the interview at nearby Gainesville or Ocala instead of at our place.

If you have to travel so far that a separate trip for an interview would pose a hardship, we *might* arrange a trial period. It is doubly important to resolve all possible questions before travel in that case. Do not expect the trial period if you have not arranged it before leaving home. Of course, either of us can back out anyway if we don't like the interview.

Q. An internship with Barking Frogs Permaculture Center may not work out for me. Is there any other way that I can become involved?

A. Yes. There are several options, in that case. The most obvious is to work on our projects as a volunteer. The screening process and rules are the same as for interns. There can be some training benefits and the commitment from each of us is much less. Some kinds of projects suit volunteering at a distance. You can also arrange for us to lead workshops or teach a course in your region. Or you can take our Online Permaculture Design Course as a tuition student. We have a large selection of publications that you can simply buy and read. A part-time internship is possible for local people.

Q. All this screening sounds like a lot of fuss. Is it OK if I just drop by and talk with you for a few hours and look your place over?

A. **No. Absolutely not.** Don't even think it. Dan has experience living in a "permaculture zoo" and he didn't like it. Our home is our retreat and we protect that privacy. Since there is a possibility that some good could come from self-invited visitors, we do consider requests for visits arranged at least a month in advance, provided it is understood that the visitors will spend at least 90 percent of the time on site working at assigned tasks. This needs to be a rain or shine work commitment, because we divert time from other tasks to prepare for the work that you will do. Typically, we cut surplus vegetation to be gathered by volunteers. If they do not show up, the biomass becomes destructive, blotting out areas, instead of being used for compost or mulch where needed. Otherwise, **Barking Frogs Permaculture Center is not open to the public.**

Do you have any other questions? Please ask them.

Barking Frogs Permaculture Center

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