

Education

Permaculture in Kinsale

When I first contacted Kinsale Further Education College about their Permaculture course, I was told that due to the demand, I should apply before Christmas 2005 to be sure of a place starting in September 2006. I applied in November, was offered a place, took a career break from my teaching job and moved to county Cork in the hot summer of last year. After my first week on the course I had played some ice-breaking games with my classmates, discussed green ethics, planted herbs in a mulched bed, cooked pizzas in an outdoor cob oven, made compost, learned the details of peak oil and been given an assignment to research the life strategy and culinary and medicinal uses of sea beet. I was part of a group of smart, radical, funny, environmentally clued-in students, aged 16-44, from all over the country and beyond. This was the best mid-life crisis I'd ever had.

Kinsale College is home to the first two-year full-time Permaculture course in the world. It was set up by Rob Hopkins in 2001 and for me it was the chance to put into practice my ever-growing green principles, to equip myself with the skills needed for a low energy future and to explore the

possibility of a career change. Permaculture is about learning from nature and designing systems that are sustainable, be they your home, garden, farm or community. It is about creating a life that is fulfilling and abundant. Its ethics are summed up as: earth care, people care, fair shares.

The course has an excellent combination of theory, practice and plain get-your-hands-dirty enjoyment. There is always something new and fascinating to be learnt. We have been on numerous field trips to observe and participate in the practice of sustainability



such as organic growing or building with cob. We have had visiting speakers to talk about green architecture, renewable energy and wastewater systems. Every week we go on an ecology field trip to look at flora and fauna, and there is always some planting, pruning or other gardening work to be done in the college grounds. For one of my projects I'm part of a group growing garlic. We have our winter crop well established, and I now know that it's hardy, easy to grow and useful for keeping pests away from other plants.

After a few months I realised just how many important life skills I had been lacking. Here I was learning how to build using sustainable materials, how to grow some of my own food, how to build a rocket stove, how to charge a battery using a solar panel, how to coppice hazel and willow, how to identify different plants and know what their culinary and medicinal uses are. I found myself asking 'What have I been doing all these years?' This is the kind of information everyone should know. It also raises the question: why aren't there more courses like this all over the country?



The first year comprises modules in Permaculture Design, Organic Production Principles, Sustainable Woodland Management and Field Ecology. In second year there are modules in Conflict Resolution, Community Leadership and Start your own business. The tutors are all extremely knowledgeable and experienced, the atmosphere is relaxed and the work is highly enjoyable. It's exciting and inspiring, and there is a sense that what we are doing might actually make a difference. Permaculture design is a design for a more sustainable future and with the impending challenges of climate change and peak oil, it is to be embraced as an important part of the solution.

2-year full time PLC course

Practical Sustainability

Kinsale Further Education College

- Permaculture-Woodland management
- Organic Growing-Green Building
- Renewable Energy-Community Leadership
- FETAC Level 5 Courses also in:
- Outdoor Education Instructor Training
- Art
- Theatre Performance
- TV & Film Production & Multi Media Production:
- Culture & Irish Heritage Studies

021 4772275
www.kinsalefurthered.ie

