

How to Design a Permaculture Orchard



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The origins of the permaculture orchard

Before I returned to Europe, I spent time on [Melliodora](#) with David Holmgren. You know, one of the guys who invented permaculture.

His farm was an eye opener for me, they haven't been in a supermarket for five years - at least 85% of what they eat comes from the property itself, and a lot of their nutritional intake was coming from their permaculture orchard.

Although only on an acre or so, there were nonetheless 120 fruit and nut trees in this European-style mixed orchard...

The orchards yield two tons of produce which, in combination with the house gardens, provides for their predominately vegetarian diet and creates a seasonal surplus – mostly consumed in residential courses or traded with the local community.

With this short guide, I want you to bring a step closer to designing your own permaculture orchard by learning from [David's example](#). You'll be able to produce all the fruit and nuts you'll ever need and we'll tackle the first important step in the design process - the layout.



Designing a Permaculture Orchard

Inspired by David's example, I knew that I wanted a permaculture orchard on my farm, but...

...I had no idea how to start designing it, or how I would lay out the trees. I knew I didn't want them to be in straight rows...

So, when I asked David about the layout of his orchard, he said that trees are planted in rows following approximate contours.

Here is the image of the orchard layout...



You see, if you were to follow the real contours of your land with each of your rows, soon you will realize that their width would start to vary, and, depending on your terrain, sometimes significantly...

With a permaculture orchard, we're not trying to design a food forest with swales like Geoff Lawton would, rather we need a uniform width between the tree rows...

Ok, but how would you actually do this and create a layout for an orchard on your terrain?

Actually, that's easier than you think - here's how I've achieved it...

What you need to do is first find your reference line, an original row that all other rows will be referenced against...

On my property, I've done this by taking a contour mid-way up my slope as my reference line. Following this, I knew that all other rows would be an exact copy of this one...



Subsequently, once I'd decided on the width of my rows (in my case five meters), I copy-pasted that line across the land, upslope and downslope and... that's how you create a layout for your orchard - it's that easy!



Now you just stake/mark that layout on the ground, and you're ready to start putting trees in the ground, today, in a month, next season...

You'll probably need a lot of trees, so I recommend that you learn how to grow them by yourself and save some serious money. I wrote an extensive guide on how to start a permaculture nursery; you can check it out here.

I know there is more to designing a permaculture orchard than what I described in this short guide, but I hope that I gave you a good idea on where to start.

Finally, let me know your results at [william@permacultureapprentice.com](mailto:wiliam@permacultureapprentice.com).



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