

Well then, Dave, Mr. Jacke. If you're ready, could you give us a little bit of your background, biography, how you came to permaculture and doing the work that you do?

DJ: Oh, jeeze. Okay! Yes! First of all, thanks for having me on, Scott, it's great to be here. Gosh, I mean, I can go all the way back to the saying that your first memory of your life has an impact on what you choose to do. And my earliest memory is of being three years old—I grew up in Connecticut—and driving into New York City with my parents and having my eyes burn from the air pollution. So that kind of set me on a path of some sort of awareness of the things, that some things are wrong in the world, you know! Starting at three years old. And, you know, I spent a lot of time in the woods as a kid to kind of get away from my crazy family and get some space, and feel a self-connection there and, you know, learned a lot from being out in the woods. So that was really the set up.

But, when I went, when I decided to go to college, I went to a school called Simon's Rock in Great Barrington, Mass which, the basic idea of the school is the first, the last two years of high school are a waste of time academically for a lot of kids 'cause you're taking college prep courses you're just going to repeat in college. So, I went to college after tenth grade, not 'cause I'm smarter than other people, but because that's how the school is put together. And, in looking over their catalogue, the only thing that made any sense to me to study was environmental studies, and so I took an ecology class my first year of school, which changed my life.

It changed my whole way of seeing the world. I had a great PhD philosophy ecologist as my teacher and I was one of five environmental studies students there and we had two PhD ecologists that we were studying with, just the five of us. So it was a great, it was a great introduction and really got me going on a lot of stuff. And just taking ecology, I was like, "why are we not applying this knowledge to the way we organize human society?" And I've been thinking about that since I was sixteen years old, basically.

So, permaculture came along three years later, into my awareness, and it added on to what I was already building and deciding for myself; it took me several steps beyond where I'd gotten on my own at that point. And then I took a permaculture course with Bill Mollison, the second one he had taught in the US, in 1981. I can say the rest is history, to make a long story short. [Laughs] I did go to the Conway School of Landscape Design in Conway, Mass. I got into the one-year Masters program in landscape design, I got my degree there, and that's what got me off into the school of hard knocks, where I've been learning ever since.

That's a pretty dynamic background, to get involved in all of this.

DJ: Yeah, I'm an early, an early and a late bloomer both. Ever-bearing, I guess, on that. I'm like an ever-bearing raspberry or something.

And, from there—I don't want to say that this is your great work—but in many ways, your series of books that you wrote with Eric Toensmeier on edible forest gardens is kind of like a masterpiece within the community.

DJ: Thank you! Yeah, it's definitely, it's definitely my greatest piece of work so far, I think.

And, I've spoken with Eric several times. What did it take, nine years to write that between the two of you? (5:00)

DJ: Yeah, eight years.

And it's—I won't feign to say that I've read the entire thing; I read it in bits because of the amount of information that's there. [Laughs]

DJ: [Laughs] Volume One is intended to be read through, Volume Two is much more of a reference, so, you know, no shame there.

Well, it's, what was it, David Holmgren said to me that it's like Bill Mollison's *Designer's Manual* is more of an encyclopedia. You don't sit down to read it, you just go to it and reference the pieces you need.

DJ: Yeah. I did sit down and read *that* book cover to cover one time, though. [Laughs] But that just goes to show you what kind of a nut I am, I guess.

I can say that I've read the entire thing, but I haven't done it from beginning to end in one sitting.

DJ: Yeah. It's not an easy thing to do.

But your *Edible Forest Gardens*, it's such a massive piece of work, not just by weight and being two volumes. Also for the amount of material that you included, and all the pieces that you put in there. Do you feel that part of your background in having pursued environmental studies at a young age, and then going off and studying landscape design, really built on wanting to include so much information?

DJ: Well, let me just back up and say that I hear what you say and I agree. And, but, for me, the most important thing of that book is actually the frame, the frame, the framing of the concepts. Which is, I would say, pretty much unique. In order to put the book together the way we did, I had to really understand and re-frame ecology in a design context. And, I defected from ecology in that I re-framed from the ecologists 'cause their frames weren't that useful. So, the most valuable thing in the books, I think, is the frame of conceptual organization that I offer in Volume One, particularly, but also Volume Two.

And that gives all the pieces that you mentioned that are in there an organized structure to hang on. And I'm finding as I mill around the world teaching this stuff that that is actually the most important piece, is having the frame. And I, it's mostly,

it's what I try to propagate the most is the frame of reference and the structure of the thinking. Because that's actually the main issue we face as a species, is having to shift our paradigm. 'Cause if we don't, we'll just use these creative tools of permaculture in the same way, they'll cause the same problems all over again if we don't change our paradigms. So I just wanted to put that out there.

The second piece of what you're asking, really, well I guess it's two things I'd say. One is that my background and experience as a designer definitely gave me—and a practitioner, I mean I've done construction, landscape construction, building construction, wastewater system design and construction, all kinds of, many different aspects of the on-the-ground piece—and, while I was researching for *Edible Forest Gardens*, I found some books where ecologists tried to take ecology and make it an applied field, you know, *Managing Succession* was one, *Managing Ecological Succession* I believe is the title of the one I'm thinking of, and I'm forgetting the name of the author. But, it was an ecologist who wrote it, and because he didn't have the experience on the ground, he couldn't really make the ecology that practical. And really it took someone with the kind of background that I had and that Eric had, to take the ecology and make it usable.

Now, that's a piece, but I will say also that in the researching and writing of *Edible Forest Gardens*, my own thinking, I had to go through several fairly radical transformations of my own perspective and thinking. I had 1970s ecology in my brain from college, and I was writing the book in the two-thousandsies, you know. And, that's a long time in a fast-moving science during a fast-learning era. And, a lot of the stuff that I learned in my basic permaculture course, you know, actually I felt a need because of some of Bill Mollison's history and his personality, his seeming desire to be controversial a lot. And not to give documentation of where he got his ideas.

I felt a need to go back to ground and make sure the things I was writing had some basis in reality. I think that's one thing people find valuable in the book, too, is how well-referenced it is and, you know, people feel some confidence in what I have to say. And, you know, I hope that confidence is well placed. There are some ecologists who raise some critiques of interest about the book. But, you know, the references are there so people can go back and decide if I actually used the reference material **(10:00)** appropriately. That's why they're there, is so people can hold me to account.

In any case, writing the book definitely took me at least a quantum higher in my, deeper, in my understanding of ecology and design and how they integrate. A big quantum leap for me. So, my whole approach to design and my practice has shifted because of writing the book. And my whole approach to teaching, as well, has shifted a lot. There was a concomitant thing going on for me in terms of my teaching paradigm, my educational paradigm, that was happening at the same time. So, it's a whole new world for me, since that book.

Well spending eight years of your life writing it, having gone through the seventies and learning ecology then and the first permaculture design course there very much in the early eighties and then twenty years later working on this. I mean, that's a big portion of your life to really, I mean, I think that, I'm in my early thirties and I think how much my life has changed in the last five years.

DJ: Yeah.

And the impact that writing such a major book could have on your interaction with the world and your thought process.

DJ: Oh yeah, absolutely. I mean, you know, the great thing about writing is you get to see your own thoughts. That's why it's hard to do! [Laughs] You know? And the best writing is the result of a lot of editing, you know. Volume One of *Edible Forest Gardens* I probably edited twenty times. Volume Two, not as many, and you can tell. But, it's definitely, it's self-reflection. And that self-reflective awareness is actually at the center of my whole approach to education now, and my whole approach, it's becoming this sense of my approach to life, actually. And it's actually I think at the center of what we need to do as a species, is to become more self-reflective and understand ourselves better because if we don't, then we're not going to, like I said. If we don't change the paradigm that we're living from, that we're seeing the world from, then we're just going to recreate the same problems over and over again.

And, the core of the problem in my opinion, based on my work in education, I had this exercise that I did many, many times. When I took my permaculture course, Bill Mollison spent the whole first three days just beating us over the head with all the problems of the world. And, you know, in my opinion, I was only twenty-one at the time, I already knew that there were all these problems and I didn't need him to, you know. We were all there because we knew what the problems were. He just spent three days doing that.

So, what I have often done at the beginning of the permaculture courses that I do is I actually ask people to brainstorm. We'll sit together, we'll have a big sheet of paper, we'll say, "what are all the problems? What brought you here? Why are you at this course? Puke it all out on paper." And then, I'll ask the question, "So which of these are at the root? Which ones of these are causal, and which are more effect?" And we start crossing off the ones that seem to be effects of other ones and circling ones that seem to be causal, and then we get to a certain cluster that we think are at the root and we say, "okay, of *these*, which ones are more at the root?" And we narrow it down. And every time I've done that, we've gotten to a point where something, the word either alienation or disconnection or separation is the root cause.

And, as I've looked at myself, as I've looked at our culture, as I've looked at my family system, as I've looked at all these with my clients, across the board, when I understand what is at the root of what's going on and where people have their problems, it's because we believe that we're separate. From nature, that mind is

separate from body, that nature is separate from humans, humans are separate from god, god is all that is, you know, whatever you want to say. The separation does not exist. And our whole culture and the very structure of our language is based on the idea of separation. And, if we don't deal with that issue, then we're going to recreate the problems that we have.

And so, you know, as we look at forest gardens, and the cool thing is that forest gardening or agro-forestry is at the core of Mollison's and Holmgren's ideas when they initially formed permaculture. And then, permaculture kind of, you know, spread out, and it got all over the place. And the value, by chance really, Eric and I chose to write this book, and, as understood the ecology of forest ecosystems and all the data of succession and how do we design that, it's really brought me to a much deeper understanding of how that separation can be healed and that the role that the design process, ecological design process, and the role that landscape design plays in shifting the paradigm and giving us direct feedback, direct personal feedback, about when we're out of whack **(15:00)** and when we've gone back into separation mind-mode, and how to get out of that.

Because once we learn through landscape design and landscape interaction, then we're not separate and how the law of karma, cause and effect, and how it's an amazing reality of how many, how far and how rapidly the effects of a choice or an action spread. When you really understand that and you can observe that, then it really gives one a whole different take on choices. And actually, it makes it hard to make choices actually [laughs], but, it's very fascinating, and it reconnects us and, once we learn that in the landscape, then we can apply the same principles in the much more complex and abstract fields of social and economic system design, paradigm shifting, education system design, you know, you name it. And we've got to learn it in the landscape first, though.

So it's, that's my general take, and there's probably exceptions to that. But, a different story for different folks. But, the landscape is a really good teacher for that.

I think of how the term permaculture has changed over time from the idea of a permanent agriculture to one of permanent culture and that, I think that kind of echoes what you were saying that if we start in the landscape in that idea of permanent agriculture and reconnecting ourselves with the land, that that then provides the tools to build the broader structures that are part of civilization.

DJ: Yeah, exactly. Well, it helps to feed ourselves while we figure out the rest of it, too [laughs]. That's important [laughs]. But, yeah, it's funny because I agree with you and, yet, there seems to be—even among permaculture people—there seems to be this blind spot. And I see a lot of people talking about permaculture as if it's about agriculture only. There's a lot more to permaculture than that. And so, I see a lot of folks making that mistake even here in my own region, and I'm kind of tired of talking about it.

And I actually, I've always had a problem with the word 'permaculture' to be honest. If you know anything about Buddhism, if you know anything about life, it's like, what's permanent? The only thing that's permanent is change. So, the word itself is, you know—and a lot of people know this and talk about it—but we still go on using the word. But I actually prefer to talk about ecological culture design because I like to call things what they actually are, and avoid jargon if I can. So, people probably are snickering at that because I use a lot of jargon in my book, but, you know, [laughs] the jargon is there to try and explain some reality that we don't pay attention to.

So, language is a funny thing, but it's really important for, for framing our understanding of reality. So. Ecological culture design, that's the work I do. We can call it permaculture, I don't really care what we call it, let's just do it. That's the most important thing, that we actually do the work.

However you want to label it, just take action on what you're working with.

DJ: Exactly.

You speak to something that I run into is that, I find in certain circles the word 'permaculture' itself carries baggage? Not just within the community, but outside.

DJ: Oh yeah.

So it's not just me and a couple of people who I've talked to, it is a larger number?

DJ: There's certainly something to be said for having an identity and feeling like you're part of something larger. And being able to talk to people within your own group and have your own, your own culture. And, there's a lot of people running around talking about permaculture who don't really know that much about what they're doing, and the people who are in the fields of horticulture and agriculture and whatever else are, like these people, they know, they can tell these people don't know what they're talking about. And, you know, hell, I know that there's a lot that I don't know. You know? I mean, there's far, far more that I don't know than that I do know. [Laughs]

As Wes Jackson talked about, we have to really embrace our ignorance. And he talked about the value of ignorance and how we have to create an ignorance-based culture. Because that's what we've got. We are mostly ignorant. And to realize that helps us put ourselves in an appropriate relative location, if you want to talk about a permaculture principle, what's relative location? Where do we put ourselves in a relative location to everything else? It's like, we are definitely not where we think we are in terms of what we know.

And, you know, forest gardening, you know, my books have a lot of background and a lot of references, but we still don't really know that much. It's still, we're still at the

very infancy. I figure, after two hundred years, we'll know what we're doing pretty well with forest gardening. But it's gonna take a while. It's gonna take a while. You know, we're just barely beginning to understand what species grow well together and why. And it would be nice to know why.

And that's not easy to figure out, even when you're doing a heavy-duty **(20:00)** scientific study on trying to understand, are these two species competing? When you're actually measuring with instruments, it is very hard to prove, competition is very hard to prove. And cooperation is very hard to prove allelopathy; you know, like, with walnuts, juglone inhibiting other plants. It's very hard to prove those specific kinds of interactions. How are we, who are just laypeople in our backyards, how are we gonna figure this out? Well, through really good observation, and trial and error, and putting ourselves in a place of humility. That's how we're gonna learn. And otherwise, we're fooling ourselves.

And permaculture has a history; Bill Mollison was a number one prime example of overselling permaculture. And, I'm a fan, but we have to really be careful what we claim. And I even think I claim too much in my book about self-maintenance. I now talk about self-maintaining ecosystems as the Holy Grail and if you know your Arthurian legends, you know that only one of the Knights of the Round Table discovered the Holy Grail and when he did he died. [Laughs] So...

You're speaking to a lot of the things that I'm going through as an educator and someone who's trying to reach out and expand on the knowledge of permaculture and the people who I'm talking to. In trying to speak with certain scientists for interviews, I don't introduce myself as a permaculturist. What do I say, usually? I pitch that I'm a graduate student in environmental education and I'd like to speak with them about their specialty to add some science literacy to these other issues. It's a mouthful, but it provides a precision for the person I'm talking to that they're more likely to accept.

DJ: Yeah. I mean, you don't *have* to, but it helps to know your audience. And speaking with precision, I mean, I just, that little change is made. You know, you don't have to know your audience. Speaking with precision is actually, I find, incredibly, incredibly important. And being impeccable with your words has various—I think as [unintelligible] talks in one of his, or I forget who it was who used that phrase, you know, it's one of the four agreements, I think it is. Or, I forget the name of that author, but. But be impeccable with your words, it's really important. It frames the way we think about ourselves, much less what we're communicating to someone else. And that's, one of the other values, it's what I did in *Forest Gardens*, I was really, I worked very hard to be impeccable with those words. I think there's a million words in those two books. [Laughs] I did a lot of work. And I can look at it now and say, "Yup. I wasn't impeccable there, I was off there." You know, I have plenty critiques. I'm not looking forward to revising that sucker any time soon, but, I could use it, probably.

One of the things that you mentioned earlier was about, that you're trying to ground what you did in reality and that you can be accountable for the work. You know, that there are some people who have critiques of your work. I'm—and again, this goes back to one of the questions that I have about moving permaculture forward, is that a lot of like the first and second wave, if you will, of permaculture literature was self-referential?

DJ: Yes. My book was a big break with that.

That's one of the things that I always run into is that, when someone is referencing their own works, or their own research, without a lot of other material, it's like, "okay, well where is this? What's the journal where it—for me, where's the journal where it's been peer-reviewed? Who else has addressed this material?" Do you think that it's important for this next wave of permaculture practitioners and authors to have that kind of accountability?

DJ: Oh, absolutely! The lack of that accountability in Mollison's and other peoples' writing has hindered the movement in a big way! This is one of the big issues I've seen in permaculture is really poor or nonexistent social system design. You know? I'd like to, I'd like us all to be accountable for what we do. And someone needs to actually do the study and say, "Okay, let's go look at different peoples' work, and let's, let's see what worked and what didn't." Because if we're going on a wing and a prayer and not looking back and saying, "Well that didn't work and that didn't work, let's improve," then we're not gonna make, we're not gonna make it, folks. We're *fooling* ourselves.

We don't have systems of accountability in permaculture. We don't have accountability for permaculture teaching. So many systems that I've observed in the last—I've been doing this for thirty-two years now. I've been involved in permaculture as permaculture. And I've seen so many systems fail because of lack of or poor social system design. And, if the principles apply in the landscape, if they're true principles, they apply in the social system design. So let's get doing this social system design, folks. Let's get good at it. And we all have our failings as individuals, all of us teachers and practitioners, but, hey, let's be accountable. **(25:00)** I am happy to be held to account. I honor that impulse. We all deserve respect, you know. We all deserve respect. But, this is a huge issue.

And I'm working on this thing I call 'the axes of social system design', it's kind of like the scale of permanence, the scale of permanence which some people may or may not know. But it came from keyline design, and Holmgren and Mollison talked about it in *Permaculture One* and then Mollison never wrote about it again, and I've brought it back in my book as a tool for helping organize our site analysis. And it looks at all the elements of landscape from most permanent to least permanent. And you organize your site analysis questions based on that scale, and it's a tool to help you get unstuck. I, I'm trying to develop axes of social system design, what are the different elements of social system design that we have to be aware of? That ornamental functional social system, we have to be conscious of these different

pieces. And, it's getting to be a fairly long list, but someday I'm going to write an article about this, but, I'll read you the list right here.

Okay. Lemme see. It's, uh, ownership, who owns the resources? Who can inherit the resources, heritability? Who has decision-making power? Who is accountable for those decisions? And who has the consequences of those decisions. Who puts labor in? Who has access to yields? Who has access to use of the system other than yield? Who has access to information and who has access to communication? If we don't design all of those aspects of the social system in a conscious way, so that they're functional, it's going to be less likely to be a functional social system. And, we need to get serious about this, because that is the cutting edge of permaculture.

Hugelkultur beds are fine, you know, swales, fine. We're currently having a fad on hugelkultur and swales because, it used to be, back in the eighties, if you didn't have an herb spiral, you weren't doing permaculture. And it seems to be a similar thing, if you're not doing hugelkultur, you're not doing permaculture. Well, phooey to that, alright? These are all techniques and tools that have their place. But, if we're not designing those social systems, then we're not dealing with the whole culture.

The challenge of that is that the inner landscape, with where the real issue is, and very few people are willing to look at that and deal with that piece. Because even the debate whether permaculture is a paradigm or movement or just a design approach, and my argument on that is *you cannot separate them*. There's no way to separate them. And it's a false argument. If we're looking at understanding holistic systems and how systems operate, then we have to be designing all of those in a conscious way. And conscious is a key variable [laughs]. How conscious are we?

**I feel like I just lit a match and threw it on you and set you on fire [laughs].
With where this conversation has gone—I don't mean that in a bad way at all.**

DJ: I'm passionate, obviously. And, a lot of these are long-held pet peeves of mine. I've been watching the permaculture movement been involved in helping organize the movement for a long time. And I've stopped using the word permaculture for seven years because I didn't want to be associated with the BS anymore. And I actually fought my publisher, I didn't want the word 'permaculture' on the cover of my book. I didn't want to be associated with permaculture. But they put the word 'permaculture' on my book! So, yes, I'm a traitor to permaculture [laughs].

But, if they put the word 'permaculture' on my book and I said, "Okay, I guess I'm doing permaculture again." And I've been doing my best to teach and propagate what I think we need to be doing as permaculture. And, we'll see. I'm having an impact. But, you know, I'm not wedded to the identity of permaculture. I'm gonna—and this is my life's work—I'm gonna do it under whatever name, I'll change my name to Lovebubbles and call myself Lovebubbles and do permaculture under the name Lovebubbles, maybe. I don't know. It doesn't matter, the identity is unimportant. It's the work that matters. It's being of service that matters. And, actually knowing that I'm being of service and having a sense that I'm actually

achieving what I'm trying to achieve, that's the most important thing. I don't care...At some level, there's a part of me that does care whether I get recognition for it or not, but, the recognition is far less important than the actual work getting done and the shift happening in the culture because that's what, that's what we're here for. And I get very tired of hearing about people on their ego trips, you know? It's not serving anybody except for themselves.

My outward persona is very, kind of calm and middle of the road with this nice kind of monotone radio voice as we sit here and have this conversation—

DJ: [Laughs]

—And, I talk about how a lot of what I'm trying to do is to reach the eighty percent of the people out there who probably have not heard of permaculture, (30:00) but are interested in building a better world because they have children or grandchildren or all these other things. But, I mean, there's this side of me that just, you know, I want to go out there and just start pulling pins and firing people up, and get to kind of shock and get reactions from people to start getting to think about things, like deep down.

You touch on a lot of things that I'm always thinking about within the community and within these various structures that we have because, for me, it's—and I have to say for me because I don't want to speak for anybody else. This is only my own perspective.

DJ: Mmhm. Good.

And I think that there needs to be transparency. And that we have to be able to say, "well, I've only done so many permaculture designs in my life. The number that have been implemented, you know, a much smaller subset of that." And, to be able to say that, "no, I don't know what that is, but let me point you to a place where I can find you more information. Let me call a colleague who knows more." And not try to sell yourself as an expert in an area that you're not.

DJ: Let's acknowledge the fact that none of us have ever been here before! We've never been in a place where we have 7.7 billion people on the planet and climbing, we've got Monsanto pulling their tricks, we've got Nestle pulling their tricks, we've got Obama pulling his tricks, the Republicans pulling their tricks. All this BS going on in the planet, and we're all trying to work it out and figure it out. Let's talk 1984. Vulnerability is strength, you know? Vulnerability actually is strength, where we can admit our vulnerabilities and we can admit what we don't know, then we can get somewhere. We get traction.

But if we're fooling ourselves, then we're dealing with fantasy. And I know I fool myself a lot! Look, I self-reflect, you know, and I definitely have an addictive personality and was a marijuana addict for many years, and so many people in permaculture are also addicts. It's part of the culture! It's part of western culture to

be an addict, we have an addictive culture! If we can't deal with that, if we can't admit that, then we are just lost and we may as well not have a conversation. You know? I mean, let's get real, people. Let's get very, very real. As a therapist said to me—once when I was going through my divorce and I, I really had a hard time hearing this—he said, “reality is always better than even a good fantasy.” And at that point, my reality was extremely painful. And it took me a few years to realize that he was right. And, we have a very painful reality that we're all faced with, whether we're experiencing it or not.

If we're a part of the one percent—which most of anyone, pretty much anyone who's listening to this podcast has a computer, that means they're a part of the one percent on the planet—we are buffered. Those of us who are on or listening to this podcast are buffered from the work effects of the culture that we've got going on the planet. We are causing suffering for other people just by having, you and me being on the phone, and other people listening on their computers. We're causing suffering for organisms and people and ecosystems, right now. Can we deal with that? Can we face that, can we feel that reality? Because if we can't, then we've got work to do on the inside.

People think I know a ton. And, you know, maybe I do. But there's a hell of a lot I don't know. One of your listeners asked a question about worms eating their currants and jostaberries that you wanted to ask me on the podcast. I haven't had that problem! I went and did research so I could answer that question. Research that anyone could have done. So I can sound like an expert. I asked some other people about their experience before the podcast so I could have an answer. It's not that I knew! [Laughs] I haven't had that problem with my jostaberries and currants yet, so, I haven't faced it.

We're all learning. We're all beginners. Let's be beginners together. We have, we're inventing a new culture. Or new cultures, plural. We're here to do that together whether we like it or not. Let's have fun while we're doing it. Let's be real. Let's admit our vulnerabilities so we can actually integrate our self-concept with reality of who we actually are. That would be good. I would appreciate that from other people. I appreciate it when I am able to do it myself. And I'm able to do it more and more, thankfully. Because I've spent probably \$200,000 on therapy in the last twenty years and I've been building a meditation practice that is helping me to clear away the underbrush so I can see myself more clearly. And I'm willing to own my shit. But if we're not willing to own our shit, then we won't be able to compost it and use it for something. **(35:00)** We'll be pushing it onto other people and causing pollution to occur. What are your feelings that are bubbling up in response to all this?

I don't feel alone.

DJ: Oh, good. Right on, bro.

You've, in just the last couple of minutes, put a lot of things out onto the table from yourself and your own life that reinforce that idea that vulnerability is

strength because it was open communication about the place where you come from as a person and admitting that, though you're accepted as an expert, it's only because you can go and do the research and present the information that people come to you thinking of you as an expert that creates that expectation.

DJ: It's amazing to be in my position and be aware enough of psycho-emotional dynamics so that I can experience other people projecting their shit onto me. It is a very intense experience. In fact, it took me some years to be able to stay centered in the face of it. And this is why I have compassion for people who aren't centered in the face of it and whose egos get blown up in the face of fame, so-called fame or attention from other people and people projecting their stuff onto them. It's very tricky stuff. And I'm sure I still, my ego still gets inflated at times, you know? But I've come to understand that my ego is the smallest part of me, it's just a concept, it's not who I really am, and I don't even fully know who I am! I'm still learning who I am every moment. [Laughs] It's different every moment.

So, people want me to be an expert, and sometimes I feel like I need to meet that expectation. And, sometimes I can't. And it's all, it's all just a trip, man, it's just, it's wild. But often, when I don't have an answer, I can ask good questions that help people to shift their way of thinking and that, that is very useful. And that is probably the most useful thing I have to offer, you know? The standard ecologists' and designers' answer to almost anything is, "it depends." And that's not where it ends, you don't say, "well, it depends," and leave it there, just to be a wise-ass. You say, "Okay, what does it depend upon?" Let's articulate the different factors that that question depends upon, and then we have the opportunity to go observe and get the information we need to make an answer. That's systems thinking.

I don't want to be the expert for people, I want them to become their own empowered learners. That's one of my goals as an educator. So if I give people answers, it's like spoon-feeding people water-soluble nutrients and just feeding them answers rather than giving them the organic matter that they have to break down for themselves to get the nutrients they need.

You just expressed many of the things that I go through as a teacher because I'm not, I don't like the teacher-student paradigm that much. One of the conversations that I have with people about the online PDCs or PDCs in general is that there's this, if you want to you can go out and find all this information, anywhere. And you can put it together, and it's one of the things I'm teaching in an online PDC right now, to try to examine what that model is like. But I'm, in putting that together and advertising in many ways to the people who wound up joining me for the class, is that I'm not trying to, I'm not here in my mind to teach the permaculture material because you can get that anywhere. You can go out and you can watch Youtube videos and you can read books and things and get that information. That for me, it's more to provide a structure for people to work within, to understand it, to guide them through the process in an ordered way. And then to provide mentoring so that they can answer their own questions. These are resources that, why don't you read

these and come back and then ask me questions on that reading so we can round out your own perspective and honor the place that you come from, not to try to impose my view on you. It's a very different dynamic from the place that I grew up in.

DJ: Oh yeah. Well, see, I have problems with the word 'teacher', actually. As applied to human beings. To me, and I've played with different ways of saying it. I used to think that a teacher is not a person, a teacher is an event. But what I'm really trying to say is, events make the best teachers. I am not a teacher, I am a designer of learning experiences. And that my approach to education—the word education, literally from Greek, means 'to draw out', educere, 'to draw out'. Not to put a funnel in my ear and stuff in. Right? So, the calling a person a teacher implies that funnel in the ear business, you know?

And when there's a lecturer, you know, I often joke about this, you know, you look at people who are talking about invisible structures in permaculture. **(40:00)** Here's another pet peeve of mine, okay. People in permaculture calling social and the economic structures 'invisible structures'. If you call them invisible, they will remain invisible. Let's call them what they are, social and economic structures, okay? Number one. But, we're in lecture mode, and I talk about that, and I say, "Social and economic structures are not invisible. They're quite visible." So, look at the social structure of the room in a lecture format. That social structure implies that I know everything and you know nothing, if I'm a lecturer. Which is complete bullshit! There's far more information in the room, and knowledge in the room, than I have in my own person, my own self!

So, I try to keep lecture to a third or less of my learning experience and design, exercise, games, and experiences that people learn from—and they often learn things that I don't expect them to learn and that teach me things. That's cool! We're learning together. You know? And that's a whole different paradigm. You know, I have, I respect your take on the online course and your tests, it's not something I've been willing to try because it just, it just seems like the wrong medium for that. There's something about direct personal experience that I think is extremely valuable for embodying and engaging people in the way that I prefer to engage them and what I prefer to embody in my experiences.

Obviously we could have a much longer conversation just on the educational front.

Very much so. But, we've been here for a while talking about education, and all these various points and perspectives. You touched on the one listener question.

DJ: I didn't *answer* her question, I just touched on it! [Laughs]

True, because you answered the question more fully before we began the interview. Could you go ahead and answer that question a little more, I'll ask you the other listener question, and then we'll wrap this interview up with your last thoughts?

DJ: All right, so. Pamela has gooseberries and jostaberries and there are worms that are eating the leaves voraciously and stripping it of all—the plants of all their leaves. And, Scott, you told me that she lives near Portland, Oregon. I don't know the pest issues in that region of the country as well as I know them here in the northeast, but most likely, it's the imported currant worm, also known as the currant sawfly. They are voracious, they have two to three generations of larvae per year, and, my understanding is that you can control them with rotenone parteries. That's the organic chemical control approach, if they're getting stripped that fast then you may want to go that route in the short run just to save the plants for the year.

But, larvae like that, little worms like that, they are eaten by wasps and various kinds of predatory insects. And so, particularly wasps. So if you can provide a lot of nectar for wasps and other predators and provide habitats for them to make their nests and, you know, find out what your local native bees are in the back of Volume Two of *Edible Forest Gardens*. There's a table of the niche requirements of beneficial animals, including insects, and you can go and look up the different kinds of wasps that are out there and what they eat. And that will give you some sense of the habitat requirements you'll need to satisfy in order to provide habitat for wasps. Then you just gotta worry about getting stung by the wasps! Not all these wasps will actually sting humans, but some of them will. So you want to provide that habitat some place away from where you're going to be spending your time, if possible.

Beyond that, I don't know if there are nutritional things that would influence the health of the plants. My understanding is also that these fly, sawfly larvae can be cyclic, intense one year and not so bad the next. That's what I understand, and I look forward to hearing your experience. So that's, that's the one question.

And the other question comes from Matt Winters. And he says that, "I understand that Dave did some extensive work in Montana with a group working to establish a public food forest. I see these projects popping up in various scattered places. Is there a central clearinghouse of information for permaculture activists who want to introduce this concept to their communities? And how would we get the ball rolling in places where *no one* in community leadership has this on their radar.

DJ: Well, it depends. All right, so, let me just say a few words about public forest gardens. 'Cause I have some concerns. I've been working, this is the third summer of implementation of a forest garden, a half-acre forest garden at Wellesley College outside of Boston, and I've been very clear with Wellesley College Botanical Garden that this is experimental. There's a lot we don't know, and they're very fine with that. As far as like the Seattle, with the seven or eight acre forest garden (45:00) getting installed in Seattle, and I know a few of the people—not very well—that are working on that forest garden. They seem like they know what they're doing, but, again, I submit: we're all infants at this.

And I have concerns about public forest gardens if they're not well supported socially. If we don't have good social structures supporting the public forest gardens

we're implementing, they may actually turn people against forest gardening if they don't *look* the way people want them to look, if they aren't managed well, if they cause problems that were unintended or problems that could be avoided. So, I'm concerned about the idea of a lot of people putting public forest gardens in because, in a public park, it needs to look—in order to interact with public—it's gonna have to have a certain amount of aesthetic quality, and if it doesn't meet that, it's going to turn people negative. And that could do some damage in the long run and make it harder to get permaculture stuff going in that community in the future.

So, I want to caution people that we have to make sure that we design really good social structures to go along with these public forest gardens and make sure that a lot of attention—in fact, maybe more attention—gets put on those social structures than on the garden itself. This is what we did, we spent a fair amount of time actually before and after, but also during the Helena, Montana experience that we just recently completed, looking at it and working on the social structure. And that is like, so important to this that it's, it's ridiculous. So put that veto out there.

As far as I know, there's no central clearinghouse for helping people to get these things organized. I've had various conversations with various people from various places, one in Indiana, and so on, that are in a similar boat to Matt. It sounds like Matt is the only person in his area that is interested. And what I would suggest to Matt, and to other people, is that you implement a forest garden in your own space. And learn how it works, and make mistakes, and make it better, before you start to try going into a public forest garden. We have so much to learn. And if you don't have an example that works in your own backyard, then you can't show people, it's going to be harder to convince them in the first place. So, I would start by getting demonstrations doing your own forest garden and *then* building from there. And actually trying to get multiple people in your neighborhood. Once you do it on your own place and you start showing people, it will spread, or it won't, depending on peoples' attitudes. And that will give you a sense of whether your community is ready to have a public forest garden or not. That's my suggestion.

It sounds like it's a place where someone, if they were interested, could turn this into a project in order to kind of connect with different projects so people can see examples and learn what others are doing.

DJ: Yeah, and I will say that if people go to APIOS Institute, that O-R-G-A-P-I-O-S Institute, that org, there's a wiki website there that Eric Toensmeier. And some other folks have been working on for, I don't know, for a few years. And, basically it's a website so people can go find out what other forest gardeners are doing. There's a set of pages where people can talk about what they've got going in their own forest gardens, there's polyculture pages where people can say, "here are polycultures that I'm playing with, here's a species in it." And there's species pages where people can learn about different species and actually add more information about their experience with different species. So it's a wiki like Wikipedia, so that everyone who's involved can be adding information and we can all be learning from each other. That's the best site that I know of for that kind of information.

There is, another resource would be the edible forest gardens group on Facebook, which has over nine thousand members at the moment. And there's some good back and forth that goes on there, there's also some less than happy back and forth, as is often the case on Facebook, that happens there. So please be patient with that. But, this is people from all over the world, literally, pretty much every continent involved in that Facebook group and there's some cool stuff happening there. So that's a good place to go for information as well. So, those are two places you can look.

And then, before we bring this to a close after all this information, is there anything else you'd like to add to the conversation for the listeners?

DJ: Oh, just, you know, stiff upper lip and keep the chin up and all that rot, you know? Feel your feelings; they're a source of genius. Keep on truckin'. We've got a lot of work to do, and a lot of fun to have along the way, you know. And as Emma Goldman said, if I can't dance, I don't want to be a part of your revolution. So, make sure you do your inner work as well as your outer work, and you'll find amazing correspondences **(50:00)** between the inner work and the outer work. The more you do it, the more you see how they feed each other and they build on each other.

You know, if people are in learning more about the educational stuff that I'm doing, I'm working on putting together a permaculture teacher training, a nine-day permaculture teacher training course that'll happen next March. Hopefully it'll work out, we're still looking for a venue in the natural Tennessee area. So we'll be putting that together for March, just pay attention to edibleforestgardens.com, that's my website. You can go to the events page, that's where my events are listed and when that's gone public, that's where it will be. So, I look forward to seeing people and hearing from people, you know, wherever, and just apply the principles and see what they have to teach you.

Well thank your for that, Mr. Jacke, and thanks for taking the time to join me. I've really enjoyed it, I've been wanting to give this for quite some time and I finally got the opportunity. And now the listeners can hear from you as well.

DJ: All right, great, well thanks, Scott, let's do it again sometime.