



PERMACULTURE
CALGARY GUILD

Permablitz Host Guide

2019

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Edited: 30 July 2010, Adam Grub, 15 July

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Introduction

Congratulations! If you're reading this, it's probably because you're about to host a permablitz. This is a short manual of sorts to help you get prepared and know what to expect on, before and after the day of your permablitz, as a horde of volunteers helps you turn your yard into an edible oasis.

Who can host a blitz?

In order to host your own blitz you must be a registered member of the Permaculture Calgary Guild. We ask that you participate in at least 2 permablitzes prior to hosting your own. We ask that you come to two or more blitzes in advance so that you:

- a. Get an idea of what to expect on a blitz
- b. Learn some relevant skills
- c. Demonstrate enough drive to show that you'll maintain your garden
- d. Contribute to the permablitz network
- e. Build community!

Once you are part of the group and put in your "time" we'll help organize and promote a blitz for you. You don't need a lot of skills, just a commitment to give it a try.

History of the permablitz

The first permablitz was held in Melbourne, Australia in 2006 as a collaboration between permaculture students and a South American community group. As of July 2010, over 90 permablitzes have been held in and around Melbourne and the concept has spread to many cities and towns around Australia and the world.

Permablitz is a concept which has been adopted by many organizations and informal networks. In Melbourne at least, all organizers, facilitators, workers and most designers on the blitzes have been volunteers, there has never been any funding, and the network has remained largely informal and organic.

The official Permablitz website (www.permablitz.net) and mailing lists are maintained in Melbourne by volunteers to help co-ordinate the network. Region based permaculture groups such as Permaculture Out West (POW) and the Eastern Suburbs Permaculture Group (ESPG) have recently begun coordinating permablitzes in their own areas within Melbourne, and some local transition groups (see www.transitiontowns.org) have been facilitating permablitzes.

In Alberta and British Columbia there have been about 20 informal blitzes over the last two years. Due to popular demand and huge success the Permaculture Calgary Guild decided it was time to help to facilitate the process to speed the repair of our city, and the world beyond!

Permablitz roles

As a blitz host you are about to receive a big input of labour, design and good energy. Permablitzes are great fun, but do require some preparation. You'll be expected to work with a designer and/or facilitator, feed the troops/blitzers/volunteers, gather materials and prepare the site. Typically the host does not do too much work during the blitz as you are keeping the other blitzers watered and fed, however we do encourage you to get your hands dirty if you have time! You can expect help from the permablitz network with your design, coming up with quantities of materials needed, facilitating the day, and some follow up help if needed. We'll go into more detail below.

The Design Process

About permaculture design

Permaculture (short for permanent-culture or permanent-agriculture) is a design system which helps people provide for their own needs by working with nature, rather than against it. It helps us to obtain a yield while repairing and enhancing damaged environments -- like the urban environment for example. A lot of it comes down to employing some conscious design, and some uncommon sense to help us avoid common pitfalls, while broadening our ideas of what is possible. See www.permacultureprinciples.com for a list of principles which underpin permaculture design strategies.

The Permaculture ethic is, Care of earth, Care of people, and return of surplus. All design is centred around this ethic.

We insist that all permablitzes must be based on a permaculture design. The design can be your own if you have taken a permaculture design certificate or completed by a local permaculture designer. It is important to have a good plan, so that your team knows how to take the design from paper to reality.

Why permaculture design? We want systems which are going to yield abundant food for your family, create habitat, clean the water, build topsoil, create community and educate others how to do the same. It is not the purpose of a permablitz to install ornamental gardens or lawns. A permaculture designer knows how to create designs that meet all the above criteria as well as tailoring the design to your budget, skill levels, time and to the constraints and creative possibilities of your space.

Finding a designer

Once you've been to a few blitzes and decide you want a blitz of your own, we can help connect you to a permaculture designer.

The Permaculture Calgary Guild Calgary Permablitz Network has a marketplace list of designers who are eager to put their skills to work! Check out <https://permaculturecalgary.org/community/marketplace/> and try searching for 'design' for current listings. Once you choose a designer we recommend viewing past installations to ensure that the designer is the right one for you. We do not regulate designers or their designs, the role of the

Permablitz Network is to facilitate connection and communication.

If you do not have a preference for a designer, or would like designers to apply specifically for your project, you may wish to create a posting on our Opportunities board under the *Community* tab on our website (<https://permaculturecalgary.org/>).

If you are in need of a volunteer designer, you may include this information in your posting. Volunteer designers do this because they want experience, but of course are under no obligation.

Your chance of getting a free design seems to increase if you:

- sound like a nice person
- live in an easily accessible location
- have an interesting, but not overwhelmingly complicated project

We don't discriminate, but we often feel better about performing volunteer designs for people who couldn't have otherwise afforded it. If you can afford it you might consider a professional design. We maintain a list of professional designers who have been major contributors to the permablitz network. A professional permaculture design can be less than \$400 or upwards of \$3000, depending on the level of detail. For most blitzes something towards the lower end would suffice.

What to expect

The designer can help you locate the various elements of your system such as raised vegetable beds, fruit trees, micro livestock, sheds, greenhouses, pergolas, paths, water-tanks, composting areas, seating areas, lawn and simple water recycling systems. Considerations for placement include ease of access, shade and shelter (microclimates), services to the house such as providing summer shade and winter sun, soil types, aesthetics, privacy, and so on. Designers also try to place elements to compliment each other, which minimizes required maintenance. One of the great permaculture sayings is "work is a failure in design." As an example, chickens running under fruit trees eliminates weeding, fertilizing and fallen fruit.

At the end of the design process you should have at the least scale sketch, some explanatory notes and some brief implementation guidelines. To achieve this, the designer(s) usually need a minimum of 3-4 hours consulting with you and developing the design on-site.

Important!

Make sure that before the designer comes that you have called Alberta first call and Shaw to locate water, gas, cable tv and electrical lines. This will help the designer to avoid these services and prevent problems during the blitz!

What to provide

The designers will benefit from any house plans you have, cadastral maps and real property reports are a great resource that can streamline the design process. Cadastral maps are typically line drawings that are dimensioned to scale, with a northern orientation. The city typically provides this for a small fee. The designer will likely ask you to fill out a questionnaire that details your household's wants, skills, time, likes. It is good to go over this questionnaire during their site visit as it helps the designer to conceptualize the design while they are observing your property.

It's always best to get at least the major elements of the design set on the day of the designers' visit. If there are people in your household who might have different opinions than you, they should be present.

Preparing for the Day

Finding a facilitator

Generally you won't be expected to facilitate the blitz yourself (although some hosts occasionally do). There may be one or more facilitators, usually one of the designers, sometimes someone else from within the permablitz network. If your designer is not able to facilitate, let us know at permablitz@permaculturecalgary.org and we will try to find a replacement facilitator. You may have a friend or two who involved in the project who may help co-ordinate different activities throughout the day.

As the facilitator has a lot of work to do, it is not uncommon for the facilitator to charge an hourly wage while directing the project. \$300 for the day is not uncommon. There may be facilitators that are willing to work free to earn valuable facilitation experience.

Set a date

Work with the facilitator(s) to set a date for the permablitz, and add your event to our Events Calendar. Generally you'll want to give yourself at least a couple of weeks to prepare and so there's time to promote the event. It's not usually a major issue if there are other blitzes scheduled on the same day, but we would recommend finding a date that does not conflict with other permaculture related events to ensure you will be able to find adequate volunteers. Most blitzes are scheduled on weekends, but if you are feeling adventurous try hosting one on a weekday!

Post your permablitz event

As a member of the Permaculture Calgary Guild, you are invited and encouraged to post your permablitz on our events calendar. Visit <https://permaculturecalgary.org/>, select *Submit an Event* from the *Events* tab to submit your details! Be sure to select *Permablitz* as your event category and include your contact information and social media event URL to ensure hopeful blitzers can get in touch with you.

Bookings and numbers

Most blitzes, particularly in the inner city fill up quickly. We strongly recommend you share your email to collect RSVP's and get a good idea of your numbers. Too much energy in any system creates chaos and disorder so we recommend limiting the blitz to 15 – 20 people, max.

The number of people you can handle depends on:

- size of the property
- the amount of work to do
- whether there are additional facilitators who can run workshops throughout the day to soak up all the spare energy and make sure people have a good time.

Important!

Remember the blitzers need to have a fair exchange for their effort on your property so is important to have enough people so that small workshops can be added throughout the day. You will also want to make sure you have enough food and beverages on hand to feed your hungry volunteers!

Gathering materials

The designer's report should include a list of materials such as length of pipes, cubic metres of mulch, height of newspaper piles etc. Some materials such as cardboard and horse manure can often be sourced for free. If you have a list of materials that you need that you would like to crowd source, you may include this under your event listing on our website. You never know what your volunteers might bring!

Promoting your Blitz

We feel that the successful promotion of your blitz requires a multi-pronged approach. We strongly encourage you to engage neighbours, friends, family and the local community! You can also reach out to communications@permaculturecalgary.org to have your blitz promoted in our monthly newsletter. Remember we are not just ripping up a lawn, we are building community and friendships!

The Day of the Blitz

Setting a game-plan for the day

Sometimes several projects are independent; other times tasks must be completed before others can proceed, causing a bottleneck. You should talk to the designers and facilitators before the day to consider these issues. Prioritize what aspect of your design you want to be completed first. Some jobs (like moving huge piles of compost or mulch) may need a concerted day-long effort if they are to be finished. A bit of forethought can help things go smoothly. It is ideal to find a balance between having every tiny detail under control, and allowing a small amount of chaos, in which people can problem solve. Work with your facilitator in order to come up with a sensible game-plan for the day, but be willing to let things take on something of a life of their own.

Important!

If the installation does not get done during the blitz day it is not the responsibility of the facilitator or designer. If you require additional help to complete your permablitz you can speak to the designer and hire or provide a fair exchange for him or her to help you.

Health and safety

Before the day, your role is to deal with any obvious safety issues. Don't plan to take down any trees or large branches, or other potentially dangerous activities. These tasks should be handled by trained professionals. It is the facilitator's role on the day to draw attention to any dangerous tools, like mattocks or power tools. They should also discuss proper back care, and highlight any safety issues specific to the site.

Food and drinks

Early blitzes were bring-your-own sustenance, but now food and beverages are generally provided by the host. You might ask those who have RSVP'ed if they have any special dietary requirements. We've had everything from BBQ's to an award winning chef catering, but one thing is for sure - food is the best way to win a permies' heart! It is strongly encouraged to have beverages available throughout the day to keep everyone hydrated.

Workshops

Every permablitz has workshops, and the designers/facilitators as well as other participants can run them. They are meant to supplement the learning experience of your blitz team and are often humble, running anywhere from 3 minutes, to an hour. They can be related to gardening, cooking, craft, tools, culture or other aspects of sustainable living.

Sample Permablitz Schedule

A typical permablitz runs as follows:

8:00 AM

- Meet with designer/facilitator and get last minute things prepared.

9:00 AM

- Meet people as they arrive, and give them a name tag a Sharpie and masking tape for their tools.
- Have a registration sheet or book for people to record their contact details for any future permablitzes you may plan, especially if there are going to be additional phases.
- Have beverages and snacks ready!
- Have some easy-to-explain but time consuming task for your helpers to get into while others are arriving (ie. tour, social activity, light weeding, etc).

9:30 AM

- We like to start our blitzes off with a 15-minute yoga practice to loosen everyone up. You might wish to look on our website marketplace listings for yoga teachers that are willing to help!

9:45 AM

- Most people have arrived, the facilitator forms a meet and greet circle.

Meet and Greet Circle

Ask everyone to introduce themselves, where they are from, what they hope to learn and if they've attended a previous blitz. The designer/facilitator will share a copy of the design with the group, and how the installation is going to work. A quick housekeeping and safety briefing should include safety tips related to the scope of your permablitz (ie. Demonstration of how to dig and lift safely).

10:00 AM

- Time to get to work! Encourage your blitzers to take mini breaks as needed to maintain their stamina throughout the day.

12:00 PM

- Lunch

1:00 PM

- Back to work with demonstrations and/or workshops throughout the afternoon.

4:00 PM

- Gather in a circle to celebrate your achievements and thank people before they start to drift off.
- If there's anything left to do some people might choose to hang around and help. We try and encourage people to stay around and have a small party with music and socializing!

After the Blitz

If we're lucky with the weather, and we planned well, we might have finished everything we set out to do. If not you may be left with some implementation work left to do. Either way you've now got some maintenance work ahead of you -- lovely, relaxing gardening for the most part, and you've got healthy, delicious food to look forward to. If you're a beginner gardener, there's a lot to learn, but you can achieve a lot just by giving it a try. There are lots of great sources of help within the permaculture community group if you run into problems.

Thank your team

Everyone loves a little appreciation! Sending a quick thank-you email to your permablitz team following the successful completion of your day will show your gratitude for a job well done, and encourage our blitzers to keep coming back for more!

Share your Permablitz

We love to get time-lapse slide shows of blitzes, as well as feedback about how the whole process went from design to implementation. We would love for you to write a short article and provide a digital slide show for us to post on the Permaculture Calgary Guild website! Please send your photos and stories to permablitz@permaculturecalgary.org.

Resources

<http://www.permaculturecalgary.org/> - Permaculture Calgary Guild – Post your permablitz here!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/CalgaryPermaculture/> - Calgary permaculture community resource for posting needs and yields

<https://vergepermaculture.ca/> – Fact sheets, courses, blogs and other resources

<http://www.freecycle.org/> - Free stuff

<http://www.greencalgary.org/> - 'Green' resources for Calgarians

<http://calgary.en.craigslist.ca/> - Free and cheap stuff

<http://calgary.kijiji.ca/> - Free and cheap stuff