

High Altitude Nature and Gardening (HANG)

Indigenous science hacks for modern gardening

By Janet Sellers

Indigenous science, or permaculture, for restoration of forests, mountains, land, and water

Zia Parker, a Coloradoan now living in Ecuador, spoke to Tri-Lakes locals in June about permaculture, teaching that local backyard efforts as well as large mountain-scape restorations have a powerful impact on our land and people. Parker, an international permaculture educator, explained that through our daily actions we can change the direction our planet is heading in many ways.

“Observe, design, install” education for water security for families, farms and forests

Parker helped develop in Ecuador the Yupaichani Network, five models of thriving living systems, hydrating the Earth and reawakening humanity’s kinship with the Earth. “Yupaichani” is Quechua for “Thank you Pachamama (All Life on Earth/Mother/Universe).” Parker’s talk and visual aids showed mountain ranges that had been burned to the ground were restored to verdant biodiversity, with trees and plants thriving in just a few years, using only hand tools. Parker showed how this method is used in China with spectacular results for restoration of forests from overworking lands that degraded into barren, deserted conditions.

These ancient restoration systems include swales, shallow channels with gently sloping sides on mountainous and hilly terrain that help manage water runoff, filter pollutants, and help rainwater soak into the land and manage or eliminate runoff. The simple hand tools used by the mingas (traditional community work parties, a tradition throughout South

America) on the steep mountainsides and on large farms using ancient permaculture techniques prove that any and all kinds of territory can be restored, rehydrated and heal burned and over-used areas into thriving, vibrant ecosystems. The swale systems have even restored underground aquifers.

Really, really cool: ancient giant refrigerator Yakhchai (ice pit) dome buildings used in Persia since 400 B.C. stored ice, food, and more in the middle of the desert. The evaporative cooling system inside the domed structures of a mortar called Sarooj, with walls two meters thick at the base, function through air currents and water: Hot air rises out through the conical dome, keeping the inside and underground storage area cold. In the 1800s, Nebraska had similarly made the world’s biggest ice house, and these kinds of places provided ice for keeping foodstuffs cold and viable on their long train ride across the nation. Modern fridge hacks include clay pot and plastic bucket evaporative coolers that can be made in minutes and keep food cool to cold, anciently used for homes and vegetable vendors, currently taught at the World Vegetable Center Eastern and Southern Africa Office.

Handy old (ancient) garden hacks

- Get faster blooms by cloning (cuttings) or grafting.
- High phosphorus stimulates budding and fruit: use sugar and flowers or sugar and greens 1:1; mix with a tool—not hands—then ferment a week. Use 1 tablespoon of mixture per gallon of water.
- Steeped compost tea—Put two or so big handfuls of aged compost in a five-gallon food-grade bucket of water and stir daily. It’s ready in a cou-



Above: From left, Rebecca Duke, Bill Fisher, and Marina la Riva hosted speaker Zia Parker, right, for a public talk on permaculture June 13. Parker shared detailed information for timely restoration of mountain burn areas via soil care, using inclines with swales for water retention, the importance of bio-diverse flora and ancient, traditional “permaculture” systems that support environmental healing that will last into future generations. The talk was held at La Rosa Southwestern Dining in Palmer Lake. *Photo by Janet Sellers*

ple of days to pour on soil of plants. Works in the garden and potted plants. *Janet Sellers is a gardener, writer, teacher—and speaker—for periodicals, universities, schools, and special events on various topics including nature, gardening, and art. She can be reached at janetsellers@ocn.me.*

Art Matters

Nature, art, and the “curated experience”



By Janet Sellers

Is curating just for art galleries and museums, or is it for living well? And, is travel more important than staying home? Well, I have always loved traveling and took in artful experiences wherever I went. In college days around Europe, I studied art, archeology, and art history, my trusty Kodak 110 camera in hand. I traveled to Japan with my wonderful old Carl Zeiss Exakta camera and pan-x film along (remember those film cans?!) and brought that Kodak 110 for snapshots.

Later, I returned to Japan to live, work, and play, immersing myself in her ancient aesthetics of nature appreciation, living seaside in Atami and in the mountains of Hakone National Forest at their respective art museum grounds, packing in language learning and cultural arts (the heartfelt way of tea, flower arranging, bonsai, poetry). Being a contemporary art-minded kid, I had to learn to love the mysteries of Japanese ancient artifacts and art history of museum fame by traveling around the country to ancient cultural places and exploring these things on my own terms.

Back then, we flowed along with everything as interns, taking on as much as possible between translations, editing and all-around Western cultural advising for international communication, formal receptions, and conference plans: Americans, Germans and Asians would be on time, Italians and Brazilians would reliably be fashionably very late, and all Westerners needed the comfort of chairs to sit on, coffee at breakfast, forks (not chopsticks) at the table, etc. Daily experiences were unique, and we all eventually returned home to share our discoveries over the years.

Nowadays, curated artful travel is the trending global phenomenon, with people setting up curated travel adventures with artists like me to just “be” and work alongside the artist. Billed as a “renewal vacation,” Curated Travel is travel planned by a travel curator agent, with the agency providing “personalised holiday itineraries for travellers seeking unique experiences” around the world. This trend of experience-driven travel is set to continue, and online travel aggregators are gearing up to offer unique tours and activities.

Experience curators are agents that plan insightful and personal experiences for their clients. One of my students, a travel experience curator, has been preparing a wonderful October trip to Southern France this year and asked me to offer the art and photography workshops. I instantly agreed, long hav-

ing offered local nature and outdoor “art stay-cations” in Tri-Lakes, “elbow to elbow with the artist.”

The Pikes Peak region is a beautiful destination, with experience curation an optimal and caring way to share our area’s natural treasures. Bygone days had loads of scheduled tourists getting on and off buses, trains, and airplanes; the Tri-Lakes area has walkable, small-town intimacy filled with contemporary art amid ancient history and nature in every step.

Our very mountains and forests are art-filled with age-old traditions of culturally modified trees and places unique to our planet and to our local and national history. The trees speak to us through the ages with their forms, indicating information for water, navigation, medicinal, and ceremonial purposes—even astronomy—and have much to tell us. We do need to listen with our hearts to get the true stories, and it is vital that we protect our local natural living treasures so they can greet everybody for generations to come.

July art events

Art Hop—July 18, 5-8 p.m. in Historic Downtown Monument. Bring friends, buy art, and say hello. Visit Bella Art and Frame, Gallery 132, Bliss Studio and Gallery, and Santa Fe Trail jewelry, local shops—walk around town!

Tri-Lakes Center for the Arts—curated art show “Texture,” opening reception July 12, 6-8 p.m. 384 Highway 105, Palmer Lake.

Southwinds Fine Art Gallery—July 13, 4-8 p.m. “everybody-welcome-workday-after-party” celebrating Friends of Fox Run Park and Wells Fargo Bank volunteers from the Monument Jackson Creek branch. Trail and brush workday 2-4 p.m.—details at 719-357-7454. Southwinds Gallery is headquarters for Friends of Fox Run Park. *Janet Sellers is an artist, writer, and speaker for art and photo classes and other cool stuff in Tri-Lakes and the whole wide world. Contact her at janetsellers@ocn.me.*

Snapshots of Our Community

Annual Kid’s Fishing Derby at Palmer Lake



Left: Kids enjoyed a sunny day June 1 catching trout and other fish at the annual Kid’s Fishing Derby at Palmer Lake. Prizes, raffles, and support from local businesses were awarded based on age groups ranging from 4 to 14 years old. Many kids released the fish they caught, while some took their catch home for dinner. *Photo by Janet Sellers.*