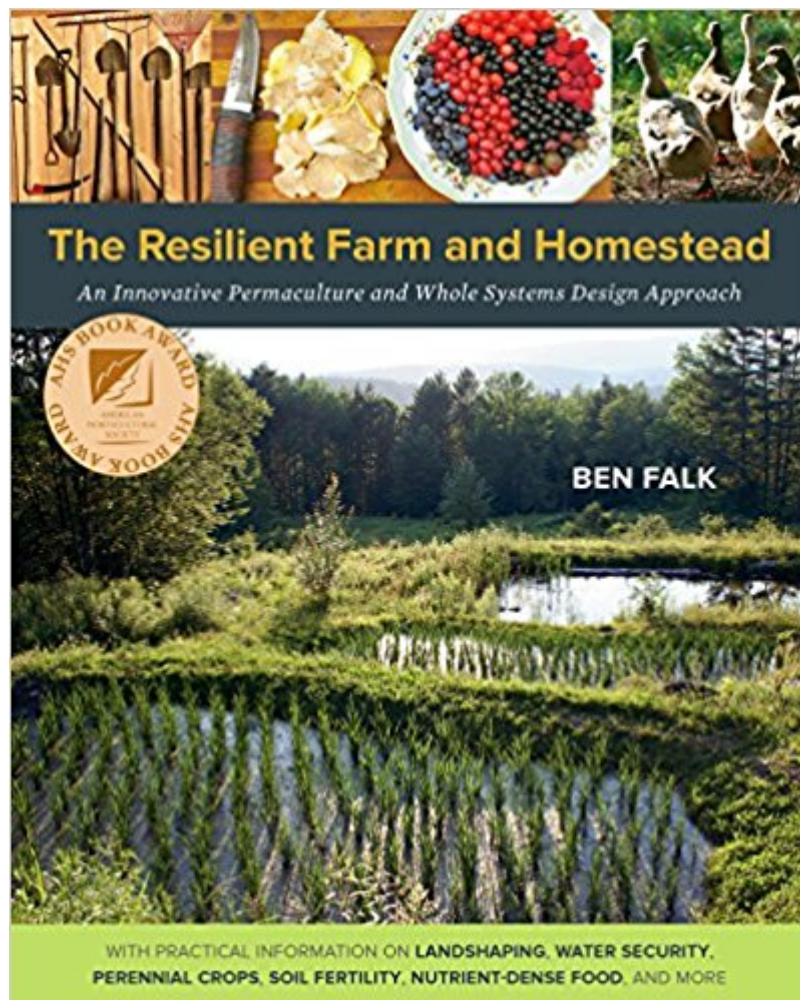




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The Resilient Farm And Homestead: An Innovative Permaculture And Whole Systems Design Approach



Synopsis

The Resilient Farm and Homestead is a manual for developing durable, beautiful, and highly functional human habitat systems fit to handle an age of rapid transition. Ben Falk is a land designer and site developer whose permaculture-research farm has drawn national attention. The site is a terraced paradise on a hillside in Vermont that would otherwise be overlooked by conventional farmers as unworthy farmland. Falk's wide array of fruit trees, rice paddies (relatively unheard of in the Northeast), ducks, nuts, and earth-inspired buildings is a hopeful image for the future of regenerative agriculture and modern homesteading. The book covers nearly every strategy Falk and his team have been testing at the Whole Systems Research Farm over the past decade, as well as experiments from other sites Falk has designed through his off-farm consulting business. The book includes detailed information on earthworks; gravity-fed water systems; species composition; the site-design process; site management; fuelwood hedge production and processing; human health and nutrient-dense production strategies; rapid topsoil formation and remineralization; agroforestry/silvopasture/grazing; ecosystem services, especially regarding flood mitigation; fertility management; human labor and social-systems aspects; tools/equipment/appropriate technology; and much more, complete with gorgeous photography and detailed design drawings. The Resilient Farm and Homestead is more than just a book of tricks and techniques for regenerative site development, but offers actual working results in living within complex farm-ecosystems based on research from the "great thinkers" in permaculture, and presents a viable home-scale model for an intentional food-producing ecosystem in cold climates, and beyond. Inspiring to would-be homesteaders everywhere, but especially for those who find themselves with "unlikely" farming land, Falk is an inspiration in what can be done by imitating natural systems, and making the most of what we have by re-imagining what's possible. A gorgeous case study for the homestead of the future.

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Customer Reviews

Publishers Weekly-STARRED REVIEW: "This intelligent, challenging book, rooted somewhere between back-to-the-land idealism and radical survivalism, sees resilience as both planting and building for the use of future generations, but also as preparing food, water, shelter, and the human body and psyche for the onset of any imaginable extreme emergency. The result is a comprehensive, open-ended, theoretical and practical system for a post-carbon-dependent life—including site design; water and earthworks; perennial farming that integrates gardening, animal husbandry, and soil building; energy; architecture; and personal health—a system that is not only sustainable but restorative of the biosphere. Readers just dipping their toes into sustainability may be overwhelmed by Falk's comprehensive vision and intimidating appendices listing homestead vulnerabilities and crucial skills for emergencies, but more seasoned 21st-century homesteaders, permies, and possibly also survivalists will appreciate Falk's realism and his belief that 'the process is an enjoyable, vitalizing one, and the results are staggering and humbling ... life wants to live.'"Foreword Reviews- "Permaculture can seem like a too-large umbrella term attempting to bring together a range of concepts and strategies, and many authors have tried to articulate the discipline in an accessible way. Ben Falk stands out for this highly successful effort at addressing how farmers and homesteaders can select, design, develop, and manage resilient properties that adapt to changing environmental conditions. Bringing his decade of experience managing a ten-acre permaculture farm in Vermont, as well as teaching about whole-systems design, Falk conveys the importance of better-designed agriculture and systems in *The Resilient Farm and Homestead*. Going beyond how-to advice on vegetable growing or chicken coop management, he delves into topics like fuel wood production, nutrient-dense food production, and gravity-fed water systems, which rely on moving water downhill instead of utilizing mechanical pumps. Natural strategies are emphasized, like silvopasture, a practice that combines livestock grazing and forestry to enhance soil protection and provide wind protection for animals. The material, seemingly overwhelming in scope, is presented artfully with numerous sidebars and bullet points that break information into digestible chunks. For example, a chapter on food production

includes a chart on annual vs. perennial labor and input costs, a diagram of a "living security fence" made of black locust trees, and a list of storage options for harvested vegetables. Particularly compelling are a number of appendices, from a "resiliency aptitude quiz" to a crucial skill list for emergencies to a vocabulary of concepts. Also useful, the book's abundant photography presents a bucolic, serene series of images that make urban dwellers sigh with longing. Burlap sacks brimming with potatoes grace one page, while a lush summer garden pops from another. Farm volunteers are shown picking elderberries, raising a timber-framed wall, and grafting fruit trees. Falk also includes plenty of practical illustrations as well, such as a drawing of how to grow rice in buckets, or a diagram of a wood-heated hot water system. The combination of these inspiring images and Falk's deeply integrative approach provide a much-needed permaculture guide that will likely kick off an array of reader projects. The mix of resources, practical advice, and land design offered here is a strong starting point for anyone interested in regenerative agriculture and modern homesteading."

"With *The Resilient Farm and Homestead*, Ben Falk has definitely planted the seeds of a positive, abundant legacy. This book outlines the process of designing one's homestead with not just the future in mind, but the imminently practical NOW! This one is going on my shelf next to *Helen and Scott Nearing*."--Mark Shepard, author of *Restoration Agriculture*

"Ben Falk extends the conversation about resilience to a deep resilience--resilience from the level of personal attitudes and skills to the design and creation of the maximally resilient homestead. *The Resilient Farm and Homestead* weaves together permaculture theory as modified by actual practice on a ten-acre Vermont farm with a thorough preparedness guide for times of climate change and greater uncertainties of all kinds and sizes. The book is greatly enhanced by numerous glorious photos of permaculture plantings as hedge rows, rice paddies, people swimming in swale-enclosed ponds, fruit and vegetable harvesting, and foraging sheep, chickens, and ducks. I particularly appreciate that Falk tells us what didn't work as well as what did. This book will be essential reading for the serious prepper as well as for everyone interested in creating a more resilient lifestyle or landscape."--Carol Deppe, author of *The Resilient Gardener: Food Production and Self-Reliance in Uncertain Times*

"Imagine. Honoring biodiversity in a place we each commit to for the long haul is what it takes to address a rapidly changing climate. Problem solved! Plant trees, let greenness thrive, learn the ways of fungi, be joyful. Ben Falk provides the encouragement and critical know-how to create your own food-producing sanctuary in *The Resilient Farm and Homestead*. The time is now to engage in healing the land and secure an ongoing future for generations to come."--Michael Phillips, author of *The Holistic Orchard*

"*The Resilient Farm and*

Homestead is a terrific book. "Simultaneously inspiring and practical, Ben Falk takes you from the why to the how...a journey where you will create a present and future filled with optimism and joy."--Shannon Hayes, author of Long Way on a Little and Radical Homemakers

"In The Resilient Farm and Homestead, Ben Falk gives us a delightful and inspiring description of his years developing a 10-acre permaculture farm in the Green Mountains of Vermont. Readers from regions outside New England, however, should not assume that Falk's practical, hard-won knowledge will not apply to them. His discussions invariably transcend the specific applications revealing principles which should be useful to homesteaders everywhere."--Larry Korn, editor of The One-Straw Revolution and Sowing Seeds in the Desert by Masanobu Fukuoka

Ben Falk calls his book about reviving a wornout hill farm in Vermont an example of resilience and regeneration; I call it pure natural magic. Grow rice in New England? Yes. Heat water to 155 degrees F on cold winter days at a rate of gallon a minute by piping it through a compost pile? Yes. How about dinner tonight of your own rack of lamb garnished with homegrown mushrooms? Yes. Your choice of scores of different vegetables and fruits even in winter? Yes. Plus, your own dairy products from your own sheep. All the while, the soil producing this magic, on a site once thought little more than a wasteland, grows yearly more fertile and secure from natural calamity."--Gene Logsdon, author of A Sanctuary of Trees and Small-Scale Grain Raising

Ben Falk, M.A.L.D, developed Whole Systems Design, LLC, as a land-based response to biological and cultural extinction and the increasing separation between people and elemental things. Life as a designer, builder, ecologist, tree-tender, and backcountry traveler continually informs Ben's integrative approach to developing landscapes and buildings. His home landscape and the WSD studio site in Vermont's Mad River Valley serve as a proving ground for the innovative land developments featured in the projects of Whole Systems Design. Ben has studied architecture and landscape architecture at the graduate level and holds master of arts in landscape design degree. He has taught design courses at the University of Vermont and Harvard's Arnold Arboretum as well as on permaculture design, microclimate design, and design for climate change. He recently served on the board of directors at the Yestermorrow Design-Build School, where he also teaches from time to time. He is the author of The Resilient Homestead: Innovative Permaculture Systems for the Home and Farm.

The title really says it all. For those unfamiliar with the concept, permaculture, as defined in this

work, is "applied disturbance ecology". The fundamental idea being that working with the land allows an optimized native ecosystem which is productive, supports life, and requires minimal maintenance. The term was first proposed by Bill Mollison and Dave Holmgren and first published in book form in *Permaculture One: A Perennial Agricultural System for Human Settlements*, and more extensively fleshed out in *Permaculture: A Designers' Manual*, but these are the kinds of works which beg for explanation. They are full of practical advice, plans and drawings for homestead design, water usage, and crop selection, but for all their visionary qualities, Mollison and Holmgren are not as organized or easy to follow as many would like. Additionally, the practical examples, with before and after pictures, and case studies demonstrating effectiveness are minimal in those works. This, I think, is the reason for the explosion of works like Shephard's *Restoration Agriculture*, and Hemenway's *Gaia's Garden*. This work is very much in the same tradition, but I liked it better than either of those. The first chapter is a "why permaculture?" discussion. It hits the high points of Mollison's idea, and though it doesn't say much you won't find elsewhere, it is clearly written and provides a solid foundation to the rest of the book. The second chapter discusses the design process, how to go about planning the transformation of a plot of land into a permacultured homestead. In this, it summarizes prior works, but does so every bit as extensively as the one dedicated work I've read on the subject: *Permaculture Design: A Step-by-Step Guide*. You do not need that book if you have this one. Chapter three is a summary of earth works and water planning, and while not as extensive as Yeoman's *Water For Every Farm*, it explains well enough that you could forgo that in the short term. It does not discuss contour plowing as extensively as Mark Shephard or Yeoman does. But it will give you the basic ideas behind the process. Chapter four discusses recycling of fertility, composting, and the how to use the cycle of decay and regeneration to benefit every living thing on your homestead. Chapter five discusses food crops, which centers around perennial crops and how to integrate grazing animals, poultry, and plant life to generate yields greater than the sum of the parts. Here again the discussion and the examples are better than in *Restoration Agriculture*, though some of the choices are tailored specifically to the northern temperate climate of Vermont. Enthusiasts in other climes will need to look elsewhere for specific choices. Intriguingly, the staple crop Mr. Falk grows is rice, and there is some good discussion of why this crop. Certainly unique in American agriculture, which has been solidly dominated by wheat and corn, but probably not as useful to permaculturists in more arid areas. Chapter six discusses fuel, and why wood burning, coupled with energy efficient housing design, is the most ecologically sound choice for a homestead. He also discusses building design, including how to plan for passive water conservation and use. Chapter seven is a "putting it all

together" discussion. These chapters are followed with appendixes of tool lists, checklists, and design outlines. Overall, probably the best introduction to the topic, in a practical sense with examples, that I have read. While the details are specific to his location, it could not be otherwise, and for homesteaders in that climate, it will be even more useful. For those in the Midwest, the practical examples in *Restoration Agriculture* will be better, but that work is not as clear, nor as good on topics outside crop selection and planting as this one is. Additionally, while details of some aspects of sustainable living are glossed over here, it does not purport to be a self-contained manual to every aspect. For those interested in this topic for the first time, I would recommend this work, followed by *Introduction to Permaculture* as a starting point. You probably don't need much else if you have imagination, helpful neighbors, some understanding of local ecology, and a desire to experiment. For those already widely read on the subject, this is a solid addition to a permaculture library, demonstrating the feasibility and success of these principles in well photographed detail. Highly recommended.

I've been gardening, homesteading, medium scale farming/ranching in three states (MO, northern CA & NM) and five properties in the past nearly 50 years, have an extensive library, subscribe to several excellent relevant publications, am constantly learning and expanding my skills & horizons. This is, hands down, one of the best, most comprehensive and HELPFUL books of which I am aware. Yes, I have and love resources from John Seymour, Gene Logsdon, Sepp Holzer, Joel Salatin, a HUGE amount of permaculture texts, gardening, homesteading, grass farming, sustainability, etc., WHICH ARE IMMEASURABLY VALUABLE, but this is right up there with the best. I enthusiastically echo several other excellent reviews, but cannot understand the scathingly negative ones. For my purposes, Ben has written a wonderfully refreshing blend of PRACTICAL and possible permaculture homesteading book from his PERSONAL experience. I've plenty of books gathering dust telling me what to do and what should work...but not many willing to admit when it doesn't (particularly the permaculture books). It is concise despite covering an impressive array of material. Not everything that "experienced" old-timers do works equally well in all situations and I appreciate the author's honest reporting of what is or is not working historically and currently on his particular property at various stages of its development/reclamation. It often takes several years of working with a property to get a feel for what it wants and needs in terms of plants, animals, water, amendments...especially if one's experience is with vastly divergent enterprises and climatic challenges. Regardless of what we know (or think we know), one can always learn from others' successes, mistakes, ideas, experience. While most of the charts & graphs were not helpful for my

personal learning styles, no doubt other folks loved them. He wisely presented the material in various formats to reach the widest audience. I appreciate Ben's willingness to share their project journey thus far and look forward to his subsequent reports...books.

While there is some useful and interesting information in this book, it fell well short of my expectations. I enjoyed and appreciated the author's philosophy (although he veers at times toward prepper/survivalist weirdness), but it seems that he lacks the experience and expertise to offer much practical advice to farmers and homesteaders beyond such things as the basics of cutting firewood. The book is beautifully presented and inspiring at times, but lacking the kind of practical value that I had hoped for.

this is a great book. Ben Falk goes the extra mile to write information that other permaculture books don't. He starts from a more advanced knowledge which I really appreciate. It gets frustrating reading books on sustainability and they start at a beginners level and you are left fishing for information that is new...not so with this book!...if you want really good information this is the book....I bought this book a year ago and left it in my car, someone broke into my car and stole it ...rrrrgh.....so finally bought it again and was not disappointed.

Takes a rare and systemic approach to permaculture as a tool for self-sufficiency. The logic and theory utilized in no way detract from the allure of this lifestyle, but rather seems to remove some of the mysticism surrounding the modern civilized views of returning to a simpler life through skills and resiliency. This is not a how to do manual as much as it is a how to think; introducing multiple methods and ideas as small parts of a coherent system requiring the end user to research individual components more deeply in order to find their own approach on their own site. Highly recommend as a launching off point by building the framework required for self-sufficiency.

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