

GARDENLY SLOWNESS¹



Gardenly slowness helps you to notice and appreciate activities that may not bring instant results but gradually contribute to the future flourishing of the garden and the gardener. While thinking about the future this method helps gather knowledge from the peripheries and everyday practices.

When designing each activity, like a garden, we need to consider whether the intended goals are feasible and think of time as a resource to be consciously allocated. Gardenly slowness does not exclude creativity or productivity but invites us to notice the meaning of our actions and their connections as part of a larger system. Gardenly slowness is active, careful choosing and weighing up the scope of action and the size of each step.

Through repetition, small steps we take now for the future can become a slowing down ritual. This can contribute to the wellbeing of both the garden and the gardener.

We often make hurried decisions that waste our own resources and those of the planet. What would happen if, instead of running in a never-ending race, we made time to care for the future and by doing so, care for the garden and the gardener in the present moment?

This method is inspired by permaculture practices,² where one of its core ethical principles is care for the planet. By caring for the garden, we are also contributing to our own welfare. All flourishing is mutually beneficial and as we tend to the garden we are contributing to our own futures.³

When we have an idea and take our first steps to put them into action things in the garden transform from nothing into something. For example, the garden becomes a permaculture garden, not when the garden is finished but when we apply the first principles. The focus here is on process and care. It fosters a deeper connection with the surroundings and shifts our focus to unexpected places. By practising this you may discover something you did not intend to find, that you didn't know you were seeking.

By adding layers of care and consciously repeating activities, we enter into a long-term relationship with our surroundings. Through gardenly slowness we support the growth of the garden and gardener, even when we are not actively involved. Sometimes it is good to just let things be, without intervening. Some experiences need time to settle before new ideas can emerge. In those moments, it is good to drift to the edges to observe what is taking place because change often begins outside the mainstream.

See also how craft and the slowness it produces supports degrowth thinking in the method card, "Decomposing resource-hungry patterns".

¹ We made up this expression.

² What is Permaculture? *Permaculture in New Zealand*.
<https://permaculture.org.nz/permaculture-basics/> (accessed 01.12.2024)

³ Robin Wall 2013. *Braiding Sweetgrass. Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. Penguin Books.

Exercises

- Plan your activities as if you were designing a garden. Consider your aims, break down the bigger vision into smaller, easily achievable activities and select the plants you would like to grow based on those goals.
- Appreciate the peripheries where, like a forager, you can gather gifts that have grown with your involvement. You can gather both plants and knowledge.
- In the different seasons observe and notice what changes your efforts bring. Be aware of what happens when you don't actively do anything.
- Plant something that won't bear fruit until years to come (such as hazelnut or grapevines). Provide them with the necessary care, thereby caring for the future and future generations.
- Take note of what you have done in the garden, if possible write it or draw by hand. Your diary can be a tool for developing ideas.
- Darn a small hole. Repeat this action when a new hole appears. Note the appearance of emerging patterns.
- Put a stick into the ground⁴ – even this small action increases biodiversity by providing birds with a place to rest. And with their droppings they can spread seeds in the garden.
- Allow for and note creativity in everyday activities. By focusing on creative practices, you can encourage slowness. Gardenly slowness can also be applied to cleaning up digital clutter and by making this into an everyday ritual it can have a noticeable impact.

⁴ We thank Marian Nummert for this idea.

Photos: Marta Kononov, Kärt Petser



Knitwear that has been perforated by rats has potential, similar to a compost bed with its deposited layers. Even though the best time to mend is before the appearance of a hole,⁵ it is worth wearing the garment between mends, so that together with the wearer the garment participates in the process. To make sure that clothes don't wear out completely it is important to strengthen them by darning. A hole is more likely to get fixed if it is mended by hand rather than waiting for the right moment to take out the sewing machine – we might work more slowly but the job gets done. A stick put into the ground can act in the same way, like a ritual by which to begin caring for the future. Activities shared with others empower and feed the task and the person doing it. A garden bed established with others as a community effort is more resilient than one made alone.

Photos: Marta Kononov, Kärt Petser



⁵ Maris Taul signs her guidebook with the Estonian proverb "Mend at the right time". This proverb is a good example of how timely intervention requires fewer resources. By mending at the first signs of wear or when the hole is still very small, we prevent further damage and need less time and materials. Taul, Maris 2024. *Parandame ja nõelume*. Türi: Saara Kirjastus