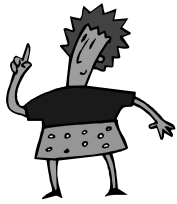


Permaculture Network In Malawi

Issue # 44

Newsletter July – September 2003

Teaching Tip



People learn when they are ready to learn. If you are conducting a training, set realistic expectations for yourself. If you have 20 people and only 2 or 3 people really seem to apply what you have taught, focus on these successes, not the failures. One individual is often all it takes to make great changes.

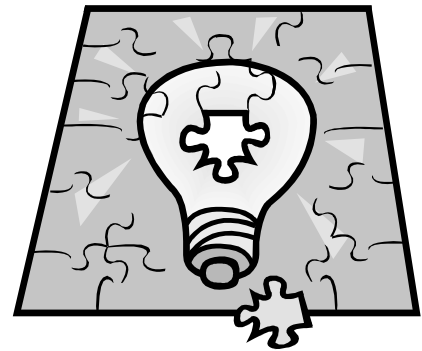
Inside this issue:

Seeing Solutions	1
You Don't Need Gumboots To Teach	2
Always Something to Teach	3
Members Share	4
Workshop at Moyo Wathu	5
Taking It Home	6
Our Growing Training Base	7
Resources	8

Seeing Solutions, Not Problems *from the editors*

Once again we are a bit late in getting this newsletter out. These last few months have truly been a lesson in seeing solutions and not problems. As many of you know, Kristof and Stacia Nordin have spent the last six years developing a Permaculture Demonstration Plot at their house in the Chitedze Agricultural Research Station. Due to administrative reasons, Chitedze has asked people to move who aren't directly affiliated with the research projects that are taking place there. We tried to show that our research into sustainable food security, nutrition, and energy conservation should be an important part of the work that is taking place there, but we were unable to make a strong enough case and therefore have had to move to a new house.

At first, we were quite saddened at the prospect of losing all the work that we had put into the demonstration plot. But then we began to take a different approach to the situation. Our *solution* lay in looking at all the beneficial things that had happened over the six years: hundreds of people had come to observe the gardens, learn about Permaculture practices, gain insight into improving their nutrition, see ways in which they could recycle their water sources, and share seeds. The plot also gave us an excellent opportunity to experiment with different types of companion planting within *guild* systems so that we now have a good understanding of what plants work well in our area.



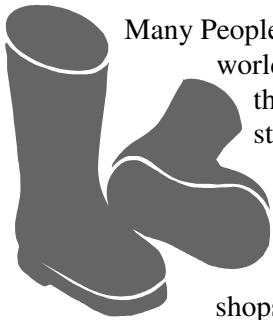
We have now found a new house near the Chitedze area and are extremely excited to start building a new "Permaculture Paradise". The lessons that we have learned along the way will assist us greatly in setting up new garden systems more quickly and much better planned than we could have ever dreamed of six years ago.

So, we have now learned the important lesson that everything in Permaculture has its seasons. Things come and go, live and die, recycle themselves and improve life. Knowledge that is shared can never die, it can only add strength to the whole system. Our teaching will continue and so will our learning.

This issue of the newsletter will focus on teaching ideas so that you can help others to understand how Permaculture principles can help people achieve food security, nutritional security, and personal security in terms of health and their futures. Remember, one of the best lessons that a person can learn when trying to teach others is to "See solutions and not problems". Practice what you preach and others will begin to see the potential. 🌍

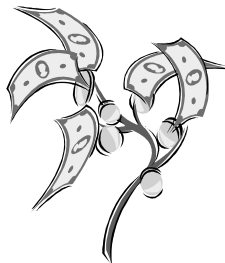
You Don't Need Gumboots to Teach

by Kristof Nordin



Many People think that “money makes the world go ‘round’”. This way of thinking has ingrained itself so strongly within Malawi that it has almost become a disease. We see professional “workshoppers”, people who strive to go to as many workshops as possible to get the allowances without caring about the workshop’s content or taking any of the information home with them to share with others. We see people failing to plant food because nobody has given them “money for seeds and fertilizer”. We also see people who think that they can’t teach about sustainable agriculture without first writing a proposal to get flipcharts, wheelbarrows, and gumboots.

Permaculture shows us that everything we need can come from nature, *free of charge*, if we are thinking ahead and working with these natural systems rather than against them. Money is only a fairly recent invention in terms of human history, and it is a *human* invention not a natural one. Money doesn’t grow on trees, but foods, medicines, fibers, and building supplies do! Communities used to base their form of “currency” on trading goods and services without any money. This meant that if somebody was good at growing something and somebody else was a good carpenter, the two could share their skills with each other. The carpenter could eat and the farmer could live in a nice house. Malawi culture still does this to some extent, but this valuable and ancient practice is disappearing due to the immense focus on money. Many people now believe that a “standard of living” equates to the ability to own a TV and VCR rather than health, food security, and a genuine *quality* of life (all of which can be obtained without the need for money).



Before you decide that you can’t teach without money, it is good to remember that “Nature is the best teacher”. If you want to teach about soil fertility, take a group of people outside and look at the differences in soil color, smell, and consistency between the areas that humans have been using and the areas where nature has been allowed to manage itself. These “natural” areas are getting harder to find, but there are usually small areas that you can find if you are look-

ing for them. To teach about water management, take people outside to look at the cause and effects of soil erosion (these examples are unfortunately very easy to find). Look at areas where water is being used and what happens to it after it has been used. These types of areas include the end of boreholes, bathing areas, runoff from roofs, and areas where clothes or dishes are washed. To teach about growing food without money, look at areas where there are sweeping piles or where things have been thrown away. There are usually numerous foods growing and providing seeds in these areas. Look at areas that have been burnt and note that very few things are growing.

The outdoor classroom is a great place to help people to start to see the world through the “eyes of Permaculture”. Start with the basics of understanding and work from there. Many people have been told to do things without being taught why. If people don’t understand about soil, how can they start to heal it? If they don’t understand about the water table and the devastating effects of runoff, why would they bother to set up systems that will “stop, spread, sink, and shade”? If people don’t understand about the importance of eating a variety of nutritious foods, why would they grow them? These are all lessons that can be taught without a classroom, without flipcharts, and certainly without the aid of wheelbarrows and gumboots. Start with the resources that people have available to them and build from there.

Permaculture doesn’t forbid the use of money, but if it gets in the way of teaching and living a healthy lifestyle, this is when it has become a problem. Money can even be made with the use of Permaculture. Take a look at the shelves in your local PTC the next time you are there and see what types of things are being imported. Spices, dried fruits, chickens, cheese, even things like tomatoes, eggs, and onions! Why? These are all things that could and should be produced right here in Malawi without giving our money away to places like South Africa and Zimbabwe. We have sunlight, a rainy season, and the potential to grow things all year round. This is more than most places have. (In cold areas such as the United States, many places can only grow things for about three or four months out of the year.) In this view, we begin to see that Malawi is not poor...it is extremely rich with potential (with or without money). 🌍



Always Something to Teach with Permaculture!

People's actions are sometimes the best teaching tools. Some of our actions help the environment and others hurt it. Whatever the situation, you can use it as an example to help people learn about the principles of Permaculture. Here are a few examples of these teaching opportunities. Use every chance you have to help people understand the importance that nature plays in improving our health and quality of life.

Burning



Burning: Repetitive burning on the same land has many negative results. It destroys nutrients that are important for plants to grow. It removes groundcover that helps to protect the soil from the harsh forces of sun and rain. This also encourages runoff, which removes even more nutrients, leads to erosion and flooding. Burning also removes important organic matter that helps to hold moisture and provides food for insects like termites so that they don't eat your plants. Fires also destroy the biodiversity of an area. Many of these burned areas at one time contained trees and plants that could have served as food, medicine, firewood, and building supplies if they had been allowed to grow. This biodiversity is also important for providing food and habitat for beneficial creatures that will help the plants grow. If you see people burning, try to ask them their reasons and explain all the benefits that could be derived from protecting that land rather than destroying it.

Compost Making



Composting: Composting is a method of mimicking nature to provide nutrients back to the soil. In nature, organic matter falls to the earth, decays, and releases nutrients for plants to grow. Composting simply speeds up this process. By piling up organic matter and adding a bit of moisture, compost heaps can provide even more nutrients to your plants than the chemical fertilizer that people buy. These purchased fertilizers often only contain 3 or 4 nutrients, but compost can contain up to 12. This is why people say that chemical fertilizer only feeds the plants, whereas compost feeds the soil. Even better, compost can be made for free! The best compost piles contain a wide variety of organic matter. This diversity helps to ensure that the soil will get all the nutrients it needs. Just like us...the wider the variety of our food, the more likely we are to receive all the nutrients that we need. Build compost, use compost, teach about compost!

Over Sweeping

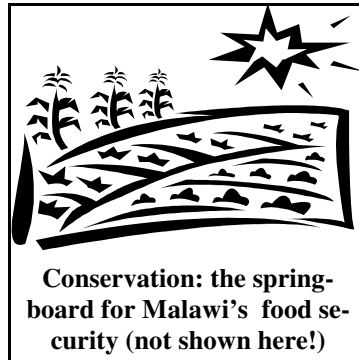


Over Sweeping: Over Sweeping has practically become an addiction in Malawi. This detrimental practice is similar to burning in the fact that it removes organic matter, soil nutrients, ground cover, and encourages runoff. Beyond this, it also erodes the foundations of buildings. A study that was recently done determined that over sweeping was the number one cause of structural damage to Ministry houses. This sweeping also increases the amount of dust that enters the air, increasing respiratory infections and soil erosion. In the rainy season many over swept yards turn into small lakes of standing water. This encourages the breeding of mosquitoes and the likelihood that people will get malaria. Sweeping a pathway to your house is different than sweeping your entire yard down to bare dirt. Instead of sweeping mass amounts of land, teach people how to establish gardens in these areas that will provide them with year-round food close to their houses.

Members Share Their Knowledge by Leo Kuwani

Permaculture gets an invitation to the Land Resources Conservation Conference, 2003—The Land Resources Conservation Department held its annual conference from 14th-18th July at the Blantyre ADD. Recognizing the important role that Permaculture technology can play in food security, the Department invited the Permaculture Network in Malawi to make a presentation. Leo Kuwani and June Walker represented the Network with a paper entitled, “Permaculture Designing for Food Security.” The paper stressed:

- No more shifting and slash/burn agriculture but permanent agriculture.
- Working with nature rather than against it.
- Long and thoughtful observation rather than long and thoughtless labour
- Common sense + local knowledge = Permaculture
- Permaculture is a holistic design system for sustainable living that utilizes soil, water, energy, plant and animal conservation to meet our needs for food security.
- Nature never monocrops, doesn't plant in straight lines, and doesn't sweep. Rather, it dresses itself with organic matter.
- Observe and study nature to learn its wisdom.
- Don't plant plants, build guilds.



- Agriculture looks at land and ecosystems through “Man's” eyes, Permaculture looks at these things through nature's eyes.

The Director of Land Resources Conservation Department opened the conference with the theme of “Soil and Water Conservation: the springboard for Malawi's food security”. This has three objectives:

- To review implementation of soil and water conservation programmes in Malawi
- To analyze factors affecting national and household food security
- To formulate soil and water conservation strategies that can lead to both national and household food security in our beautiful Malawi

The Director said that being food secure means that people have the access and ability to satisfy their nutritional requirements to maintain a healthy and active life

throughout the year. Land is the foundation upon which the economy of this great nation is built and its degradation must be avoided at all costs. To have a successful and sustainable conservation programme, land use planning must be carried out *with* the farmers and not *for* the farmers. The farmers should be taking conservation as an integral component of a productive farming system rather than a separate practice.

What is conservation farming?

Conservation farming refers to a range of farmers options that permit minimal disturbance of the soil composition, structure, and natural biodiversity. The advantages of conservation farming are found in ensuring that there is soil cover that protects from erosion, soil degradation, extreme temperatures, and evaporation. The materials used for covering become the source of organic matter and help ensure that weed are controlled. The following are components of good conservation farming practices:

- Good soil cover
- Minimizing soil disturbance
- Effective runoff control
- Increased water infiltration and retention



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Teaching Tip – Practicing Design

One way to help a group visualize about how to plan a Permaculture plot is to divide the participants into groups of 2-4 people. Mark off one meter by one meter squares on the ground with string or sticks. (Preferably find areas with small gullies, slopes, rocks, water, or other variables.) Tell the groups that these squares represent an area of one hectare and that they can use anything they find (rocks, grass, sticks...) to represent houses, trees, compost piles, etc. Have them lay out the area as if it were their community, keeping in mind all the things that you have taught about soil conservation, water management, guilds, conservation of energy, and other Permaculture principles. When they are finished, have the groups present their “communities” to the other groups and allow for questions and comments. Provide the groups with feedback on their work such as whether the groups planned a year-round variety of foods, placement of trees for fullest potential, fuel wood sources, medicines, best use of water resources, elimination of soil erosion, and other things that you may have been

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At the conference, it was pointed out that “the cooperation that exists between the Department and other stakeholders is commendable and needs further fostering”. Conservation work is a multidisciplinary responsibility, hence there is no way to achieve anything by divorcing our partners. We need to strengthen the links through strategies that can promote partnership between government and other stakeholders in soil conservation. Some of these strategies include:

- Training NGO staff, especially field personnel on extension skills together with the govern-

ment staff so that they complement each other.

- Using “farmer to farmer” extension and group approaches. Farmers should be requesting the services of an extension worker only when there is need to do so, otherwise farmers are capable of doing extension work themselves in their own communities. What is needed is to train farmers in extension activities and training for transformation. This would help to ensure the sustainability of activities in communities.
- Decentralize activities to include children and the youth in affore-

station activities, for they are the ones to realize the benefits.

- Exchange visits between programmes and communities.
- Exchange of seed materials.

At the end of the conference as plans and reports were being reviewed, the Director asked, “Why make a plan or a programme if you know you are not going to implement it? Training without using is a waste.” In this sense, Permaculturalists seem to be a kilometer ahead!



Teaching Tip – Creative Cooking

If you want to teach people about the benefits of eating a variety of foods, try some creative cooking ideas where the participants prepare the foods that they will eat. Remember not to “push” people too hard when trying new or different tastes. We are taught what to eat as children, so change will take time. Try making just a little bit of new things for people to try...if they like it, have them make more! 🌍

Permaculture Workshop at Moyo Wathu, Chiringa, Phalombe

By Mr. Somanje A.G. Mbewe

Between being a member of Permaculture Network in Malawi and for the first time attending a Permaculture training, I have really enjoyed and grasped new knowledge and skills. Our facilitator for the workshop, Mr. Leo Kuwani, taught us many facts pertinent to Permaculture. There were 19 participants in the workshop and everyone of us liked and enjoyed the lessons. The host officers of Moyo Wathu (Mr. Manjoro & Mr. Chingwa) welcomed us and were very pleasant.

The participants actively participated during the whole two-week training course. We learnt many topics such as the history, ethics and principles of Permaculture, environment and ecosystems, nutrient cycles, land designing, pest

management, bed designs, plants, zones at home, guilds, types of manure, medicinal foods, food hygiene, sufficient food at home, water cycle, water harvesting, types of energy, integration of livestock, fund raising with Permaculture and many more.

We had a trip to T.A. Mkhumba’s home where participants were able to see for themselves some practical activities utilizing Permaculture. We also had a trip to a small mountain where we saw nature taking care of the land by itself. We looked at the way water flows,

and found natural fruits, grass, insects and many more.

As a Primary Advisor in Education, I have benefited a lot and increased my horizon so that I will be in a position to advise my teachers in my zone very effectively and efficiently.

At the end of the workshop participants were honored with certificates, which gave us pride as we were told that later, after 2 years of implementations in our homes, we could become trainers.

The workshop went smoothly with our any disturbances. I would like to render my sincere thanks to Mr. Leo Kuwani, for keeping a perseverance spirit during the workshop. He took all the topics teaching hence he was not bored but always he became active. 🌍



Tea time – a great time to share information & to eat nutritious foods!

Taking It Home: the importance of teaching styles from the editors

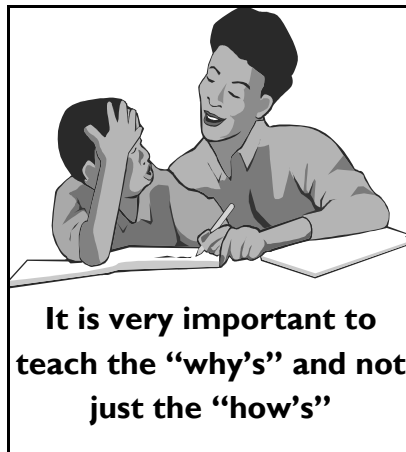
One of the most important aspects of teaching is to help people incorporate what they have learned into their daily lives. If you have done your job as a trainer, people should see the importance of what you are teaching, use this knowledge to their benefit, and then share it with others.

So what makes a good teacher? There is a saying that goes, “What I *hear*, I forget. What I *see*, I remember. What I *do*, I understand.” The wider the variety of teaching styles that you use, the more likely that you will get through to people. If you tell someone to plant a tree, do you think they will do it? Probably not. If you show someone how to plant a tree, do you think they will plant their own? Perhaps. If you guide someone to plant a tree for themselves, they have already done it, and now they have the skills to continue the process.

It is also very important to teach the “*why’s*” and not just the “*how’s*”. People can understand *how* to implement Permaculture, but if they don’t understand *why* it is important then they probably won’t bother to use it. If you can teach people that Permaculture can assist with food security, improved nutrition, disease reduction,

better water supplies, lower financial inputs, and increased income generation then the “*how’s*” of Permaculture become something that they will really want to learn about.

There are many different teaching styles that you can use to help people learn.



Talking with individuals can be one of the most effective ways to reach people. Don’t think that you need to rent a conference hall to be a trainer. If you are a role model, it will make your job much easier. You will be able to show and explain the benefits of Permaculture principles because you are using them. You will be able to convince people about the benefits of a diverse diet because you are eating one. You will also be able to impress people on the subject of food security because you are harvesting food every day

throughout the year.

The following is a list of ideas for teaching styles that can also be incorporated into different situations. Some may be used with individuals and others with groups:

- Visual aids
- Outdoor observations
- Role plays
- Hands-on practice
- Demonstrations
- Field days
- Dramas
- Brainstorms
- Small group discussions
- Assignments
- Outdoor Activities
- Games
- Creative cooking lessons
- Ice breakers
- Contests
- Competitions
- Field trips
- Resource materials
- Guest speakers
- Lectures
- Picture card discussions
- Presentations
- Farmer-to-farmer visits
- Experiments
- Research
- Role modeling

If you are creative and enthusiastic, you should be able to come up with ways to use these ideas to your advantage. Practice what you preach and believe in what you teach, this will help to make you a great teacher. 🌍

Teaching Tip – Water Cycle

If you want to teach about the water cycle, tie a clear plastic bag around the leaves of a tree or flower. Within a few minutes you will begin to see moisture accumulating inside the bag. This can be a useful tool to show people how plants return water into the atmosphere, create clouds, and ensure that rain will fall. The more plants that we have, the more water we will have.



Our Growing Training Base

In the June-July 2002 issue we asked members to write to us and tell us what types of training they are doing and how they gained their knowledge in Permaculture. Below is a summary of what the members reported. Please note that we are unable to verify any information put forth, but we hope that you will give these trainers a chance and then report back to the Permaculture Network with an evaluation of what you learn from them. Refer to the membership list for the trainers contact details.

Michael M. Kadango, Mangochi – Received his training at a 12-day course in Permaculture Design

- Also organized and is teaching a youth group at Agape Life Church to grow vegetables and conduct IGA activities (tomato chutney and banana chutney). 1-day lecture with primary school teachers.
- Designed garden & harvests rain-water for gardens. Set up resource centre that depends on a small donation.

Vin Kabwalo, Mchinji – Trained at a 10-day Permaculture Nutrition course in 2001 with Kristof & Stacia Nordin.

- Teaches rural communities how they can have a healthy life by working with nature without robbing or violating its resources. Teachers about re-forestation, live fencing, compost manure, he says, just to mention a few.
- Facilitated Permaculture session for Peace Corps Volunteer trainees at Chitedze research station.

Vensio L. Govati – Completed 12-day Permaculture design course as a trainer held at MOET in Mangochi.

- Teaching Permaculture to 12 school leavers and some interested communities around his home.
- Undergoing a test on Permaculture draft series and poster with June Walker (training material development).

F.N. Majawa, Ntcheu – In 1993 the Food Garden Foundation of South Africa sent information about natural farming. In 1995 attended Permaculture Design, Chilema, Zomba. In 1991 attended Permaculture Trainers course in Ekwendeni, Mzuzu. In 1999 attended Permaculture Nutrition course in Balaka with Kristof & Stacia Nordin.

- Since 1997 has been teaching pupils at Ntonda F.P. School.

Lipangwe Organic Manure Demonstration Farm (LOMADEF), Ntcheu – Established in 1993 as an NGO.

- Trains & provides extension services to enable farmers to prepare and use organic manure. Teaches food storage and utilization. Produces natural pesticides from plant combinations (Tephrosia, Chillies, Futsa, Garlic).
- Reclamation of degraded land to improve soil structure & crop yields (uses marker ridges A frames, graded bunds, agroforestry, vetiver and dolichos beans and other leguminous edible and non-edible plants).
- Has trained 2158 individuals in organic manure, 1580 in A frame technology, 980 beneficiaries are cultivating and practicing agroforestry, a total of 800 hectares is grown organically.
- Has provided training to Concern Universal, CCAP, Green Line Movement, Evangelical Baptist Church, US Peace Corps Malawi, CARD, Carmelites Sisters of Catholic Mission Kandeu, and Zomba Diocese.

Somanje A.G. Mbewe, Phalombe – Received his training at a 2-week Permaculture training at Moyo Wathu in Chiringa, Phalombe held by Leo Kawani. (See previous page in this newsletter for a description of the training.)

- As a Primary Advisor in Education he plans to advise his teachers in his zone.

M.K. Masiye, Khonjeni – Received on-the-job training with Peace Corps Volunteer Karen Schmidt. Attended a 5-day Permaculture Nutrition TOT in 2001 given by Kristof & Stacia Nordin and Leiza Dupreez in Livingstonia.

- Briefed the District Health Inspector, Medical Assistant & HSAs about Permaculture and Nutrition.
- Worked closely with 3 HSAs to implement Permaculture methods in their catchment areas.
- Taught representatives from 20 villages from T/A Kapichi about what Permaculture and good nutrition means.
- Plans to continue finding groups of people who are interested and assist them in planting guilds.

McJustice R.B. Betha, Chapananga – In 1994 attended designers course at Chilema with trainer Jeremy Burnham and Avice Hindermarch, both from South Africa. In 1996 attended Sustainable Agriculture trainer's course in Arushia, Tanzania organized by PELUM with facilitators from all over East Africa. In 1997 attended a holistic approach to sustainable living workshop at Bvumbwe.

- Conducted trainings in Permaculture & vegetable production for IEF (Chikwawa & Nsanje); designers courses for Nazarene Church (Mzimba); for Permaculture Network (Dedza); and trainers' course Makawa (Mangochi).
- Established Maziko Amoyo Wabwino Organization (MAWO) and conducted a variety of trainings including the designer's courses. Aims to assist the community in promotion of culture & indigenous knowledge.

John Davis Nyasulu, Phalombe – In 1999 June Walker provided training at Likulezi Project. In 2001 attended training with Stacia & Kristof Nordin and Leiza Dupreez at Lukwe Permaculture Project.

- Training groups, orphan families and primary schools in the Likulezi project.



Permaculture Network In Malawi

Kristof & Stacia Nordin, PO Box 208, Lilongwe

*“See the world through
the eyes of Permaculture”*

Membership Information

Memberships are for the calendar year. If your mailing label includes **“Payment Due!”** Please send us your 2003 membership fee or a letter as to why you are unable to pay the fee.

Benefits include quarterly newsletters with advice on nutrition, food plants, resources, ideas, and contacts of people in Malawi who are also practicing the sustainable living of Permaculture.

Fees are 400 mk for the calendar year. Those who pay more can sponsor community groups who are unable to afford the fees (thank you!).





Send payment in the form of check, postal order or postal stamps along with your name, address, all contact details, profession & areas of interest with checks written and addressed to:

Stacia Nordin, PO Box 208, LL

*Next Issue: Preparing
for the “Hungry Season”*

Teach and learn every day!
Phunzitzani ndi phunzirani tsiku lili lonse!

Resources for Permaculture Training

-  **Nutritional Food Guide Posters** – Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation & Food Security created a series of training posters in English, Chichewa and Chitumbuka that come along with a community nutrition manual. In 2002 the set cost about 500 mk. They are available from the Agricultural Communications Branch in Lilongwe or you can work with your local ADD or EPA.
-  **Permaculture Magazine: Solutions for Sustainable Living** – A quarterly newsletter that has highlighted work in Malawi in its issues. Available from Permanent Publications, The Sustainability Centre, East meon, Hampshire GU32 1HR, England or via e-mail by info@permaculture.co.uk yearly subscription is 22 Pounds. They also have a catalogue of many different resources.
-  **Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM)** - They put out a magazine called Ground up and have other training resources. Contact: PELUM Association, P O Box MP1059, Mt Pleasant, Harare-Zimbabwe, Email: pelum@ecoweb.co.zw
-  **Wildlife & Environmental Society of Malawi** – branches are all over Malawi. Branches have activities, support wildlife clubs, and have frequent talks that Permaculture fits in with nicely. Why not contact your local branch and teach about Permaculture? The Lilongwe branch can be contacted at PO Box 30293, LL. Or by e-mail at: wesm-llw@africa-online.net