

OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

compiled by Kelda Miller

Remember that the more information you receive , the more you will be able to work with natural patterns and design systems that work.

INTUITION

First off, what do you feel from this place?

What strikes you right away?

Let your mind wander and see what information you are offered...

EARTH

What are the major landforms? Take a bird's eye view.

What is the soil like? (wet/dry, and clay/loam/sand, and humus content)

What is the vegetation like? (forest natives, pruned ornamentals, feral plants?)

Are the plants healthy or weak?

How old is the oldest tree?

Do any of the plants give you clues to the history of the site?

Are there signs of animal activity? (Remember the small ones too: worms, spiders, slugs, etc)

What interactions do you see? (Example: an insect eating a certain leaf, or a particular tree in which a bird nests).

AIR

How does wind move through the site, on normal days?

How does wind move through on very windy days or during storms?

What are the temperature ranges? Throughout the seasons...

Where are the frost pockets?

WATER

What is the rainfall like? Amounts and seasons?

How does water move through the site?

Where does water sit when it rains a lot?

Where are the cool microclimates? (Example: a shrub that always has a dark, wet area under it, where the dog sits on a hot day).

Where are water lines, sewage lines, septic drain-fields?

FIRE

Where are the sunny areas? Where are the shady areas?

Where are the warm microclimates? (Example: a large rock that holds heat and is protected from wind, where a cat sits on a cool day).

How does the sun move through the site throughout the day?

How does the sun move through at different times of year?

Where are gas lines, phone, power lines, etc?

ALSO

How do the humans here use the land? What is the infrastructure like? (house, roads, fences, walls, etc)

Where do humans move through or past the site?

Where do they spend most of their time?

Where do they want to spend their time?

What is the history of the land? (talk to locals, study old maps/books/photos)

What natural disasters are likely in this area?

What off-site affects this place? (major roads, water bodies, 'weedy' neighbors, etc)

What resources are nearby? (stores, other gardens/farms, big parks, etc)

How does your being there affect this place? Your children? Your pets?

What will this place be like in the future without you making any design changes?

After learning more about this place, again ask yourself what you intuitively feel about it.