

2021 Pearlstone PDC Frequently Asked Questions

- What is permaculture?
 - Permaculture is the practice of designing sustainable human habitats by following nature's patterns.
- I live in the city, what does permaculture offer me?
 - Yes! People are using permaculture in cities around the world with inspiring results. Here is a [short blog post](#) about a few of the many ways permaculture applies in the city.
- What does permaculture look like at Pearlstone?
 - Pearlstone is a great place to learn Permaculture because you can see how permaculture principals and process apply to different scales and goals. Some aspects of Pearlstone work are deeply driven by permaculture principals, while other aspects of the organization are simply influenced by this approach. As such, we can teach from the prospective of an institution, a business, a farm, or a home in ways that resonate in your life. Here are a few examples, come see for yourself!
 - Our land stewardship is expansive. We tend to forests, meadows and stream valleys on a 180-acre scale like many parks, campuses, and mid-size businesses or farms. Here we use techniques like prescribed fire, habitat creation, and stream-to-floodplain connectivity.
 - Permaculture principals deeply inform 12 acres of organic agriculture at Pearlstone in ways that can apply directly to other homesteads, small businesses. In this setting we are applying permaculture ethics to compensating our staff fairly, propagate plants, and making compost, and more.
 - We apply permaculture principals in outdoor education spaces that are similar to any school environment, home, or garden. In this case permaculture looks like small food forests and natural building.
 - We use our permaculture skillset to influence the highly professionalized environment of our retreat center business. Here our permaculture approach manifests as renewable energy, LEED, Fitwell, sustainable sourcing, and waste reduction.
- What are the bunkhouses?
 - Bunkhouses are shared, rustic screened pavilions located in the forest a short walk from the dining area, bathrooms, and classroom. Sheets and pillows are provided for the single bed you reserve by selecting this option. Bring your own blanket, sleeping bag, or pillow for a cozy night's sleep. The space is shared by several participants and has a pleasant summer camp atmosphere. The sound of the breeze in the leaves and the insects singing are a favorite.
- How do I camp?
 - If you love camping or are looking to save money this is a great place to camp! You bring the gear and we'll provide a lovely camping spot in the forest or adjoining meadows.
- Can I vehicle camp?
 - We have a few spaces to park your van, camper, etc. These are first come, first serve. We offer a shared garden hose and extension cord connection to take turns refilling water and recharging batteries if needed. All the better if you have your own solar charger. We do not allow discharge or dumping onsite. Bathrooms and showers are nearby.
- Are there bathrooms and showers?
 - Yes, the bunkhouses and camping spots are a short walk from the bathrooms, showers, and dining area. The setup is similar to many campsites with centralized facilities.

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- Can I commute?
 - No - generally. We say that this course is dawn-to-dusk and intensive because it's true. We start early and end late to make the most of our time together. Being present for a morning drink, a long walk, and evening conversations are wonderful aspects of being in community together that are as valuable as anything else we have to offer. We have made exceptions to be most inclusive in a few cases where dynamics like personal health or family caregiving were particularly sensitive.
- Can you tell me about the food and meals?
 - Our meals are anchored by amazing ingredients from our certified organic farm. We keep the food simple and nourishing. We eat outside at picnic tables in the shade of the trees and meals are really enjoyable parts of our days together. The menu is Lacto-ovo vegetarian, homestyle kosher (more below), and delicious! We provide light snacks, hot water for tea and coffee. Love meat? Bring some jerky! Participants are encouraged to bring their favorite snacks and teas to keep in their bag and/or share with the community.
- What does it mean that the food is Kosher?
 - As part of the Jewish community in Baltimore we are proud to offer homestyle-Kosher nourishment. Kashrut (Kosher practice) is an ancient practice of honoring the holiness/preciousness of the food that gives us life. Like other ancient practices, Kashrut takes many forms in our world today. If you aren't keeping kosher in your daily life than you may learn something new and probably won't notice our practice very much at all. If you are keeping kosher, we are happy to discuss the details of weaving your practice and ours together during your stay!
- How is this course connected with the Pearlstone mission and retreat center?
 - We are fortunate to work at an organization with an inspiring mission embodied by a world-class retreat center and powerful educational programs. Our retreat center welcomes more than 20,000 retreat guests and program participants each year. That represents a broad range of experiences from conferences and corporate events to weddings and festivals to school visits and wilderness experiences. Take a look at our website if you're curious! Our stewardship team uses permaculture as a tool to care for our land, farm, and facilities in ways that better achieve our mission and serve our guests. We situate this course in the forests and fields rather than in our conference rooms and dining hall because it is enjoyable, restorative, and inspiring. Eating, sleeping, and learning in simple and beautiful outdoor structures bring permaculture principals to life experientially. It also keeps the course as affordable as possible.
- What is the schedule like?
 - We say this course is dawn-to-dusk and intensive because it's true. We start early and end late to make the most of our time together. There are more than 100 hours of lecture, hands-on projects, and design work on the schedule. But it's not frantic. The course is anchored in a serene outdoor classroom perched in the trees above our organic farm where we are setup for presentations and design project work. The atmosphere is relaxed, and we have generous breaks around meals for people to hike, swim, read, nap, exercise, or socialize. You can approach the schedule in many ways. Some are looking for rigorous study or professional development, others for connection and networking, some are managing communicating with family or work. You are welcome here, as you are, and so we aim for a schedule that balances these diverse ways of serving people on their path.

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- What do you mean by “community of learning”?
 - Our teachers have years of experience practicing and teaching these ideas and skills. Each of us holds wisdom and experience and each of us has insecurities and blind spots – teachers and students alike. We gather because it’s really inspiring to be with others who are doing this work in ways that are authentic to themselves and their community. We are all learning and it’s a gift to be able to learn together. And like any relationship, or community of relationships, this community takes effort and care. We all pitch in to help with simple chores like cleaning shared space, washing dishes or taking out the trash. We take time to listen to each other’s questions and insights. We communicate with each other openly and honestly. And we give each other space to try new things, make mistakes, and grow. Please know that you belong here, whether you have been studying permaculture for years or you are arriving with fresh curiosity.
- Do you offer scholarships or work-trades?
 - We offer two work-trade opportunities that each reduce the tuition cost by \$300. These are available on a first come, first serve basis. There is work involved in the trade. If you are interested in applying for a work trade position, email Greg Strella at gstrella@pearlstonecenter.org