

Introduction

GROW CREATE INSPIRE is a practical guide for becoming more aware and more self-sufficient in all aspects of life, from physical health to mental well-being, relationships to self-confidence, reflection to goal-setting and so much more. This book is meant for all those multitalented beautiful minds and free spirits, all the thinkers, dreamers, artists, musicians, writers, poets, philosophers, educators, gardeners, farmers and anyone who ever wanted to leave a legacy on this Earth. Most of us are born with the amazing gift of an intrinsic moral obligation to the Earth, but sadly for many, it is lost throughout the maze of life. The speed at which our society moves is frightening. In less than a century, we have advanced so far in technology that looking into each other's eyes has become a lost art. We find it so hard to have a simple conversation without the casual mention of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Pinterest. We expect an instant response to electronic communication. Our brains have been wired to function so fast that it is virtually impossible to relax and meditate in silent thought without conscious, dedicated practice. Our Earth is being destroyed while we are too distracted to notice or too overwhelmed by our hectic lives to begin the work of Earth-healing. We find comfort in humor and mind-numbing entertainment. Children can recognize more corporate logos than they can vegetables or plants and trees in their own backyards. Yet children are some of the most curious and inspired individuals in our society. The philosophy of *Grow Create Inspire* focuses on the importance of allowing children to explore the Earth and to form a deep connection to our planet so that they will grow into the next generation of Earth stewards. My hope is that anyone who reads this book will be inspired to grow and learn, no matter their stage in life.

Emphasizing inspiration from the permaculture way of life, *Grow Create Inspire* touches on the various aspects of growth from personal growth

to growing your own food to growing for your future while leaving behind something more valuable than money for generations to come. In my lifelong search for individual solutions to environmental crises, words and phrases helped to describe my views but seemed not to express them fully throughout each aspect of my life. Sustainable, eco-conscious, eco-friendly, Earth steward, green, free-spirited, earthy — these were all good attempts at explaining the way I felt about the Earth, but I was still driving a car, buying gasoline, using paper and plastic and being a consumer. How could I label myself any of these if I was still consciously supporting the things I stood against? I was doing my part every day, I thought. I recycled everything possible; I wore hand-me-downs; I was a vegetarian; I was an activist; I grew food; I did river cleanups; I taught kids about environmental awareness; I rode my bike when I could. But I was still partaking in the very things that are depleting the Earth's natural resources. Even words like "green" and "sustainable" evolve into something other than their original meaning, and oftentimes their meanings are lost when exploited by major corporations trying to market their products.

My big ah-ha moments occurred within months of each other, right around my 18th birthday. Reading the book *Ishmael* by Daniel Quinn aloud with my father was one of those moments. The author's words painted a vast picture pinpointing the demise of civilization to the industrialized agrarian lifestyle. And it made so much sense to us. It was the moment when individuals, tribes, villages and cultures went from being self-sufficient hunters and gatherers tending the crops to being reliant on others for food. We hashed out the world's problems for hours that early morning in the springtime, covering everything from greed to war to hunger to politics to natural disasters and everything in between. The other ah-ha moment was when I first learned the term "permaculture." I was in a group called Eco-Act, founded and facilitated by the Missouri Botanical Garden in 1981 to inspire Earth stewardship in youth. My mother helped me sell chocolate bars so I could afford a trip to the Punta Mona Center for Sustainable Living and Education, an organic permaculture farm in Costa Rica.

In that day-long permaculture workshop, I felt fiery ambition running through my veins. It all became clear: permaculture could save the world! Well, at least it could if everyone in the world knew just how profound it was and if there were ways to simplify it to bring it to the masses in an accessible way. Permaculture became the one steadfast philosophy and way of life that I held dear to my heart throughout my 20s and 30s. Certified and specialized

permaculturists all have different views on what it means to them and how to utilize it. That's the beauty of free will. And some permaculture experts may argue with my personal take on permaculture, but I do know this: it changed my life.

To me, permaculture is all-encompassing; it can be practiced every day in every single aspect of life in everything from thinking to dreaming, from building to restoring, from gardening to water conservation, from cooking to eating, from teaching to parenting and so much more. Permaculture is an umbrella under which all the innovative, resourceful Earth stewards may dream big while seeking shelter from the storms of this crazy world. Permaculture is inspiring. It stimulates the mind to think differently now for the future of the planet. Permaculture is alive with the possibilities of positive change.

As you read on, know that all suggestions are based on my experiences with the natural world, friends, family, mentors and the Earth itself, suggestions that can be adapted, altered and formatted to fit into your own life. Permaculture has sculpted my life and has opened many doors to my desire to deepen my connection to the Earth while implementing daily solutions to the problems facing the world today, and my hope in writing this book is to share this philosophy with others.

GROW | CREATE | INSPIRE

I watched the steam rise from my ceramic mug while envisioning a quest for my next creative endeavor. It was winter, one of those cold mornings where the stillness invites contemplation and intimacy. I was on the front porch, mesmerized by the reflection of the bare trees against the pale blue sky that was so vivid atop my coffee. The sun had just barely peeked over the horizon. I could see my breath. Our home is nestled in the forest. The sights and sounds of the forest in the winter made me ponder the rhythms of nature throughout the seasons. The plants were all dormant. Snow covered the rich dark earth, yet the forest was alive. Some of the trees had even begun to form buds despite the freezing temperatures. Nature, in all its glorious forms, is so resilient. I had an overwhelming sensation to grab my journal. The need to write took over every cell of my being. It was as though ignoring this feeling could literally cause a part of me to die inside. Ballpoint pen between my fingers, three words revealed themselves as I began to write: grow, create, inspire. Each word I followed with a loose interpretation or definition, as I understood them.

The dictionary sees it a little differently, of course, as definitions of these three poignant words are more literal than how I envision their true meaning.

To grow is to develop maturity. To create is to bring into existence. To inspire is to attribute influence. But when one truly grows, creates and inspires, our five senses manifest into something much greater than the mere sum of their parts.

Grow Create Inspire ...

Those three words written in my journal manifested into this book, which illustrates a holistic approach to healing the human spirit with environmental restoration as the ultimate goal. It focuses on mindfulness, compassion and resilience as tools for positive change. I hope this book will inspire individuals around the globe to discover a universal cure for Mother Earth's ailments. It discusses how the simple act of growing your own food can open the garden gates to welcoming the notion of a paradigm shift and inviting permaculture and other solution-based concepts in as a way of life. The goal of *Grow Create Inspire* is to encourage and empower others to do those three things — grow, create, inspire — on a physical and emotional level in every professional, personal and spiritual aspect of their lives. Brainstorming solutions for a healthier planet while thinking about ways to raise awareness and inspire mindfulness will bond a unified collective of Earth stewards. My hope is that *Grow Create Inspire* will resonate with everyone from all walks of life, especially in terms of carrying the torch of educating today's youth. In realizing that environmental issues are everyone's concern, we then begin to see the world through a clear lens. There are so many distractions pulling our attention away from the direction the world is headed in. *Grow Create Inspire* offers powerful solutions to some of the problems we face, all of which can be implemented by anyone around the globe with a little determination and support from their community. In the words of Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." To grasp a greater understanding of the interconnectedness of humans to one another, to nature and to the universe, and to discover what caused this massive disconnect with our Earth, is no new endeavor. Many of the great Earth stewards have pondered these thoughts, including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Mahatma Gandhi, Bill Mollison, Martin Luther King, Jr., Rachel Carson, Winona LaDuke, Vandana Shiva, Annie Leonard, Erin Brockovich, Chief Seattle and Ralph Nader. Continuing in the spirit of such great thinkers, *Grow Create Inspire* seeks to rekindle that fire within our hearts and renew our zeal for life in a way that allows us to form our own legacy of Earth stewardship and self-healing.

Grow Create Inspire focuses on the need for change in the way we grow food and addresses why the food crisis has become a global epidemic. The three sections (Grow, Create and Inspire) will discuss permaculture, growing food, reducing your carbon footprint, incorporating creative solutions into your personal life and making a direct impact in your own community by inspiring others to grow food and create positive change.

GROW will empower each of us to awaken our own personal growth by fostering a better future, one that can begin with the simple act of growing food in our own backyards. By truly grasping the basic concept of the vital importance of food for humans around the globe, we can begin to understand how to change the world, one small seedling at a time. Beyond the theoretical, this section will also cover basic gardening tips, permaculture projects and small-scale sustainable farming practices. The GROW portion also gives dozens of creative suggestions for encouraging friends, family and community members in this work. Community gardening, crop sharing, plant sales, seed swaps, guerilla gardening, workshops and sustainable backyard tours can bond and unite us in achieving these goals.

CREATE focuses on how we can create a world that works for everyone, and how we can collectively create a solution-based paradigm shift. This portion focuses on the importance of creativity to cultivating holistic sustainability and a world that is mindful, nurturing and compassionate — a world that is welcoming to everyone. Creativity is a vital component to human happiness and an essential ingredient to sustainability in its unadulterated definition. Through several examples of creativity in everyday life, whether it is cooking, food preservation, gardening, art, music, construction, writing or dancing, readers will see that they can easily adopt such activities into their life. CREATE includes recipes for happiness, stress release, healthy eating habits, holistic wellness and, of course, for homegrown, home-cooked meals and preserved foods.

INSPIRE acts as a cog for motivation. This aspect of the book includes uplifting and heartfelt stories of endurance, patience, excitement and inspiration. It also tells the brief stories of some of my own role models and how they have followed their dreams while doing their part for the Earth, inspiring thousands around the world. By acknowledging the lineage of your own inspiration, you can then begin to pay homage to Earth stewards who have taught you throughout your journey by sending ripples of positive change out into your own communities. It also shares stories of a few remarkable and innovative individuals who feel a sense of deep love for the Earth. These

valiant folks brought their dreams of Earth stewardship to life and impacted millions along the way, changing the world as we know it. These individuals stand apart from the rest because they had undying ambition to make our world a better place.

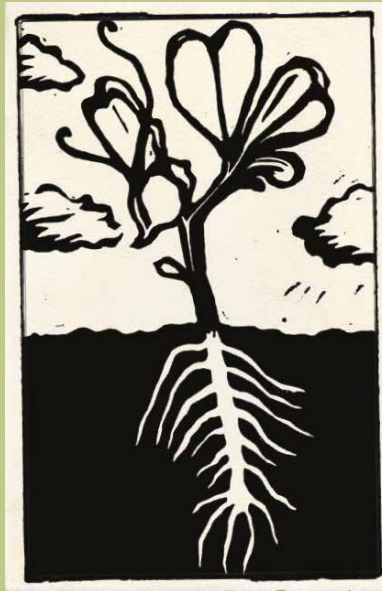
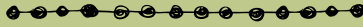
Empowerment as a Solution to the Global Food Crisis

What if we empowered each other to plant the way for generations to come? What if we were able to bridge the gap between culture and cultivating — more specifically between cultural diversity and biodiversity — by simply having conversations with others? What if we were excited to hear and share stories of symbiotic relationships between people and people, plants and people, plants and the Earth: excited enough to make a difference in our own community? By illuminating the notion that real food (grown from the Earth) is the point at which all of these relationships intersect, we then begin to wrap our minds around the Earth as a living, breathing, holistic system that is in constant symbiosis. This holistic system is our home. Since the first humans walked upon the Earth, food has been a necessity for survival. The evolution of the importance of food to humans is remarkable. Food has sculpted civilizations. Food has been used to heal our bodies. Food defines us culturally. Food gives us pleasure. Food maps out the course of our everyday lives. For these reasons, food can change the future of the Earth.

Let us paint a beautiful oasis of food and abundance through backyard gardens, community gardens, sustainable farms and permaculture villages that purify our air, improve our water quality, give nutrients to the soil, provide nourishment to families and create habitats for pollinators. People from all walks of life are already uniting to form a global transition into an abundant, healthy, sustainable world and need a way to bring their dreams of this incredible future to fruition.

Grow Create Inspire reminds us of what already exists in our hearts and minds: how to be a conduit of change from within. Changes made within the self can ultimately inspire others, creating a ripple effect of concentric circles. As with any inspirational work, this book intends not to prescribe but to offer multiple approaches to sustainability. Readers can determine which solutions resonate most for them. A unified collective consciousness can be achieved if we inspire each other to, as Gandhi says, “be the change we wish to see in the world.” I hope that you find *Grow Create Inspire* to be an altruistic, practical and meaningful approach to help make the world a better place.

grow





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The Problems and the Solutions

Anything else you're interested in is not going to happen if you can't breathe the air and drink the water. Don't sit this one out. Do something. You are by accident of fate alive at an absolutely critical moment in the history of our planet.

— Carl Sagan

If we breathe air, drink water, eat food, enjoy sunshine, and cherish time to stroll through a park with our children and grandchildren, environmental issues affect us, each and EVERY ONE of us.

— Professor Pamela Garvey

UNLESS EACH OF US honestly acknowledges and assesses the negative impact we have on the Earth and actually puts solution-based thinking into practice, we cannot change the future of our home, planet Earth.

Understanding that the soil is a living, breathing organism covering the Earth, we then can implement simple solutions that everyone can take part in. It could be as simple as planting more trees or an organic garden with native pollinator-attracting plants. It could be as simple as removing a few items from your diet that contribute to soil degradation. It could be as simple as shopping locally or joining a CSA (community supported agriculture) farm. It could be as simple as taking public transportation. It could be as simple as buying less unnecessary stuff.

The soil is being destroyed at unprecedented rates by overconsumption, big business, human development, deforestation, monoculture, genetically modified foods, groundwater contamination, reliance on fossil fuels, unsustainable natural resource extraction and pesticide, herbicide and fungicide usage. All of these problems are symptoms of a deeper root cause: our massive disconnect from the Earth. The soil is the direct source of a significant amount

of nutrients. We need the soil as much as we need the air, yet only a small percentage of people who care about these issues actually takes action to amend them. According to a survey conducted in 2013 by the Pew Research Center, 52 percent of Americans named protecting the environment a top priority for Congress, whereas 86 percent named strengthening the nation's economy as a top priority. Perhaps it's for those 86 percent that this quote was written: "Only after the last tree has been cut down. Only after the last river has been poisoned. Only after the last fish has been caught. Only then will you find that money cannot be eaten." (Cree Indian prophecy)

Anyone who has ever grown their own food or watched documentaries about food knows that this monoculture-based society not only is unsustainable, but is actually causing irreversible damage to the Earth every day. Despite this, we continue to support these practices, albeit sometimes unintentionally and out of convenience, whether buying prepared meals in unnecessary packaging or simply buying conventionally grown vegetables at the grocery store. Corn and soy are the crops with the most devastating contribution to monoculture. Unfortunately corn, soy and wheat are found in the majority of processed foods, especially in the United States.

Of course there are many practices that cause oftentimes irreversible soil degradation: fracking (hydraulic fracturing), oil drilling, mining, strip mining, deforestation and clear-cutting. Our reliance on fossil fuels is not helping. Unbeknownst to many, the simple acts of buying gasoline or using non-renewable paper are also contributing to environmental degradation.

Access to environmentally friendly everyday products such as paper goods is very limited and often more expensive, making it impossible for those on a tight budget to choose to support the companies making a difference. And then there is air and water pollution. It is very hard to witness giant smokestacks lined up along major rivers that were clean and clear less than a century ago. I heard someone say over a decade ago that all of the oceans, rivers and streams are polluted beyond restoration. This news was devastating. How could humans, in less than 100 years, destroy the water supply around the world? How can we as a human race do our part to change the gloomy future of this planet? When an individual starts to brainstorm solutions, they seem practical and attainable considering the technology that is available.

For instance: what if big companies, factories and corporations simply stopped producing anything made from nonrenewable resources and instead made them from renewable resources such as agricultural waste, hemp and bamboo, and transitioned into powering their factories with renewable

energy? Think of the positive impact that would make. Or on a larger scale — what if all the energy giants trained their current employees to operate energy plants using solar and wind power? What if all of the coal-fired and nuclear power plants simply converted to renewable energy? What if car companies were required by law to stop making gas-powered cars and only make hybrid or solar electric cars? The technology is available. There are many solutions to these problems.

However, each set of solutions has its own set of problems and unknown ramifications. So where does that leave us? When having this conversation with a dear friend and longtime environmental activist, Jim Scheff, his answer was, “We just need to use less.” This is such a simple yet profound insight and is attainable with a little grunt work. Being an example to friends and family members in our own communities and sharing our stories big and small will send out ripples within our regions. There are plenty of individual solutions one could implement as well, which almost always have direct impact on others. The solution that I have adopted is food: how it can help heal our bodies and how it can help heal the Earth. Food is the basic necessity for survival. If everyone in the world knew how to grow their own food, that would reduce our reliance on large-scale industrialized agrarian production, ultimately reducing the need for fossil fuels, chemical applications and so much more. Food throughout communities would then become localized.

Problems Facing the World Today

- ⊗ Big Business
- ⊗ Deforestation
- ⊗ Globalized, industrialized food system
- ⊗ Monoculture
- ⊗ Mountaintop removal
- ⊗ Pesticides, herbicides, fungicides
- ⊗ Reliance on fossil fuels
- ⊗ Exploitative extractive industries
- ⊗ Oil drilling
- ⊗ Oil spills
- ⊗ Planned obsolescence of electronics and appliances
- ⊗ Plastic culture
- ⊗ Heavy metals
- ⊗ Convenience



- ☞ Try a little harder each day to make the world a better place.
- ☞ Find out how you can help protect the air, the water, the soil and the precious natural resources.
- ☞ Be an advocate for old-growth forests and the Earth as a living, breathing organism.
- ☞ Show a profound respect for the future of the Earth, which will inevitably inspire others to do the same.
- ☞ Work diligently to protect the environment for all those who inhabit the Earth and for future generations.
- ☞ Train coal and nuclear energy employees in alternative energy fields.
- ☞ Smile at a stranger.
- ☞ Practice compassion.
- ☞ Volunteer in your community.

What determines whether an individual does or does not become a steward of the Earth? Is it an intrinsic moral obligation? Is it a value taught to us by our families and communities? Are we born with an innate instinct to want to protect the Earth and its natural resources? How could anyone not care about the environment? Shouldn't it be the norm to want this world to be a better place? I've wondered about these questions for over a decade.

Some individuals seem to show no concern for the environment. How can we set positive examples for them and especially for children? Some individuals have more time, energy and resources to dedicate to ecological rehabilitation. But there are still solutions that everyone can implement, such as not littering and following the principles of the three R's: reduce, reuse, recycle. These don't take much effort at all.

For the future of the planet, our children need to grow up knowing how to be environmentally conscious, how to reduce their carbon footprint and how to encourage others to do the same. A quote by Chief Seattle, chief of the Duwamish tribe of the Seattle area, often comes to mind: "Teach your children what we have taught ours, that the Earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the Earth befalls the sons of the Earth. The Earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the Earth. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children." Whether or not we have children, the world as a whole has an obligation to pass Earth stewardship (possibly even as an ingrained character trait) down to the next generations. Some of the most profound wisdom comes from First Nations' chiefs. This wisdom alludes

perfectly to the fact that sacred wisdom, and the wisdom passed on from generation to generation, cannot be broken even when the spirit is broken by an external force so vile. First Nations have been stripped of their basic human rights by the long process of colonialism, a project of land and human exploitation. Their land was ripped from under their feet, and while often ignored and forgotten today, the history and present, is absolutely heart-wrenching. They were on the land first, holding the land and all of its inhabitants with great reverence. They tried to live in harmony with the Earth; they treated the Earth with dignity. Because of their connection to the Earth and the seasons, the rhythms of nature, they held ancient wisdom in their hearts. This wisdom persisted despite the way they were treated by early settlers, despite the way they are treated by the government today. Reservations today are merely a fraction of what First Nations lived on.

There is a steadfast resistance of Native peoples to oppression with concern to indigenous land rights. There is indeed good and evil in the world, and as Woody Guthrie states, “some will rob you with a six gun and some with a fountain pen.” The world is filled with naysayers and power-mongers. What European settlers did to the First Nations is sickening. In many ways, the project of colonialism lives on today in what scholars call neo-colonialism. Centuries of exploitation and persecution through slavery, colonialism and segregation created a deep scar in our society. I would call that scar racism. The racial separation and inequity in America is part of a thick barrier that has been building for centuries. It has taken an equal amount of time not only to regain trust but to regain dignity, and we as a nation are still working to dismantle these barriers. Kudos to all those who share the views of equality, who stand up for equal rights, who celebrate diversity and live with compassion and who are deeply hurt by the existence of racism. It is these individuals who have evolved past hatred, who have found light in the dark corners around the world, who have loved all life deeply and unconditionally. First Nations are a beautiful example of personal evolution and spiritual growth: holding so tight to virtuous love and compassion while suffering through the absolute hell that is genocide.