

## Land Selection & House Placement • Development Issues Organic Growers School Handout - Peter Bane - March 8, 2019

Scale of Permanence, (after Yeomans and Jacke)

- |                                     |                               |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Climate                          | 7. Microclimate               |
| 2. Landform                         | 8. Buildings & Infrastructure |
| 3. Water                            | 9. Zones of Use               |
| 4. Legal Issues                     | 10. Soil Fertility            |
| 5. Roads/Access                     | 11. Aesthetics                |
| 6. Vegetation: Tree/Plants/Wildlife |                               |

1. Most important decisions regarding land for human use are
  - Where is it located and how to choose that location?
  - How should be it be settled, built, developed?
2. Land has value for housing based on location:
  - proximity to services, markets, neighbors, community
  - access to roads, communications
  - reliable supply of water
  - sound legal title and lawful communal relations
  - solar access in cool climates
  - some level land with air and water drainage, not subject to flood
- 2a. Land for farming should also have a high portion usable (50%, minimum 3 acres).
  - Some of this can be wooded if harvestable (not excessively steep or isolated).
  - Wetlands can be useful, but should not dominate ( $\leq 20\%$ )
3. Factors to avoid:
  - hostile or uncooperative neighbors; lawless community
  - no deeded access; landlocked
  - clouded title
  - high risk of catastrophe: wildfire, inundation, industrial accident, earthquake
  - no good water supply
  - no mineral rights; high potential for energy or resource extraction
  - low-lying or extremely steep ground
  - long access road or road crossing stream
  - lack of electrical power
4. Favorable situations:
  - dairy farm, active or former
  - broad ridges, some open ground
  - variety of aspects, including southern
  - neighborhood of mixed age and value of properties
  - counties not dominated by monoculture ag
  - proximity to a college or university
  - moderate distance from a rail line (1-4 miles)

5. House placement is dictated by the nexus of:
  - southern aspect
  - moderate slope at mid-valley elevation
  - reasonably short access road
  - connection to other cultivable and useful land
  - safety from flood; good frost, air, and water drainage
  - a measure of privacy
  - protection from storm and prevailing winds
  - distance to utility connections
  - soils that can percolate for septic field (where required)
  
6. Identify and reserve all house sites in advance of development.
  - Consider how housing might be clustered.
  
7. Locate areas for:
  - utility structures: barns, sheds, greenhouses, etc.
  - water storage: dams, ponds, rain gardens, tanks
  - reforestation

**Criteria for Land Selection** - rate each item 0-5, multiply by number of points shown  
*Ratings: 5 - excellent; 4 - good; 3 - average; 2 - mediocre; 1 - poor; 0 - non-existent*

Price	10 points	Proximity to svcs, facilities	7
Water	10	Comfort (max/min temps)	7
Development ease	10	Size	5
Community suitability	8.5	Soil suitability	5
Utilizable portion	8	Character (personal taste)	5
Aspect	8	Natural features (view)	5
Privacy	8	Natural boundaries	5
Natural Resources	8	Wind (good and bad)	4
Electric Power	7	Tree cover	4
Access	7		

Minimum weighted score in points: 400-420

### Resources

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*The Permaculture Handbook: Garden Farming for Town and Country*  
[permaculturehandbook.com](http://permaculturehandbook.com)

*Permaculture Design* magazine, PO Box 3607, Tupelo, MS 38803  
[permaculturedesignmagazine.com](http://permaculturedesignmagazine.com)

Permaculture Institute of North America • 1248 Calypso Ct, Ashland OR 97520. [pina.in](mailto:pina.in@pina.in)  
 Krafel, Paul. *Seeing Nature: Deliberate encounters with the natural world*. 1999.

Heinberg, Richard. *The End of Growth: Adapting to our new economic reality*. 2011.

Snell, Clark & Tim Callahan. *Building Green: A complete how-to guide to alternative building methods*. 2009.

Kourik, Robt. *Designing and Maintaining Your Edible Landscape Naturally*. 1986.

Graham, Edward H. *Natural Principles of Land Use*. 1944.