

The Ecovillage Opens!

July 2, 2005

Our eco-village is a reality. Those lines that Beth drew on paper weeks ago are now a meandering roadway of boards and chicken wire. Those endless discussions about composting toilets have been translated into small structures complete with curtains and informative signs. The weeks of pondering greywater systems have led to two intense days of building them, one after another after another. I had a moment of realization yesterday—that normally in a two-week permaculture course we might build one demonstration greywater system—in the last few days we've done over a dozen!

My friends have arrived, Lisa, Juniper, Geneva, Delyla, Sabo and Laura, with her kids Geneva, Sequoia and Mo. We're all camped near the fairy tree, together with other friends and a small group of Pagans.

People are pouring in, tents are going up, some of them amazing structures like the double-hooped, canted I-don't-know-what-to-call-it that looks like a giant covered wagon hoop. Barrios are filling up, kitchens are setting up. Everyone has been working for days, like a happy beehive humming with activity. We've managed to overcome the chaotic moments of panic and a thousand disasters and now it seems that every project attracts the workers that it needs. I have a great crew of people putting in greywater systems and helping with the compost loos. Every morning we check in on the days' work, split into groups and go off and do it. Some skilled carpenters have helped build the structures for the loos, and some less skilled carpenters have gained more skill completing them. We have designed a greywater system to fit the needs and sites of each kitchen. At some later point I'll write something longer and describe them more fully—for those interested. We even provided the medics with a biofilter using straw inoculated weeks ago with mushroom mycelium that break down toxins. We've brewed up lactobacillus inoculant to help the compost toilets break down. I think I've found a local community garden-called an allotment over here—to take our kitchen scraps. I've personally tested the composting toilet, and found it very comfortable (although I realized at a crucial moment that it desperately needed screening from the back, which has now been provided).

There have been a thousand frustrating moments and a million irritations, but right now I'm just enjoying the satisfaction of seeing this all come together. There's a hundred times I've asked myself, "Why do I put up with this?" The answer is the sheer beauty of seeing how this work happens when it happens well: everyone working together for the sheer joy of it, everyone looking for what contribution they can make, what job they can do. For every job, however grueling or hard—carrying heavy boards or staffing the gate at 3 AM, there's a willing volunteer. There are people who hold more information and help figure out what to do—Elanor takes on the job of coordinating jobs, for example. If we need workers for something, we tell her. If someone wants to help out,

they ask her. But there is no one issuing orders or telling people what to do, no coercion, no bosses. And so, where only a week ago we finally got permission to use the site, today we have a small city in progress that seems to spring magically into being.

Now, if only we could get the meetings to be as good as the work! Today is the Make Poverty History March, the big one in Edinburgh. We hope to have a small ritual at the end, at 5 pm.

-- *Starhawk*

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Starhawk is an activist, organizer, and author of *The Earth Path, Webs of Power: Notes from the Global Uprising, The Fifth Sacred Thing* and other books on feminism, politics and earth-based spirituality. She teaches [Earth Activist Trainings](#) that combine permaculture design and activist skills, and works with the [RANT trainer's collective](#), that offers training and support for mobilizations around global justice and peace issues.