

Earth Restoration

The Bridge to a New Global Culture

by Terry Mock

Only by emulating the efficiency of nature can we sustain our species at a desirable standard of living.

Nine years ago, as president of FNPS, I called for "The Year of Restoration" and predicted that earth restoration would become a major industry, with the native plant movement playing a key role in the coming restorative economy.

Outrunning our Headlights

While there continues to be debate over various scientific, economic, and political details of the plan, two overriding pressures are now combining to forge a new global consensus for environmental restoration:

- At the present rate of consumption, the earth does not have the resource capacity to continue to sustain our human population. The end of the current world for humankind is now in sight.
- The United States, winner of the Cold War and the leading role model for the rest of the world, has a capitalistic system that is now approaching insolvency because the total accumulated national debt of over \$4 trillion requires all personal income tax revenue just to pay the interest due.

The existing world economic order is teetering on the brink of bankruptcy and will not be capable of sustaining itself much longer by exploiting dwindling world supplies of natural resources and by deficit government spending.

That is the bad news.

Paradigm Shift

The good news is that out of these huge problems will come the pressure to replace our old system with new political and business structures

that will help provide for a sustainable global economy. The will to act is all that is missing, for the scientific knowledge to technologically operate our planet in a sustainable manner is now available to all via satellite-relayed, instant around-the-world information.

The key component of our newfound knowledge of sustainability is the philosophy of "doing more with less", and the best sustainable models for us to study are the earth's natural systems. Only by emulating the efficiency of nature can we sustain our species at a desirable standard of living. At long last, the often-repeated cycle of deforestation, and the subsequent rise and fall of civilizations from the dawn of human time, can be broken. The restoration economy will replace the competitiveness of a scarce resource mindset with the cooperativeness of a limitless, sustainable resource paradigm.

The native plant movement is perfectly positioned to lead the world to a new restorative economy during the next 50 years. As a grassroots, volunteer organization, native plant societies have tremendous local knowledge of plant communities and are not dependent financially or politically on current outdated systems. Native plant industry members involved in design, research production, installation, and maintenance of natural systems have developed a symbiotic relationship with local and state societies that provides the cooperative framework for bridging the gap between the old economy and

the new one. Rapid dissemination of native plant knowledge and restoration techniques through new communication technology will provide all of the earth's inhabitants with the ability to "Think locally, act globally." In short, for the first time we now have the desire and the ability to transform our culture rapidly to one of global environmental sustainability. The transformation is already well under way.

Green Infrastructure

In his best selling book, *The Ecology of Commerce*, environmental business guru Paul Hawken says that the restoration economy is beginning to prosper with over 70,000 companies already committed to some form of environmental commerce. "In such an economy," he writes, "there is the prospect that restoring the environment and making money would be the same process."

Restoration implies a responsibility to change existing business practices to more closely mimic the complex and efficient models of sustainable natural systems:

- New accounting standards, which consider the long-term costs of environmental degradation, must be implemented.
- Creative financial tools, such as mitigation banking, must be allowed to evolve in order to vent development pressure and to raise revenue for large-scale restoration projects.
- New horticultural technology, which stimulates natural lateral root growth, must replace current root-damaging practices.

- Sustainable profit centers, such as eco-tourism, must be developed for local economies as an alternative to natural resource mining.
- Organically produced, local cash crops must be developed to replace chemically dependent monocultures in order to preserve biodiversity.

Take the High Ground

There will continue to be ideological backlashes to the movement to restore native plant systems from business, political, and environmental preservationists. These attempts should be viewed as the natural last-gasp efforts of dinosaurs to retain dominion over a changing world.

Earth restoration will not only restore our natural ecosystems — it will restore our faith in ourselves and our hope for the future. David Brower, the first executive director of the Sierra Club and pre-eminent wilderness preservationist, now asserts, at the tender age of 82, that the world desperately needs CPR — Conservation, Preservation, and Restoration — in order to achieve the ultimate goal in life — Celebration.

The opportunities for each of us as environmental entrepreneurs are greater than at any time in human



Air-root-pruning container technology at Roper's Native Nursery, Lake Worth.

history. We can make money, save the world, and have fun! Who says you can't have it all!

Terry Mock, past president and a founding member of FNPS, is marketing director for Hold Em, Inc. and THE ACCELERATOR® Growers Association.

References

Ansubal, Kenny. 1994. *Seeds of Change: The Living Treasure.*

Berger, John. 1985. *Restoring the Earth.*
Brower, David. 1995. *Let the Mountain Talk.*

Figgie, Jr., Barry E. 1992. *Bankruptcy 1995.*

Fuller, R. Buckminster. 1983. *Crunch of Giants.*

Gore, Al. 1992. *Earth in the Balance.*

Perlin, John. 1989. *A Forest Journey.*

Whitcomb, Carl E. 1988. *Plant Production in Containers.*