

## SPEAKERS

Jeremy Melder, Morag Gamble

### **Jeremy Melder** 00:02

Hello, my name is Jeremy Melder, and I'm the presenter from Beaming Green. Before we start, I would like to acknowledge that this podcast is being held on the traditional lands of the Bundjalung people and paying our respects to elders both past, present, and emerging. The Beaming Green podcast is a podcast that will help you take out some of the stress and confusion about how to live your life more sustainably. We do this by introducing you to inspiring people with first-hand experience and expertise who cover aspects of sustainability, from human interest to environmental perspectives, helping you to thrive and enhance your life and the lives of your friends and family. Today, I'm excited to be welcoming Morag Gamble to Episode 23. Morag is that global permaculture and eco village ambassador, designer, teacher, writer, YouTuber, blogger, podcaster homeschooler, and founder of the permaculture educational institute. Now Morag has a long list of accomplishments that I will include in my show notes. But today, I'm excited to be speaking to her about her experiences with permaculture that I hope she will share with you. And, about the UN World habitat award winning eco village that she has lived in for the past two decades, or Crystal Waters Eco Village, which is in the Sunshine Coast, just past Maleny. If you anyone knows that, please join me in the welcoming Morag to this podcast. Welcome to Beaming Green.

### **Morag Gamble** 01:53

Hi, Jeremy. It's lovely to be here.

### **Jeremy Melder** 01:55

Now, I know that you recently did an interview on the GEN ecovillage, which I loved no, I saw the passion in what you do. And I was just wanting to find out with you. Before we start, we wanted to talk about permaculture today. But I'll just wander with you just humour a little bit. But I'm quite passionate about sustainability and sustainable communities. And I know that you live in a wonderful community called Crystal Waters community. And I just wanted to just tell our listeners a little bit about it.

### **Morag Gamble** 02:25

Sure. Thank you. Thanks for asking. I think it's I think these places are amazing. I made my way up here to particularly live in this eco village I was I grew up in Melbourne. And it was after I'd spent a fair bit of time in a place called Ladakh and over the other side of the Himalaya's is traditional sustainable community and in the learning community of Schumacher college that was all about creating sustainable communities. I thought so where do I live in Australia? What does that look like? What does that life look like? And I explored permaculture and eco villages and I decided it was time to kind of come and find out more about Crystal Water. So that was almost 30 years ago. Wow. And I ended up moving here in about 1997. So, 1998 It's been a while that I've been here now. And so basically, it's 640 acres one it's quite a large property. That's one whole property. And they're within that 83 households. Wow. So, there's about 220 people is that we've here it kind of goes up and down,

depending on how many you know visiting WOOFERS or permaculture students or campers or guests in people's houses. So, it's roughly about 220 of all different ages. I think last count or something like 16 different nationalities. So, this place, it's interesting, the way that it's set up that it gives you the possibility to be have your own space, but at the same time, great possibilities for community. And one of the key things that I love about it is that it's there's a big focus on the commons. So, the fact that within the 640 acres, we each have one acre that's freehold that's our, so I have built a house here on my freehold acre, but the freehold ID, if that's word free, holded part of crystal waters is only 14%. Right? Rest is common land, okay, and so that we look after together. So that includes, you know, we're stewards of the rivers and the streams that flank the property and the, the forest which are up in the hillsides and the and revegetating the gullies and all of that is common land, and so is the farmland. And so, we negotiate together, you know, through a different licensing system, you know, who wants to take a section to do something with that as well. So, this idea that together, we care for this land wonderful and, and that even though we have one acre that are at that our own, that, you know, I think 99.5% of the places don't have fences around them. So, it's fluid, which means that the wildlife can flow through as well, you know, like, one of my greatest joys of being here is just recognizing that I'm just one of the species in the landscape. And this is home to, you know, the Kangaroos have their pathways and the Wallabies and, and the birds that come in and, you know, you know, those patterns in the and their cycles. And, you know, even the seasonal changes, I noticed, when I know when the first leaves and start at one for the first leaves start to come that the rainbird start to migrate in, and then the first that the when the mulberries on the shoot, mulberry are coming on that they're in there, and I can hear their call the mating call, they're waiting for their mate to arrive. And, and this has been going on for years, there's one tree in my garden, then I know that the seasons shifting, because all these things start to happen. And I also know that my time to get to watch out to the mulberries to be ready to pick as well. But this sense of being totally embedded in, in this natural place. And I think and that, that the way in which we live here is it responds to where we are. So, for example, you know, there's no pipes to bring water in. So, we need to be responsive to the rain patterns or the cycles and be careful about how we're, we're consuming water in our households. And then what we do with it once it goes out the other end. So, we must think about those cycles of use in our resource use in our own homes. So, you know, and you also think about what you're going to put down the down the sink, because you know, it's going to go into your garden, it's going to be affecting the soil, and then the food that you that is growing there, both for other species and for yourself. And so, you become aware and attuned, and you notice little shifts and changes because you are part of it, and you're dependent upon it. We also do have a week and you know, we, we mostly generate our own power as well, we are grid connected. So, if we need to, we can do that. But the intention is that we're heading towards being, you know, creating more power as an eco-village, then, and I think it's probably a good time now to start doing a bit of a study on it. Maybe we are already we don't know. I think that's a that was one of the things that we decided after, after the Eco village conferences did a bit more monitoring and investigation on where we at with some of those basics were. Yeah,

**Jeremy Melder** 07:49

it's quite important, isn't it? We'll do all that. Just out of curiosity. So, you've got 220 odd people, harnessing those people in terms of managing the land and so on? Is there some sort of when you sign on to live on this land? Do you have to put in a certain number of hours? How do you manage this because I visited Crystal Waters a few times and notice this to various age groups and so on? And, you

know, we've all had rebellious teenagers and people that are a bit older and so on. But how do you get that group of people, you know, to work and manage this percent of the land, there's,

**Morag Gamble** 08:35

there are several different ways that this happens. So, the way that crystal waters is set up, is that there's a series of clusters of houses. So, it's not like just they're all spread out across the whole landscape. We've come up with Hamlet's and so if you if you take each Hamlet, for example,

**Jeremy Melder** 08:51

right,

**Morag Gamble** 08:52

there are people within that, who are looking after the common land around them. So, it's almost like a sense of, you know, like Hamlet space, some people have created a parks or bush tucker forests or picnic areas, all different. So, there's a sense of Hamlet Commons that exists around the edges of that. And then if we think about maybe the more riparian zones, or then we have a land manager that's employed by the community that organizes for identifying where the next level of regeneration needs to happen, and what sort of trees need to be planted there, to find those trees and then to organize the days where we come and we plant and we look after them. Now you're not obligated to come and do that. But you're invited. Yeah, if you do come, it can go off your community hours. You can kind of take it after you've done a certain amount of community hours. And with the community hours, you can either choose to do the hours or if for some reason you're not able to do them, you can choose to pay for that time to then pay someone else with resources or more trees or something. So, you can choose to do that. When let's was active, like the local account, we could use that as well. But mostly now we've sort of just do community exchange anyway, yeah, if you're older, and you, you don't, you can't work or you can't pay either.

**Jeremy Melder** 10:26

Then there's other options. Yeah,

**Morag Gamble** 10:28

for example, you might have a WOOFER staying with you, like the willing worker volunteers take with you, you can send them along if you want to. Or you might be the person who's there, having a chat or sharing about your knowledge about the plants or, you know, ticking off who's done what, there's different ways that you can contribute your hours, and, and we find a way to make it work.

**Jeremy Melder** 10:49

That sounds wonderful, because you're then you know, like, there is wisdom, even in the age, they might not have the No, I've got rheumatoid arthritis. And I realize what happens when your joints, you know, freeze up, and you can't work, but you do have knowledge that you can share. And it's such a wonderful thing that you're saying that they are using their knowledge to share that with people good. In terms of, you know, you've already touched on this in a certain way, but in terms of their support, or people in the community, in other people derive incomes, you know, to sustain themselves, because

you're quite far out from, you know, a major town like Maleny is probably the closest, how do people support each other or support themselves?

**Morag Gamble** 11:31

Hmm, that's an interesting and complex question. So, there's a, there's several people who came here, a long time ago, who'd retired here, so they'd either taken early retirement, to come and live here, there were sort of some of the pioneering people. So, they were self-financed, in a way. So, there was some people in that category. There are other people who are builders, for example, or they learned building skills, because they noticed that one of the things that was needed here in the Eco village, as it was developing was people can help people build houses or put on solar systems or do the wastewater systems or, so it wasn't trying to say, Okay, well, this is my profession. And this is what I must try and find a job in, is coming here and going, Okay, I'm, I'm doing a needs assessment here. And I'm looking to see what is it that the community is needing help with? And what are the sorts of things that I feel interested in or capable in offering as a skill. And so, then people developed up new work opportunities around meeting those needs. And you know, some of the things now, land management for some of the older people, you know, they the weight of the one-acre lot, you know, people if you're living there, and you're an older person, you probably can't manage it all. So that's being dealt with in different ways. Sometimes people come on and help them manage it like that. Sometimes they they're doing a tenancy in common. So, there's an older person, then there's also a cabin. And sometimes the older person moves into the cabin, and the new family moves into the house. And so, then you there's the rental income from that that's supporting that person. So, there's that possibility. And then someone set up a sourdough organic bakery, for example, saying why we look, it's looking at how you can, as a woman here, woman in this region, she sadly passed away many years ago now, but her name was Jill Jordan. And she was central in in establishing many of the cooperatives in Maleny. And, and looking at how to revitalize a local economy. And particularly a lot of local economies in rural areas like this was were depleted, particularly when the dairy industry was deregulated, and people were leaving country towns like this, but part of that back to the land movement. Back in the 70s. And 80s, there was this sense that how do you how do you recreate an economy that's depleted? And she talked about this idea of plugging the leaks? Yeah. And so, when you look at a community, this is like, where did where does the money leak? Where What are we spending our money on for services or from resources or for

**Jeremy Melder** 15:56

beautiful. Blessed are you right?

**Morag Gamble** 15:56

Yeah, I know.

**Jeremy Melder** 16:01

You will probably be thinking you were the luckiest person in the world when COVID hit right? Well, you know, yes or no. I mean, it was okay for me. But I'm also sensitive to the fact that it was not okay, for miniature shot. And I, and I spent most of my time, and I still do. Most of my work is community service work. So, I, because I built a house and I and I just with overtime, I took out No, I have no debt, because I worked in a way that I could just build enough and use the materials that I had. And the skills that I had; my family had to build this house. And then I garden. And so, the gardens out there and a lot

of food just come straight from there. And so, I don't need to work full time to earn money. Because my I work enough, yeah, that way. But it's not saying that I don't work, I work all the time, I work hard all the time. But most thing community service work for our listeners, I can vouch for that, because she seems to be on every part of media that I know of.

**Morag Gamble 17:10**

I see that this that there is we are in we are in a climate crisis, we're in an ecological crisis. And the kinds of things the stories that that I'm keen to share about how communities are becoming resilient, how we can make a shift and a change in a way that is, is, is being a non-participant in the systems that are creating the destruction and being part of the regenerative culture. What does that look like? How can we do that? Where is it happening and working with people in parts of the world where they absolutely have nothing. So, my work every day is working with refugees in, in camps, particularly throughout East Africa seems to be a common thread now, where they're saying, you know, they said to me early on, you know, we we're not, we're not in a COVID pandemic, we're in a hunger pandemic, because the food supplies have stopped coming in, they've been halved, with COVID, because of the stuff in the you know, disrupt

**Jeremy Melder 18:16**

supply chains disrupted,

**Morag Gamble 18:17**

the whole of that, so their food supplies were cut by half and it was already not enough. And, and then they don't have really any space to grow food. So, we're really looking at how they could do tiny gardens, how they could create common spaces. And, and there's teachers there now who, over the last year have taught, gosh, maybe 500 young people who then teaching other young people, and then the tools and seeds, and they're rippling out their work now. So again, it's only a small amount, but it's the something that's happening with that, you know, I never really feel like you can I can never do enough. I don't know why, you know, we're this, this inner fire to feel like I'm, I'm a useful contributor to society in this way. But I, you know, I feel a sense of, but I don't know whether it's responsibility to you know, because I'm now, you know, I, I'm now 50 something, and it's, you know, and I have young children, and we were, as we last year or the year before, when all the climate activism was happening, I was thinking, where do I Where is my main point of being able to contribute to support this voice? And so, I went marching with my, my young kids, and but then, you know, they also as they're talking was like, Well, what today, you know, the match was yesterday, what are we doing today? What are we doing to make a difference today and so, I was helped to sort of support my daughter and their friends to launch this thing called perm youth, which was about how they could be everyday practical activists Connect with young kids around the world, and I say young kids, the teenagers, you know, they're quite mature? And they have, so there. So now this perm youth has this life, and they're talking with people in, in the camps in the refugee camps or talking with people in this perm youth . America set up for me, us. Philippines is perm youth in Europe starting this perm youth hubs popping up all over the place in response to this. And so, my role is sensing, okay, well, whoever wants to have access to free permaculture education as a young person, I'll find a way to help make that happened, I will help to support the infrastructure set up of this network. And so, you can just kind of take it and run with it. So, finding a way to be kind of the, the holder of that space, and like a facilitator of not driving it. And so,

there's a lot of back backend work that happens behind helping to support something like that to take off and then supporting them also to do fundraising. So that, you know, the young people are raising money to support their friends in the refugee settlements. And so, there's, there's all of that that happens. So, I run a charity, a permaculture charity, so I just whenever the money comes in, 100% just goes straight to those projects. And I and we don't determine what it is that they do with it, because they know, in there, in their communities, what's needed the most. So, there's, now, we've just finished supporting a program for foster parents, basically refugees themselves, who've taken on orphans who are incredibly poor. And so, they've just finished that program. And they're now going into an urban area to work with refugees, who are who have nothing in they're stuck in the middle of a city slum area, and then they're going to you know, so they just keep these teams and moving around to different refugee communities everywhere to try and help them access the resources from for food for creating micro enterprises for connecting them with each other and connecting them with the world. And there's one more example to before we move on. This is one of the young guys who went through this perm youth program. His name was Somali and his he became so passionate about the, the permaculture and what it can do in his community and helping the orphans and the widows and the young girls and, and other young people and saying how it just lifts their spirit to be able to be feel also useful, and not idle and, and in conflict. And he said, I'm a musician, and I'm a filmmaker. Yeah, I feel like the best way to spread this is through music and through film. And so, he makes permaculture songs. And he's been sharing them with the with the Perma youth festivals that they do every month. And it started to get attention from people, they say, I love that. And like all of a sudden, they get an insight into what life is like in a camp. They get to see the positive response that is that is happening with permaculture. And so long story short, the Grateful Dead and the band, yes, have this foundation. And they have said, we absolutely love what you're doing. We think this is absolutely magic. We will sponsor you to build your music and film studio, where you can keep making these songs, and inviting lots of young people to come in and write and film and share their stories with the world. And so that's just about to happen in the next

**Jeremy Melder 23:30**

where's the studio going to be? in the camp? OH, you know, he's working with young, young kids all over the place. And He's inviting them in, and I just got the email while and one of the WhatsApp from one of the young guys the other day said, this has just changed my life. You know, like, I kind of played the guitar, but it was just to kind of out of boredom. But now I feel like I have something to say. And I feel like someone's going to listen to what I've got to say. And I feel like there's a purpose of living. It's just remarkable the power that this has, and it's by connecting young people. You know, this is the purpose of us doing this. It's Yeah, you started the permit Was that your daughter Maya was Yeah, yeah, that was my daughter. Maya it must be in the genes I tell you.

**Morag Gamble 24:16**

Well, you know, it's just we're in the space of living. Where it's where we live. Yeah. Grown up within a permaculture world. She came with me to, to Africa a couple years ago. So, she saw it, she knew what life was like there. And she I think she understands and recognizes her privilege. No, we're not wealthy, but we live

**Jeremy Melder 24:37**

a comfortable,

**Morag Gamble 24:38**

healthy way of life. You know, we have a house we have a garden, we have fresh water, we have fresh air. We are safe. And we have we have freedom to be able to move and even within the COVID restrictions. We have all of that and we have resilience. And, and I guess this is kind of a key part of what that is. what permaculture living is, is about, it's about trying to create the conditions for wellbeing of people on the planet. And what does that look like? How do you design your way of life, that you can enable that to happen? You know, like, it's no mistake that I'm sitting here today during a debt free house with surrounded by a garden. I designed it that way. You know, from my 20s Yeah. So, you know, it was a permaculture design, I designed my house through permaculture principles and ethics, I designed my work, I design my garden, you know, not planned it and fixed it, but created the conditions for this type of locally grounded ecological abundance to be able to manifest in a way that I have a sense of community security is not an it's not me, just in my house with my family, it's very much about it being connected with the local environment, with the local community with the economy of Maleny, as well, and then connecting globally. So, the richer the relationships that I can form with my place and my community, and my learning community globally. The more possibilities for creating a resilient way of life that can continue and then myceliate. Yeah, and, and you know, then that it becomes possible. Yeah, for and so what, I guess what I why one of the reasons I moved to this eco village, was on purpose to try and create and demonstrate that this is possible. It's not just a pipe dream. I'm a member when I was when I was young. And I used to talk about all these ideas people say, yeah, yeah, but at the end of the day, you know, the bottom line is and the bottom dollar and like all these like, like scripts that were just keep coming out. It's just utopian. Dreaming hippy rubbish. Yeah, I don't believe that for one second. Yeah. And I needed to be able to not only prove it to myself, that was possible, but also to demonstrate that, that it is it is workable, and it's not, of course, it's not perfect, and it's not completed. But it's, it's the intent, and the, the process and the connections that you can create through this, and, and what that looks like. And so really, I just, I have a, I offer an invitation for people to see by they can come and have a look at the YouTube channel or listen to the podcast, or, like this is I used to just invite people to my garden, but then I realized, well, that, you know, I can talk to 20 people here or 20 people there, but what the way that I can open up to share the story more widely. And that's really like, like, I'm going to have a look, this is what permaculture living is about this is this is when you take the ethics and principles of designing with nature and designing with, you know, the, the ethics of principle, being Earth care, caring for the earth, caring for people, or actually caring for all life, and fair share, meaning like what is enough, like, and so that then challenges the notions of, you know, consumption and growth patterns, and all of that into something that is more about what, you know, I can create a really beautiful, natural way of life that meets the needs of my family and I and the wildlife that's in and around us at the same time as condensing my footprint. So, there's more space for other species to thrive and for nature to thrive. Yeah, I think that's what we are, I really do think that that's what we need to be doing as a species is thinking about how we can diminish our footprint on this planet so that nature can regenerate, we need to do restoration work of the damage that we've created to bring the ecological systems back into balance and the climate back into a safe operating. You know, there's nine, there's been described by the University in Stockholm that's described nine planetary boundaries. Okay, to keep into client into a safe future, we need to stay within these planetary boundaries. We've already crossed three.

**Jeremy Melder** 29:04

I can believe that

**Morag Gamble** 29:07

we can, we can through a permaculture approach, and ecological design approach, whatever you want to call it, bring, bring back into a planetary safe level. But we need to do the regenerative work, we need to do the restorative work, we need to really look at what it is that we're expecting as a culture in any of our cultures of what is enough, what actually is the way that we can be we can design our lives to meet our needs in a beautiful way, but also be ensuring that other species and other cultures and communities also have the capacity to do that too. And that when we have surplus that we distributed Yeah, no, important is kind of the and that's kind of where the ethics of permaculture I find a simple guide to think Okay, so in What I'm doing, how can I be contributing more to the care of me? And how could I be contributing to more care of people everywhere? You know, me included, because sometimes when you work so hard to get to yourself, so, you know, like, across the board, and what is enough? You know that question, I think we need to be at like, do we need that extra stuff? Or could we fix something else? Or when we're choosing what, what we're, what we're doing? Or, you know, can I divest? Yeah, so that what I'm doing is not having an impact yet so many questions all the time. But I think, rather than getting caught up with like, oh my gosh, and like being analysis paralysis, sitting out with and with an intent, I suppose. And with that, with the heart of entering that space, from a way of wanting to be a contributor, and a regenerator. And I think maybe growing up in a space like this, and it within an environment like this gives a chance for that, not have to learn about permaculture, but it just is it just is you so I kind of see a lot of the young people who are living here have joined with Maya to then carry forth this sort of permit us and it's not just them. There's, there's another number of young people who live in and around this area and overseas who are part of this sort of team who kind of take it forward. Yeah. And that's

**Jeremy Melder** 31:23

what I'd really love to if you could share some of that information in terms of the of the youth that I can put on the show notes so that if people are interested in reaching out to Maya and some other youth, they can do that. And the other thing is also I was touched by the charity that you were talking about, you know, I think, look, there's a couple of friends of mine that I in Borneo in Kalimantan and they are assisting Dayaks over there with educating them about permaculture. They've one of them is Indonesian and one is her partner is Australian. And she's been living there for like seven years now. And you know, they've had some amazing results. And I think it's about well how do we get this message across? And it's what I'm what I'm this show the Beaming Green is really about giving people a taste, and an understanding of what permaculture is and basic understanding because it's really interesting to me that I find that we know permaculture, I've you know, I lived I also grew up in I was born in I was born in Sri Lanka, but I live in lived in Melbourne, and I did went to Eltham and did a couple of days course on permaculture but where I can really love it. If you know for the person that doesn't know about permaculture, the fundamental where it started Bill Mollison. I know. Okay, just a quick rundown we great. Yeah.

**Morag Gamble** 32:52



Okay, great. So, the permaculture, 101 permacultures began in, in the 70s. With there was two. When I save it began, it was called permaculture, then because it's the way of thinking way of being way of working together, in collaboration with nature is something that First Nations people have done Sure, you know, forever. And so, with recognition of standing on the shoulders of First Nations, people everywhere have traditional sustainable societies and recognizing the inherent beauty of the design of nature itself and how nature works. The Bill Mollison and David Holmgren were working together in Tasmania on a project looking at more how do we how do we create a sustainable society. And so, they came up with these set of design principles about designing with nature, design ethics and design principles. And so essentially permaculture is a way to design sustainable human This is how it was called back then I mean, the word sustainable is now being sort of more turned towards a regenerative I might talk about that later. But I still think the word sustainable meaning that we can sustain it and continued into the forever, you know, the long distant future, that how do you create a sustainable society? What does that look like? What does a healthy and sustainable human settlement look like? So, it is from a perk from a human perspective? How do we design so that if, as I was saying before, our footprint on nature, the nature can continue to thrive? We're not extracting so that households can thrive that communities can try that. And so, why we often hear permaculture being focused on the garden is because it's one of the easiest places to start. It's kind of like the low hanging fruit that you know. And it's also one of the reasons I really love it because you can talk about Food with just about anybody. And you can find it unless you're a breatharian, you have a relationship with food, and even your breath, air, and then you probably also have a relationship because you know, the fact that you're not eating food, you know, we all connect with it some way. And it may be from a health perspective, it might be from an economic perspective, you may be a chef or a gardener, or you may, you know, like you, we all have a relationship with food in some way. And so looking at how we can create our food systems for that are nourishing our bodies, nourishing our communities, nourishing the soil, not depleting biodiversity, you know, we're seeing that the way that we're growing food is actually eroding topsoil, it's creating pollution in the waters, the erosion is happening, like the chemicals, and the sediment that's going out the rivers is, is smothering the reef, and we're causing, you know, diabolic issues, we're seeing the ripple effects of the impact of industrial food system everywhere around the world. You know, it's, it's what drives the clearing of the rain forest, it's what you know, depletes the, you know, the forest, whether the Orangutan, like whichever way, you know, you think of palm oil, you know, the forests of palm oil that are being planted, which are clearing the rain forests, which are destroying the Orangutan habitat. So, however, you look somewhere in our food system, there is an impact. Yeah. And how do we design a food system that supports people and, and the whole planet in a way that it can continue? And we've kind of what I've said before, we're sort of hitting a lot of the planetary boundaries. So let me just come back into from a permaculture perspective, then it's about how do you design so that you're meeting your basic needs in a way that is regenerative, that is helping to restore systems. And that is, in a way, it's kind of a little bit of an, it's kind of an activist end to it, because it means that by doing that, you're withdrawing support from the corporations or the systems that are depleting. So, you're saying, okay, we as a, as a family, or as a community, we've got this, you know, we can grow our food, we can, you know, do the, we can grow Herbs, and our vegetables and our fruits, and we can trade seeds. And we can do all these things in a local community setting, which means that we're restoring the soils where we are, we're restoring habitats for insects, and we're restoring habitats for local birds. And it's a whole system's approach. So really, it's like how, how can we live in a way that creates beautiful, abundant gardens and homes where we have clean water, clean

air, clean soil, for us, as humans and families at the same time as making sure that we are not polluting the waters for other species or not creating erosion that is going to destroy another system or that we're maintaining forests, ecological habitat quality, so that other species can thrive, or whatever that ecosystem may be where you live. Now, this all sounds very idealistic. And you can say yes, but I live in a city and living in an eco-village. Yes. So, but I can't do that where I am. And you know, they're valid statements. So, then we say, Okay, well, what does this mean when, when we're looking from that perspective? You know, I grew up in a suburb. And I lived in a city as well after that. So, from a suburban perspective, this is where David Holmgren, the founder of permaculture is really focused his attention now with retro suburbia. And one of the projects I just put my head is so terrible, I should need to sit on my hands. When I go to places, I took the hands a bit by hand. I don't think I even put my hand up. I think I just did the nod, like that. So, the project of creating a subtropical retro suburban example, like a booklet of set. So retro suburbia is like, well, how can we transform the suburbs where most people in Australia live. And most people in places like America live as well. Any kind of your Western model is, is in this suburb, we have space around

**Jeremy Melder** 39:24

a backyard.

**Morag Gamble** 39:25

And if we think about what we can do there, but backyard and within the house to be not just consumers, but producers as well. We've separated we have this great separation between where people live where food gets grown, when nature it's how can we bring those back together. And what I like about this eco village where I live is it's kind of an experimental place, we've looked at Okay, this is how we can bring people nature and food production back together. Apart from this sort of sort of this mechanistic separation that we've created into a more ecological paradigm of living. How do we change that? How do we apply ecological paradigm to a suburb? Well, this is what retro suburbia was all about. And we can do it. But it means we need to revalue the household economy. You know, how can you, you know, be producing more food, collecting more water, processing more food, trading seeds, and exchanging things, repairing goods, making clothes, you know, like, how can we integrate that into the economic system or working from home and all these things now, sort of, particularly with COVID have become far more elevated. It's almost like there's been a shift of that. Now, if you don't, if you then flew in a place that doesn't have a backyard, like your apartment, there's some stuff you can grow on a balcony on a on a balcony or a rooftop, maybe. But maybe you could be involved in a community garden, where there's where there's a pot yet and if you're a renter to, you know, you're moving around. Like I was involved in starting up Northey streets, city farming Brisbane, which was a place whereas a renter, I knew that didn't matter which house I was in, in the area, I could still come down to this garden, I had a community. And we then we started the farmers market there because we couldn't grow everything we needed. So, we made a relationship with the farmers who lived around the region. Yeah. And so, this has become a really important place to create a relationship between the urban and the PERI urban areas. So that even though you're not producing everything, that you're supporting the small scale local ecological producers who live in the area who can survive in a in a Coles and Woolies environment, yeah, but they only survive when it's this close relationship. And so, it's creating a different system. And look how that farmers markets and locally taking off. Just flourish. Yeah. And they're more resilient, you know, like food connecting Brisbane, which is the Community Supported

Agriculture model. During the first COVID, knockdowns there, their business quadrupled, because that people couldn't get stuff. Because the food system had started to fall apart. They had the strong relationships that were still getting food, they were still able to support it. So, it's basically permaculture is about creating resilience in your life in a way that you it's re localizing your food system, re localizing your energy system, re localizing your economy, creating a richness of connections, that means you can be resilient when shocks happen. Flood could be a fire could be, you know, an economic thing that happens the pandemic. And so that it gives us a sense that it's not a protectionism, like I'm safe, and I'm good against the world. But there's a sense that we have flexibility and resilience and that we're going to be okay, because even if something goes wrong, I'm I know my name is well and I have a relationship and they're going to check on me. And so, the security is not by hoarding. Yep, get more security by giving more because you have more relationships. And so, it flips that whole flow philosophy around what is it's not me, me, me focused.

**Jeremy Melder** 43:05

It's just like, Hey, we share this. We do this together to support one another. And it's important. You know, I really liked that you clarified this, because I think there's a lot of perception out there that permaculture, like he said, He's about just garden. But it's not the whole of life viewpoint in terms of designing that. You help with that, don't you in terms of courses and so on? I do. Yeah. Can you tell us a little bit about that? Yeah, so

**Morag Gamble** 43:32

so, I have a, I have several different courses that I'm run from free masterclasses to YouTube channel and things, but I also run something called the permaculture educators program, because my belief is that we need more people out there teaching this,

**Jeremy Melder** 43:48

this is what I need to do this, I

**Morag Gamble** 43:51

really believe you know, because I've seen in so many different contexts in you know, every continent around the world when people are doing this kind of way of living. That it makes sense. And, and it works. And so supporting people to make this make the transition. I mean, I think this is where the sticky bit is like we can kind of see what it is that we need to go but how do you transition? So, this course is it's the permaculture educators program walks people through permaculture design course and then a permaculture teachers' course. So firstly, you're working through understanding how the systems work, how you apply and you're in place you're designing your own garden or school garden or a community garden. So, you go through that design process of understanding how to how to change the physical and start looking at the social systems and the economic systems and then we then move into Well, how would you share this with someone else? And how would you share it with the community that you care about? It's not like going okay, well, now you'd go and teach a two-week permaculture course to someone else you could, but there's like who is it that you are really They feel like you want to work with, and some people have said they want to work with the vulnerable kids in the community. Other people saying, Look, I'm you know, my dads in a in a nursing home and I really want to work with to make people in nursing homes have the access to these kinds of resources, I'm going to

design and support people. To do that there. Other people have said, Look, I want to dive right into the middle of university and start to transform how that's working and apply it into though. So, everyone is different. And so, we work with people to try and design it design education programs that you can then offer up to the people that you care about the into the systems that you know about, so that you can then speak up and make the changes that need to happen. And so, this course, even though it's like 44 modules, and people kind of work their way through it, and there's no end or start in a way you can start anytime you can take as long as you need. There's no expiry date. So, what I've just met up with a few people said, I'm sorry, I haven't kept going since doesn't matter. Like, someone got to like module seven, and then just, it was all about soils and things I said, I just went off on this three-month tangent, looking all about soils, I followed every single thread that you went into, and, and now I'm back, and I'm going to sort of go off into the water section. And so, what it is, is we're creating a learning community, basically around the world. And so, people get a chance to talk with people around the world, hear stories that we have design labs, or we're designing projects together we have, we're working on the charity together, anyone who want you're not forced to, you can choose to come into whichever bit you want. So, and then we have education labs, to looking at how you share this information. So my goal is really to create this platform where people are interested in making the shift in their life have this really friendly community, they can come in and explore it at their own pace, you know, they're, you know, if they're working full time, they can still do it around that or if they've got a young family that can do it around, there's no, no days, you have to hand anything in or any expires. And I've designed that as a mother. With young kids, I knew how exclusive it was, at times to not be able to access the education I wanted or the communities that I needed. So how could I open it up and then, and so also, anyone from the refugee settlements or from the global south, I don't like donate courses. So, there's just under the people who are in this program who are there. And if they've got access to internet, many of them do now can access this information and then make it their own and teach it locally. So, it's, it's a really, it's a, I absolutely love it. I feel such a deep sense of connectedness to this community and this learning community. And then with the podcast, we bring people into this conversation as well and masterclasses where people like the free master classes that I lead on these different topics. So, people will suggest a topic that they want me to explore. And then I will just invite anyone who wants to come along. So, we get 1000s of people registering for this around the world. And while the master class having this conversation going down the side, people making relationships and connections and sharing resources. So rather than it's a kind of a different model of education, rather than kind of just deliver, deliver, deliver, yeah, it's opening, but there is still content. So, the content is there, we just want to follow the content, you can do that.

**Jeremy Melder** 48:17

Yeah. Because you're getting interaction with people, right, and you're getting people that are commenting on these things. And that's what you're trying to encourage more learning through interaction, and

**Morag Gamble** 48:27

the possibilities and having the support that you can take the steps that you need to take. So, I also have a permaculture gardening course online as well. That's called The Incredible Edible Garden. So, this difference, you know, like, wherever you feel like you want to kind of plug into this or just start getting into it. There's something here and I also, you know, welcome people to get in touch with me if

they want to, you know, have a yarn, and see I where do I start? How do I get started with this and I can try and plug you into where might be the most appropriate spot in this system based on wherever you're at and what your interests are? And if it's nothing that sort of makes sense from what sort of things I offer, then I'll point you to somewhere where I know someone else is doing that.

**Jeremy Melder** 49:07

You're not plugged in with a good community network there, aren't you really in terms of in terms of people wanting to get in touch with you in terms of looking at all these courses, masterclasses YouTube is the one place that they go to, to, to find all this,

**Morag Gamble** 49:25

the best place to go to start would be our permaculture life. Yeah. And that's there's a blog and a website with that, but there's also a YouTube channel of their same ilk. So, but what I would suggest is that if you go to the blog, our permaculture life.com, then you can, there's a subscribe button and I put out a weekly newsletter. There's just an update, here's the latest podcast or the latest film or he's an event that's happening or information and like gardening stuff as well as whole spectrum. So just a small week. You said the guys out. And

**Jeremy Melder** 50:03

I got to say it is I've listened to a few of your podcasts and looked at some of your videos. And I think they're very informative, and you do a very good job with that, which is why I wanted you to come and chat on Beaming Green, which is you've been very informative with us with our listeners today. In terms of a couple of takeaways, I was just wondering if you could say, what are three things that people can do? In terms of thinking about permaculture for their own lives? What can they start with in terms of what would be the first three things that you would think is a good starting point, particularly targeting people that you we mentioned before we're living in, not in rural land, but living in a, you know, residential land that is either a city or something likes with a backyard?

**Morag Gamble** 50:55

Well, I was going to suggest maybe growing a garden in your front yard,

**Jeremy Melder** 50:59

okay. There you go.

**Morag Gamble** 51:02

Oh, he doesn't matter where but if you think about growing a garden, and your front yard gives you the chance to be visible. And what I think that's important about being visible is that you then other people start to stop as they're walking past and they see you gardening, or they see you growing, and then it starts a conversation and they say, Oh, I'm doing that down the back? Or how do you do that? Yeah, so finding a way to connect with other people in your neighborhood who are also doing it, because then there's never enough space to grow everything you want. But maybe someone's growing something down the road and you're growing this and you've got an abundance, you can eat all those zucchinis they've got you know, all those lemons, you can start to trade. So, start growing something start growing physically and start sharing with your neighbors are surplus. And of course, composting.

Anything that's biodegradable, that goes into it comes from your home, just put it into the soil, you know, like make a compost, or even if you just want to do a trench compost, some way of getting all that material to sort of break that waste cycle. And then he does much of everything that he possibly can. I don't know if anyone's ever heard everything my videos before. Like, if I'm growing pumpkins, for example. You know, I don't know, did you know that the pumpkin leaves are edible, the pumpkin flowers and pumpkin seeds and pumpkin skin or if you're growing a broccoli, the broccoli leaves edible. If you're growing any, you know, just about every vegetable, there are so many different parts. So, you can probably grow 10 times as much as what you thought. Yeah, you could have simply by shifting what you perceive as his food. And so yeah, grow where people can see start sharing and talking to neighbors who are walking past give them cuttings and things or give them something to taste and start to, to myceliate. this idea because when you're doing it with other people, yeah, it becomes so much more fun and interesting and engaging rather than just feel like you're on your own doing it.

**Jeremy Melder** 53:00

Absolutely. And in terms of community living, what would you say would be two or three things that people need to consider? Because why I'm bringing up this is because I think housing affordability is becoming quiet, you know, an issue, and people are now even looking at Tiny Homes. And remember you talking about that in the Gen. discussion yesterday. And you know, people are looking at affordability, what are the three things they should be looking at, you know, in considering community life, and because obviously, you've painted a positive experience, you know, and I would love to live the way you're living. So, what would you say people need to consider?

**Morag Gamble** 53:44

you thinking about urban? Are you thinking about the kind of environment that I'm in here? I

**Jeremy Melder** 53:48

think it's going to be possibly urban, but yeah,

53:51

okay.

**Morag Gamble** 53:51

So, kind of what I just said before, in a way is the beginning point, creating possibilities for community. So, you know, it changes depending on where you are, and COVID exam, for example, but sharing your surplus, like maybe even creating a little box out the front saying, you know, feel free to take this surplus or a way of connecting, like how can you connect with someone else and through food is one of the best ways, which is why I think that's the best place to start with permaculture community. The other one is maybe just organizing a street party, or something where you get people coming together. You know, one of the things that we used to do at city farm was just say, bring all your food to share, and we'll just put out the tables underneath the trees in the local park because they're parked on the corner. Doesn't have to be in your home if you feel that awkward. Yeah. And put it on the street, closer for bidding the street for a bit or on the verge or download corner Park and just create opportunities for that communication because when you start to get to know people, just open the conversation just started. Discover things and you don't have to be an eco-village to have a community you don't have to

be in a permaculture village to live a permaculture life, you can do it where you are with what you have. And, and I think it's really shifting the way that, you know, enter those relationships, not wanting something, but seeing how you can, how you can, how you can give and listen and respond. And so I think it's that how we interface like, often I find if I will come to a community like this, expecting to get a whole lot of stuff I want to get community from you, I want this and I want that, like it happened just recently, you know, someone wanted childcare, and they wanted this and that I came to the community because I wanted you all to look after my kids, but you kind of have to give Yeah, first and find the relationships you can expect. And that it's about building trust and relationship and about listening and giving and all this stuff. We kind of know this, we don't do very basic. Yeah, you know, it's very basic, common sense and relationship building. And,

**Jeremy Melder 56:00**

and I think through these relationships of people, even in the you know, in their residential dwellings that get together and community, they might then decide to move into some rural property and from knowing each other, developing those relationships that might lead to an opportunity where they can buy a parcel of land and live together Catholic.

**Morag Gamble 56:22**

Yeah. Or even, you know, opening. You know, one of the things I've just been at the permaculture conferences this last week, and one of the conversations that come up and came out, we're saying, do you have any spare rooms in your house? Or do you have a spare part of your home that you could retrofit into a place? David Holmgren, and one of the founders of permaculture said, there's been this great infill in places like Coburg in Melbourne, where, you know, they did, they took off all the backyards and put all these extra houses in, but they mapped it later, there's been no increase in the population density, we just got more people living in isolated units, which really says that that's not the solution. We need to protect the backyards to keep the spaces for, you know, productivity, and shade and ecological habitat. But maybe we need to share what our space is, we could become very precious about

**Jeremy Melder 57:13**

houses. Yeah.

**Morag Gamble 57:14**

Do you have a spare room in your house?

**Jeremy Melder 57:16**

Take an extra person we do sometimes.

**Morag Gamble 57:20**

Do you have a garage or a carport that could become a unit for somebody, you know, the whole kind of granny flat tiny house concept? What are the ways that we can shift and change how we think about our own places in the cities that we can create more community, on our places, and between neighbors? You know, and not always are we going to get everyone in the street, we don't expect everyone but if there's someone in the street, someone beside you, someone across the road, maybe

someone up the street, maybe someone at your workplace, where you create this sort of seeds of community, and you just keep seeding it with the positive approach. And by giving first by listening deeply, and, and from there. Like, abandon all expectations of what you're going to get. And you find it comes back thousandfold. When you define what your expectation is, you can begin you can become disillusioned and I'm disappointed. But if you allow the possible precedent possibilities of what is going to happen to happen. You are just I find Anyway, I'm always so just extraordinarily surprised. And delighted by what by what happens. And you know, something that doesn't happen doesn't it's okay, if it doesn't work the first time. You know, I just keep trying

**Jeremy Melder** 58:42

Morag, I've just got to say something, you know, I had a whole list of questions for you. But you went I've already ticked off all you've already given me the answers of all of these. You've done this before haven't you

**Morag Gamble** 58:59

I mean, it's just part of the story in this place, isn't it? Yeah, the story of permaculture is that it's it has a beautiful holism about it. Yes. You know, I you know, I came from a system thinking but I you know, my background is in systems thinking and in in design, and layout and permaculture onto that it really is just applied systems thinking it's its ecological design, designing with nature and, and, and it's just, I mean, I, I feel really, I feel lucky every day to wake up in a place like this. Yeah. And you know, I really feel like it is such a beautiful way of being to share that this is something that is possible.

**Jeremy Melder** 59:41

And it is wonderful what you what you guys are doing. They all must come and visit maybe but maybe I'll come and do one of your courses. What do you think?

**Morag Gamble** 59:48

Well, I'm not doing any face-to-face courses now and maybe after COVID and COVID finishes. I will Okay,

**Jeremy Melder** 59:55

there was one advertised there was one advertising for August, but I don't know whether it's your course.

**Morag Gamble** 1:00:00

Well, there's several different courses that happen here. permaculture courses, and there's other arts courses and music programs and all different sorts of things. So yes. And Crystal Waters, as an eco-village itself has its monthly market, which happens on the first Saturday of every month. So, if you wanted to just come up and get some beautiful bread and

**Jeremy Melder** 1:00:19

It is beautiful bread

**Morag Gamble** 1:00:20



and feel what the community is like, then you're very welcome to come up that first Saturday of every month just in the morning time.

**Jeremy Melder** 1:00:28

Yeah, look, I've been a couple of times, as I said, and I do agree the bread is good. And it's such a lovely spirit around the place. And you can feel a positive vibe, there's, and there's a feeling of love, which is you know, something that's not something you get in a shopping center when you go, that's something you get when you go to Crystal waters. And you know, it's just beautiful. Thank you so much Morag, I really appreciate your time, your enthusiasm, and for your sharing for our listeners on Beaming Green. Hopefully, we can chat again soon. And, you know, put out some more discussion and food for thought for people and for me and for you as well. are we're always learning I think it's not , I don't know, you know, everything? And I would like to learn more. And I think through this interaction that we get to learn more, and I really appreciate your time.

**Morag Gamble** 1:01:23

Thank you, Jeremy. Absolutely. I agree with all of that. Lovely chatting with you today,

**Jeremy Melder** 1:01:28

what I need. Thank you. Thank you for listening to this episode of beaming green. Now if you got something out of this episode, we'd love to hear what your biggest takeaway was. There are several ways you can do this; you can leave a review on Apple podcasts. Or if you have a Facebook, Instagram, or LinkedIn social media page, you can leave a review there. Yet don't forget to tag us so we can thank you personally. Lastly, go to Beaminggreen.com and subscribe to our newsletter and receive a free how to be green guide. At beaming green, we are committed to providing you with a thought provoking and insightful program that inspires you to live your life in accordance with your true nature and purpose. We do this by sharing stories from people that are walking their talk and are committed to living their lives sustainably with their mind, body, and soul. So, you can share this with your friends and family and leave the planet. The music for this podcast was created by Dave Weir