

Unlawful Action Toolkit

Version 1

Permaculture Association of the Northeast

Welcome To Unlawful

The PAN team is excited to announce the Unlawful Action Toolkit as a major milestone of the Unlawful Campaign. Unlawful is a campaign to inspire people to reimagine what their yards can be, how they can be used, and bring them into alignment with ecological, spiritual and community-building goals. Through a webinar series, online resources, and on-the-ground work days, we are supporting people across the continent to rethink their relationship with lawns. This campaign is part of a multi-year journey honoring our ethical commitment to people and the planet through de-colonizing and un-colonizing the practice of permaculture.

We are also excited to share that we are partnering with the Resilience Hub, and ORGO in order to build an online resource of inspiration and in-person demonstration for people who want to start down this path. In this toolkit, we will share some examples of what people are doing with their yards, discuss why lawns are a historical footprint of colonization, and what rewilding our yards can look like.

Join us in Unlawning. We are leading by example to restore the land and restore justice at the same time. If you are interested in learning more about the Unlawful campaign or volunteering with the team, please visit our website at www.northeastpermaculture.org/Unlawful

Thank you for your passion and commitment to making the world a better place!

Joe Nisbett
PAN Board Treasurer

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Introduction

How To Use This Toolkit

The purpose of this Toolkit is to help PAN and participants in the Unlawful campaign translate theory into action. This Toolkit is for anyone who wants to take part in the Unlawful campaign: people who want to learn more about lawns, those who want to change their own lawns, and those who want to help others do so.

The Toolkit is organized into three sections: 1) the theory behind our campaign; 2) how we can apply this theory locally through hosting Unlawning projects; and 3) resources for further reading on the topics of lawn maintenance and ecological restoration.

The toolkit includes design and planning support for communities to host their own Unlawful events. There's even information about grants, PAN's fiscal sponsorship program, work party coordination tutorials. These contain everything you'll need to know in order to plan your event with confidence. There's also links to external resources like books/articles that we've found helpful.

Overview of PAN's Unlawful Campaign

The Unlawful campaign will evolve seasonally from Summer 2022 to Winter 2023: This summer and fall we are developing the app and toolkit. Through the winter and spring we will host online and in-person workshops teaching participants how to use these tools. In the spring and summer of 2023 look on our app and Facebook page for locally organized demonstrations led by new communities who have been trained in these new techniques.

Why Unlawful?

In the seventeenth century, lawns rose in importance as a social signal of affluence and wealth in England. Today they are a dominant feature of settler culture worldwide. Lawns cover 60 million acres in the United States alone and are one of the visible ongoing projects of settler-colonialism: a desire for control, domination over others—and conformity.

Consistent with wider patterns of colonial violence, maintaining lawns harms the earth through excessive use of water, fertilizer and pesticides. But a better way is possible: People can maintain their yards without tearing up ecosystems or depleting fossil fuels by using alternative sources like rainwater harvesting systems, or planting native species that require less work to keep growing healthy.

The number one goal of this project is to inspire environmental and cultural change. We are making a change in peoples' minds and hearts about the aesthetic, cultural, and environmental

value of lawns as a symbol of oppression. For Unlawning to be successful we must remove the stigma around ecologically active space and "overgrown" lawns.

Rough Timeline of Activities

Summer 2022

- PAN launches first webinar "Why Unlawful." Recording available now on PAN website in the Member's Only section
- PAN enlists Resilience Hub and ORGO to help create a demonstration of the Unlawning concept at an installation site in 2023, as well as a mobile phone application that would give citizens the ability to document their own lawn replacements
- Initial outreach to BIPOC community leaders, initial call for volunteers
- The Map of Unlawful is published, which lists the offers and needs available in your area

Fall 2022

- Version 1 of the Unlawful Action Toolkit
- Continued outreach to invite partners and volunteers to the campaign

Winter 2022

- Outreach to community partners and other organizations
- Targeted outreach to marginalized communities, including a survey and focus group
- "How to" webinar by PAN
- Version 2 of the Unlawful Action Toolkit to include learnings from "How To" webinar

Spring 2023

- Online information session hosted by PAN for organizers of community-led Unlawnings
- Unlawning demonstration and work day hosted by Resilience Hub in Greater Portland area
- Version 3 of the Unlawful Action Toolkit to include learnings from the demonstration day

Summer 2023

- Organizers plan and coordinate work parties for community-led Unlawful Installations
- Ongoing site maintenance and impact tracking at Resilience Hub demonstration site

Fall 2023

- Unlawful Awards submissions open to community-led Unlawnings
- Disbursement of Unlawful Awards funds
- Webinars hosted by PAN featuring guest teachers from marginalized communities and Unlawful Award winners
- Version 4 of the Unlawful Action Toolkit to include learnings and case studies from community-led installations as well as feedback from marginalized communities

FAQ

Where and how much lawn space do I need to convert to be Unlawful?

You can do any section, big or small, of the lawn that you have legal access to. Backyard, Front yard, side yard, neighbor's yard, community center, courtyard, along a roadside, wherever you can convert lawn, do it!

Is it actually unlawful?

It is not illegal or unlawful. But it is certainly Unlawful and against colonial norms. Many government organizations are actually supporting conservation and gardening efforts like this. Some areas have bylaws around management and care of yards, so it is helpful to put up signage, like your Unlawful Signs or Pollinator Pathways/Garden signs, so people know you are not neglecting your space should you choose a more wild Unlawning option. Sharing your design and plans with your neighbors or, better, including them in the process, is another way to ensure your Unlawn is celebrated.

How much does this cost?

This depends on the scale of your project, what you can find through thrifting and donation, and the free resources available to you in your area. In the "Info for Hosts" section of this Toolkit, we've outlined the types of items to budget for and creating your plan.

Can I do this without gardening experience, a "green thumb", or a deeper knowledge of Permaculture?

You can absolutely join without experience! Many Unlawning work parties will offer training and direction. As for hosting, you have this toolkit, a list of resources in the final section, and there is an unlimited amount of information online, in libraries, and likely in your community. PAN created a [Map of Unlawful](#) which shows Unlawning hosts, volunteers, and sites as another tool to connect you to your community. We expect a trial and error process in a new space, and you often learn as you go. Every permaculturist and master gardener started without knowing much either. Take your time. Observe before you act—take slow small steps and you should have lots of fun. Fortunately there is a large community (people, plants, animals, fungus & insects) here to support you!

What is the longer-term maintenance work of having a garden vs. a lawn?

Many Unlawning options are far less work than watering, fertilizing and mowing the lawn. The time/work depends on the design you choose, the size and the scale. In our Design section we talk about the maintenance requirements of different options.

What is the timeline? Do I need to have a garden ready by spring 2023?

PAN's Unlawful campaign starts in summer 2022. Different projects will be on differing timelines. The idea is to create your Unlawful design this fall and start physical installations in the spring and summer of 2023. The overall goal of the campaign is to inspire people to reimagine what their yards can be, how they can be used, and bring them into alignment with

ecological, spiritual and community-building goals. Then we can double the fun by sharing our projects online!

How formal is the process? Do I need to throw an “event” or can this be as simple as me and a few neighbors whenever we can?

There is no requirement here. You do not even have to be a PAN member to host. Unlawning can be a big project involving many community groups or a handful of folks coming together when they have the time!

Themes

Permaculture Principles and Ethics

PAN and our partners are guided in our work by the Permaculture Principles and Ethics, see our resources section for an in-depth overview.

Equity And Inclusion

In the spirit of equity and inclusion, we aim to create a campaign that is accessible to people across the socioeconomic spectrum. We understand that ecological restoration is a broad term and can encompass many different types of gardening practices. Therefore, we are committed to providing resources for those whose access has been limited by their income or other factors of privilege.

Lawns have an inherently colonial, oppressive nature and we find it imperative to focus a significant portion of our effort to center, involve and uplift these marginalized groups through our campaign. We are also specifically targeting BIPOC communities with our Unlawful Awards program to offer direct financial inclusion to those historically underrepresented in the permaculture community.

Leadership Development

We are committed to providing leadership development opportunities for those who wish to become more involved in the campaign. We will provide opportunities for learning about ecological restoration and the political landscape surrounding it, as well as opportunities for hands-on experience with gardening and community engagement.

Nature Based Education

We believe that nature-based education is vital to the health of future generations and the environment. Our campaign will provide opportunities for people to learn about ecology, permaculture, and other related subjects through hands-on activities.

About PAN

The Northeast Permaculture Network is a decentralized body of people — farmers, teachers, designers, organizers, authors, researchers, extension agents and other permaculture enthusiasts — who are working in diverse ways toward advancing a new cultural paradigm grounded in permaculture design principles and ethics. We apply and integrate permaculture-aligned skills and principles at home, in our communities, towns and cities; in our businesses, livelihoods and relationships.

PAN exists to support the people in the Northeast Permaculture Network. Since January 2005, permaculture activists throughout the Northeast have been meeting and actively creating a network to mutually support each other and advance permaculture solutions among the wider public in our region. We seek to identify existing resources and create beneficial relationships among them; to envision and design ways to share experiences, information, and resources; to identify and meet each other's needs.

PAN's Mission and Values

Our Mission is to increase the resilience of the Northeast region by strengthening the regional permaculture network and increasing access to relevant education and resources.

Our work is informed and guided by the following Values:

- Permaculture ethics of earth care, people care and fair share
- Transparency
- Humility
- Being of service to the greater regional permaculture community
- Reflecting the needs/issues/opportunities of the network
- Supporting decentralization, local autonomy and self-organizing across the network
- Encouraging symbiosis, cooperation and collaboration
- Valuing ecological patterns of organization
- Commitment to social justice and liberation

PAN's Unlawful Partners

Resilience Hub has a wealth of knowledge and experience with mutual-aid practices including “permablitz” work days to carry out landscape restoration projects. RH brings in-person coordination, access to land and facilities, and a ready community of volunteers to launch the first official Unlawning in our campaign.

ORGO is a new startup with experience creating technological approaches to environmental restoration. ORGO brings citizen science and evidence-based data verification to the project, enabling a network of community-led Unlawnings to establish itself and grow around a common purpose.

Hosting and Planning an Unlawful Project

One way to get involved in this campaign is to host or attend an Unlawning project. We encourage you to join with your neighbors and friends so that the planning and long term maintenance remains a light hearted affair.

If you'd like help overseeing and planning your Unlawning project, your first step in the Fall 2022 could be finding a co-lead, group, or committee. You can reach out to your personal networks, local gardening or permaculture groups, community groups, Facebook pages and groups, the [PAN Facebook page](#), the [PAN directory](#), and check out the [Map of Unlawful](#) to find folks in your area to collaborate with!

From there, you can establish your goals and objectives, find your Unlawning site and start dreaming into the possibilities! We've broken the design process into sections here, including extra resources at the end of the document to help you on your way.

Land Access

Land access is a significant challenge to any ecological restoration project. There are some opportunities for public land access, such as easements and open space agreements, but these can take time and organization to obtain.

If you are looking for land to organize an Unlawning project, here are some ideas:

- Check PAN's facebook group and Map of Unlawful for communities that offer access to land
- Ask local government agencies if they have any land available or under the control of their jurisdiction that would be suitable for an ecological restoration project
- Check with local conservation groups and wildlife agencies to see if they have any land that could be used for restoration
- Explore the possibility of working with a private landowner who might be interested in supporting your project by donating or providing access to their land

Designing an Unlawful site

There are many ways to be Unlawful, and PAN doesn't believe any one way to be the 'best' way to do it. As with other permaculture processes, the design and vision will be unique and specific to your project. Here we outline some of the patterns and practices that are in our Unlawning toolbox and help you to choose which ones might be most useful. We recommend using the [Map of Unlawful People, Partners, and Projects](#) to connect with others in your area who may be able to help.

The rest of this toolkit is under construction

We are working hard to complete this document in stages from Fall 2022 to Fall 2023.

[Donate to PAN](#) to support the Unlawful Campaign and development of this toolkit.

[Apply to volunteer](#) with the Unlawful team and you could help us to write this toolkit!