

# IMAGINE



“... a system that is democratic and equitable, organized and carried out to fulfill human needs in ways that regenerate and maintain a healthy biosphere.”

— Fred Magdoff & Chris Williams, *Creating an Ecological Society: toward a revolutionary transformation*

---

Welcome to Issue 3 of Imagine, an occasional pamphlet devoted to envisioning what a better world could be like and ways we can make it real. If we cannot imagine a better world, no path will take us there. This vision is a work in progress — we welcome your ideas for consideration and discussion (email is below). Future issues of Imagine will continue to expand on the vision and contemplate making it happen.

---

## Our Place in Nature

For thousands of years, humans have attempted to “tame” nature. Wouldn’t it be easier and better if we accepted our place in nature as one of its creatures, living in harmony with our surroundings instead of trying to control them?

Take, for example, our lawns. What if, instead of maintaining a manicured lawn, we chose a prairie meadow or grove of native trees with woodland plants beneath them? Freed from periodic doses of herbicidal poisons, the soil would regain its health. Insects and frogs would move in, and we would delight in the pleasant humming of bees and vibrant colors of butterflies as they pollinate the flowers. An opossum or fox might move in. The air would be filled with the singing of birds, and without the grating and stressful noise of lawn mowers, we’d be able to enjoy their songs.

We have come to think of manicured landscapes as safe and healthy and wild nature as messy and potentially harmful, but in fact the opposite is true. In a yard returned to a balanced ecological state, birds and other insect eaters such as dragonflies, frogs

and opossums would keep mosquitos, ticks, and other potential pests in check. (A single dragonfly can consume 30-100 mosquitoes per day.) Foxes and other predators would keep rodents under control. With an accessible supply of wood left to rot on the ground, termites would not waste energy building mud tunnels to access the wood in our homes. We would save energy, avoid exposing ourselves or the environment to pollution, noise, and toxic chemicals, and benefit psychologically from the diversity of life around us.

*Don't it always seem to go  
That you don't know what you've got  
Till it's gone  
They paved paradise  
And put up a parking lot  
— Joni Mitchell*

An ecological landscape need not be completely wild, but can instead balance wild nature with human needs and aesthetics, such as paths, fences, patios, outdoor fireplaces, and borders of favorite domestic

flowers. At the very least, a clover lawn provides flowers for pollinators, is soft to walk and play on, develops good soil, and doesn't need to be mowed. Although establishing a new landscape may seem overwhelming, it can be done gradually, starting with a small area. It is creative, healthy, satisfying work in the fresh air, and since native wild plants are adapted to the local climate, they mostly take care of themselves once established.

Along with our attempt to control nature, we often demonstrate a blatant disregard for it. The shortsighted quest for profit that's built into our current economic system ignores the damage done to our world. Nature has value as more than just an industrial resource. We can learn to value nature without putting a price on it.

If our society were driven by quality of life instead of money, not only would nature benefit but our well-being would improve. Instead of a dog-eat-dog world, we could have neighbors working together, easing the load for everyone. Equality could become a reality. If we all had the means to care for our families, house them, feed them, clothe them, educate them, and treat illnesses, we wouldn't have to fight for "better" jobs to make more money. Everyone's work would be valued for its contribution to making life better. If our economy were not driven by the need to expand endlessly, there would be neither planned obsolescence nor wasteful marketing to get us to buy stuff we don't

need. Less stuff means less pressure on nature. Less stuff means we don't have to take care of it, store it, clean it, or toss it in a landfill.

It's time that we made peace with nature. Rather than chop down forests in the name of money, let's restore forests to cleanse our air and sequester carbon. Rather than spilling oil on beaches and coastal wildlife, let's move away from using oil at all. Life would be healthier and more beautiful for all living things, including us. Wouldn't this be a far better legacy to leave to our children?

Centuries from now humans could look back on the early 21st century as the turning point in human history when we decided to plan for the future instead of living for the moment. We realized that our children and grandchildren would face a horrible existence in a world ravaged by climate disruption, ecological devastation, and the resultant terrible inequalities and wars over resources. We finally pulled our heads out of the sands of denial and said enough is enough and built an economic system based on the values of care and freedom instead of endless production, consumption, and accumulation. We finally said it's time to treat our world and all its inhabitants with a respect for life. Let's not be cursed by our descendants. Let's act now and give them the chance to thrive.

---

## Whose Land Is It Anyway?

Returning to the subject of the commons, should anyone really "own" the earth? The 18th century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau said it pretty well. "The first person who, having enclosed a plot of land, took it into his head to say this is mine and found people simple enough to believe him

was the true founder of civil society. What crimes, wars, murders, what miseries and horrors would the human race have been spared, had someone pulled up the stakes or filled in the ditch and cried out to his fellow men: 'Do not listen to this imposter. You are lost if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong to all and the earth to no one.'"

*"I'm no longer accepting the things I cannot change . . .  
I'm changing the things I cannot accept." — Angela Davis*