Zones and Sectors

The elements of a design are placed in zones to optimize the connections between the elements, and in sectors to manage incoming energy.

Zones help us place elements on the site so they reduce work, resource use, and maintenance; boost yields and diversity; and recycle resources.

Sectors help us place elements to best use the energy and matter flowing through the site.

Zones

Consider the house (or other focal point such as a village center) to be Zone 0. The area closest to the house is Zone 1, and outside of this lie Zones 2 through 5. The more times you need to visit an element, or the more it needs to be visited, the closer to Zone 0 it should go.

The Zone System: Contents and Uses

	Structures	Plants	Garden Techniques	Water Sources	Animals	Uses
Zone I: most visited, intensive use and care	greenhouse, trellis, arbor, deck, patio, bird bath, storage, compost, workshop	herbs, greens, flowers, dwarf trees, low shrubs, lawn	intensive weeding and mulching, dense planting, espalier	rain barrels, small ponds, greywater, household tap	wild birds, rabbits, guinea pigs	Modify house microclimate, daily food and flowers, social space
Zone II: semi-intensely managed	greenhouse, compost, barns, tool shed, shop, wood storage	staple and canning crops, small orchards, fire retardant plants, natives	spot mulch, cover crops, seasonal pruning	well, pond, greywater, irrigation, swales	rabbits, fish, bats, poultry	home food production, some market crops, plant propagation, wildlife habitat
Zone III: farm zone	feed storage, field shelters	cash crops, large fruit and nut trees, animal forage, shelterbelts, seedlings for grafting	cover crops, little pruning, moveable fences	large ponds, swales, storage in soil	cows, horses, pigs, sheep, goats, other large animals	cash crops, firewood and lumber, pasture,
Zone IV: minimal care	animal feeders	firewood, timber, native plants	pasturing and selective forestry	ponds, swales	large animals	hunting, gathering, grazing
Zone V: wild, unmanaged	none	native plants	unmanaged	lakes, creeks	native animals	inspiration, foraging, preservation

Woven into to each Zone I, II, III, IV:
- Water collection, holding tanks, ponds, well, dams
- Appropriate technology using sun, wind, hydropower
- Building soil fertility, composting, mulch
- Plant stacking, wind breaks and shelterbelts
- Wildlife habitat, sacred spaces

Sectors

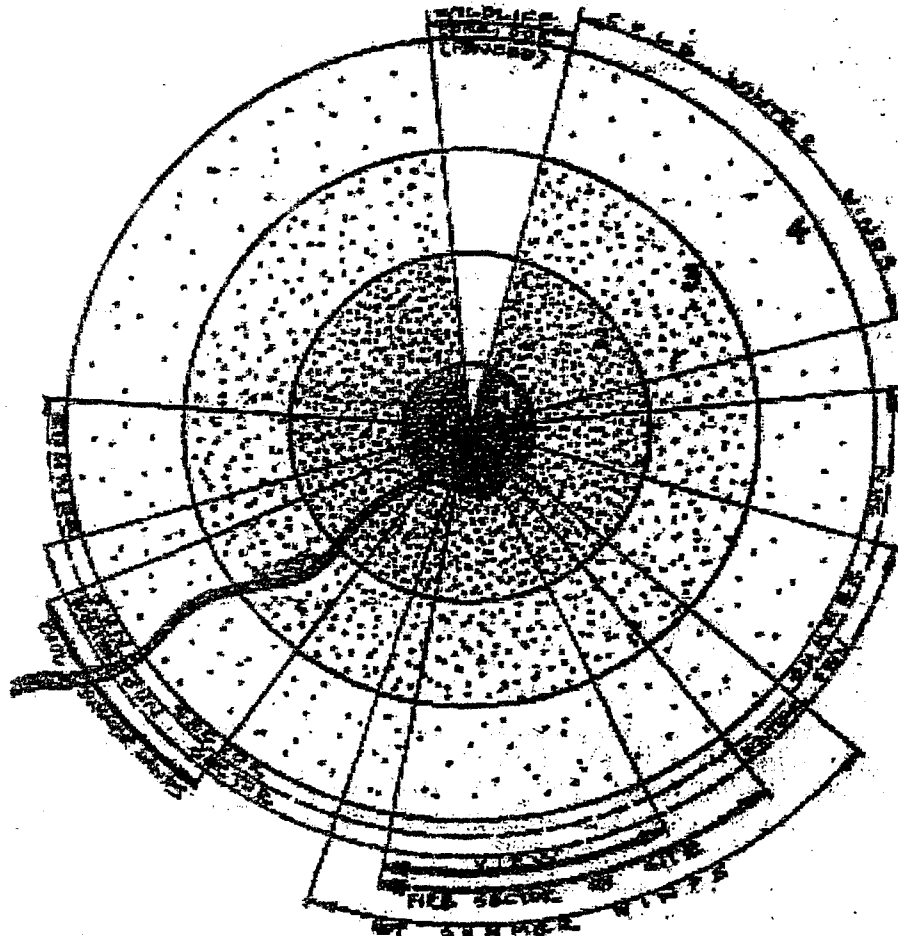**Sectors** are energies that come from outside the site.

Examples of sectors:
- Sun: Winter and summer sun paths
- Wind: Cold, hot, seasonal, salty, dusty, carrying sound or smells
- Wildfire
- View: good, bad, or views into your site from elsewhere (privacy)
- Pollution: sound, smell, toxins, electromagnetic energies, etc.
- Water and precipitation: Flood-prone areas, rain flow, snow drifts
- Wildlife corridors
- Landforms: Slope, sunken areas, hills, mudslides
- Shade: From buildings, billboards, vegetation
- Traffic: cars, schoolchildren, police, vandals, etc
- (note: urban sectors—often human-made—can be very different from rural sectors)

Elements can be placed in sectors so that they:
1) block or screen out an incoming energy or view;
2) channel energy for use (via deflectors, collectors); or
3) let the sector energy pass through unimpeded (e.g. wildlife corridors).

Zones and Sectors Summary: A design component is well placed when it is located in a zone and in sectors so that it minimizes work, energy, and resource use, and optimizes productivity and diversity.

(figure from Mollison, *Permaculture: A Designer's Manual*)

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