

■ Study Guide: Starting a Permaculture Nursery

Based on the presentation by Braden Trauth

Why Start a Nursery? Low-Skill, High-Impact (Timestamp: 6:31–8:37)

Key Takeaway: Nurseries are low-barrier, high-impact businesses compared to other sustainability ventures.

Action Steps:

- Consider a nursery as a first step into permaculture entrepreneurship.
- Frame your nursery's role in local food security.

Launching with Community Education (PDCs) (Timestamp: 9:09–10:43)

Key Takeaway: Offering affordable PDCs built a base of educated allies and future customers.

Action Steps:

- Run courses or workshops with nursery sales.
- Turn students into customers and advocates.

Nonprofit Structure and Mission (Timestamp: 11:20–12:31)

Key Takeaway: Registering as a 501(c)(3) requires bylaws and mission alignment but brings big benefits.

Action Steps:

- Research nonprofit requirements.
- Draft bylaws aligned with education/community goals.

Funding Stability: Beyond Grants (Timestamp: 14:18–16:15)

Key Takeaway: Grants are useful for capacity but unstable for operations — nursery sales provide steady revenue.

Action Steps:

- Use sales for reliable income.
- Pursue grants only for expansion/infrastructure.

Applying Permaculture Principles to Finances (Timestamp: 16:44–17:30)

Key Takeaway: Apply 'capture and store resources' to money: grow unsold plants larger and charge more later.

Action Steps:

- Avoid discounting leftovers.
- Market larger plants as premium.

Branding and Identity Matter (Timestamp: 17:39–18:49)

Key Takeaway: A clear name and good graphics boosted recognition and credibility.

Action Steps:

- Choose a descriptive name.
- Use local designers/volunteers for branding.

Starting a Nursery: Buy Wholesale, Then Specialize (Timestamp: 18:55–21:25)

Key Takeaway: They began by reselling wholesale plants, then specialized in perennials.

Action Steps:

- Start with wholesale to test demand.
- Build propagation capacity over time.

Focusing on Perennials for Food Security (Timestamp: 21:04–22:44)

Key Takeaway: Perennials (fruit, nuts, berries) support long-term food resilience.

Action Steps:

- Center nursery on perennial edibles.
- Market 'food forest starter kits'.

Advantages of Nonprofit Status (Timestamp: 23:23–25:38)

Key Takeaway: Nonprofits can access grants, donations, volunteer hours, and tax exemptions.

Action Steps:

- Consider nonprofit status.
- Leverage tax exemptions for supplies.

Navigating Regulations and Invasives (Timestamp: 26:07–28:02)

Key Takeaway: States regulate invasive plant sales and require nursery licensing.

Action Steps:

- Research invasive species lists.
- Obtain proper licenses early.

Competing with Big Box Nurseries (Timestamp: 34:12–37:44)

Key Takeaway: Big box stores sell cheap but poorly adapted plants — compete on quality and local adaptation.

Action Steps:

- Promote your regional varieties.
- Match price but emphasize resilience.

Mail-Order vs. Local Access (Timestamp: 37:59–39:06)

Key Takeaway: Mail-order nurseries are limited by size and shipping windows, local nurseries provide year-round.

Action Steps:

- Decide on local-only or mail-order.
- Use mail-order for niche crops.

Mobile Setups and Farmers Markets (Timestamp: 41:16–42:00)

Key Takeaway: Started at farmers markets, then shifted to permanent low-rent and mobile setups.

Action Steps:

- Test farmers markets first.
- Transition to permanent sales sites.

Recycling Pots and Reducing Waste (Timestamp: 43:24–44:08)

Key Takeaway: Recycling donated pots cut costs and landfill waste while building eco-credibility.

Action Steps:

- Set up a pot donation system.
- Promote zero-waste practices.

Plant Lists, Signage, and Education as Marketing (Timestamp: 44:25–47:46)

Key Takeaway: Detailed signage (uses, pollination, traits) helps customers succeed and reduces staff time.

Action Steps:

- Create attractive plant signage.
- Include culinary and ecological functions.

■ Inspiring Quotes

"Nurseries are one of the easiest, most impactful ways to build food resilience."	— Timestamp ~6:31–8:37
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"We started by reselling wholesale plants — then shifted into our own specialties."	— Timestamp ~18:55–21:25
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"Education doubles as marketing — every sign and class reduces staff time and builds relationships."	— Timestamp ~44:25–47:46
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■ Final Advice from Braden Trauth

1. Nurseries are low-barrier, high-impact businesses.
2. Education builds your market.
3. Nonprofit structures can unlock major advantages.
4. Perennials are the backbone of resilient nurseries.
5. Big box stores can't compete on adaptation and knowledge.
6. Waste reduction and reuse cut costs and build credibility.
7. Education doubles as marketing.