

Talking Conservation Drie Valleyen

ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP

by Charl van der Merwe, Environmental Ethicist
On behalf of Sedgfield Ratepayers Association.

Have you ever wondered what skills are needed to be able to make your space on the Garden Route, and the earth, a better place? Environmental Leadership is a crucial skill for addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainability. It involves applying the principles of leadership, ethics, and values to guide sustainable actions in various contexts.

Environmental leadership will play a vital role in fostering a sustainable future by integrating ethical practices and stakeholder collaboration.

The following are some skills you can develop to become an environmental leader, influence others and contribute to making our place a better place.

Imagination's Capacity: Imagination thrives on previous knowledge, examples, principles and models. Learning broadens our imagination, and engaging with nature stimulates it through sensory experiences like shapes, textures, and sounds. Nature also boosts positive emotions and releases dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin, fostering creativity. Contrary to belief, imagination does not decline with age.

Studies show that openness to new experiences enhances imagination. It correlates with increased creativity, curiosity, growth, aesthetic appreciation, flow, divergent thinking, innovative problem-solving, and considering various perspectives. Challenging conventional thinking and

exploratory thought are crucial for expanding imagination and creativity, making you a skilled environmental leader.

Imagining improved ways of living assists in addressing sustainability challenges and influences policy and decision-making at both local and national levels. Practising the following skills may require a vivid imagination.

Critical Thinking is the ability to objectively analyse information, evaluate perspectives, and make reasoned judgments. It includes skills such as observation, interpretation, analysis, and problem-solving. This skill helps question assumptions and actions (of our local authority, developers, activists, and opinion fabricators), assess sources' validity, and form well-founded conclusions. Critical thinking is essential for tackling environmental issues, and helps you navigate overwhelming and misleading information. In the age of fake news, evaluating data critically is vital. It also allows you to tackle challenges logically, consider options, and innovate. To develop critical thinking, ask probing questions and question the answers. Engage in debates or discussions to view issues from multiple perspectives, which improves analytical skills, communication, and empathy.

Empathy and cultural competence Developing cultural empathy is a skill that allows you to consider the perspectives, experiences, and feelings of another person based on their cultural background, their experience or the challenges they

face. Empathy aids in effectively communicating with those around you, regardless of cultural background. You do not need to be an expert communicator to use empathy, but this does not come without challenges as it also involves being sensitive to non-verbal cues, which can vary significantly across cultures.

Systems thinking is a holistic approach to problem-solving and analysis that views complex issues as interconnected systems rather than isolated parts. Rather than focusing solely on individual components, systems thinking considers the relationships, patterns, and dynamics that emerge when environmental, social and economic systems interact within a larger framework.

Communication is vital in raising public awareness about environmental issues and empowering informed choices. Many lack understanding of sustainability challenges, but clear communication can bridge this gap, boosting awareness and promoting sustainable attitudes and behaviours. Communication can be verbal, printed, or artistic. It must be factual and based on science, not opinions.

Environmental Problem Solving should be creative and practical and involve identifying the causes of environmental issues from human activities and developing solutions to mitigate the damage to ecosystems. Approach the problem with an open mind, identify the challenge clearly and purposefully evaluate all possible solutions.

Resilience in Environmental Leadership is the skill to cope with and adapt to stress, challenges, and change. In the realm of environmental leadership, resilience is an indispensable quality that enables you to navigate through the complexities and uncertainties inherent in addressing environmental issues.

Environmental leaders must often confront multifaceted problems such as climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and deforestation. These challenges require not only a deep understanding of ecological systems but also the ability to persevere and remain adaptable in the face of setbacks. Resilient leaders are capable of enduring great challenges while also becoming stronger and more determined amidst adversity.

Lifelong learning is required and is the skill and desire of continuous development and improvement of knowledge and skills throughout your life. It encompasses both formal and informal learning opportunities and is an initiative taken and pursued voluntarily for personal reasons. Lifelong learning enhances competitiveness, employability, social inclusion, active citizenship, and personal development.

The most important aspect of environmental leadership is **enthusiasm**. An environmental enthusiast seeks to improve and protect our natural environment with energy and eagerness by modifying environmentally harmful human activities and adopting ideals focused on doing no harm to the environment.

Garden Service



FOREST ROOTS



What we offer

- Garden Maintenance
- Lawn Care (cutting, edging, cleaning)
- Garden Bed Maintenance
- Pruning and Trimming
- Green Waste Removal
- Microbial Spray Applications
- Consultations on Organic Gardening Methods, Composting and Pest Control

www.forestroots.co.za info@forestroots.co.za
079 910 5398

ACUT ABOVE THE BEST

INDIGENOUS LAWNS

FOR ALL SEASONS

LM Berea - the best shade lawn!
Buffalo/Kweek - Semishade,
salt tolerant and water wise!



EDEN LAWNS

www.edenlawns.co.za 044 343 2883 084 380 6133