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Review: A Safe and Sustainable World: The Promise of Ecological Design

By Nancy Jack Todd

Reviewed by [Elery Hamilton-Smith](#)
Charles Sturt University, Australia

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Nancy Jack Todd. *A Safe and Sustainable World: The Promise of Ecological Design*. Washington: The Island Press. 2005. 203pp. ISBN 1-55963-778-1

This is a very personal story of the efforts by the Todd Family and their friends to establish and test ecologically designed environments. The dimensions of personal and emotional experience are interwoven with the lessons learned from their two arks and the extent to which they have been recognized for their pioneering experiments. It is a valuable example of the "Think globally; Act Locally" principle, but goes further than most in making a genuine contribution to the broader conversation on sustainability.

The bibliography is a remarkable lesson in itself. It comprises philosophical and conceptual works that helped to establish the directions and principles upon which the Todds built.

Given the successful demonstration, by this work and many other similar projects, of the value of ecological principles as a basis for human action, it is disappointing that there is still limited broad-scale action in this area. I recently visited a wondrous and very successful dry land vineyard – the only one among an immense number of heavily irrigated neighboring plantings. It uses selected ground cover plantings between the grapevines to both hold water and exercise control over many potential pests. One can only wonder why irrigation survives when it is so costly in both economic and environmental dimensions and now clearly so un-necessary in that region.

But one could cite hundreds of such examples of failure to adopt new strategies. The very concept of sustainability will only grow and develop its full potential if our political and economic masters rethink their policy assumptions and practices. But in turn, that demands wide-scale public understanding and acceptance. Nancy Todd has certainly made a contribution to that movement.

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