

PA Guide for Opening your Property



Opening your property for the first time may feel daunting, however with some careful planning and preparation, you'll feel much more confident. This guide aims to share past experience from those who have opened their place many times before.

Preparing the garden

Assuming your property has a garden, here are some tips for helping it to look its best:

- Prune plants to stimulate new growth (6-8 weeks before)
- Stake plants that are falling over or leaning
- Fill in any gaps with new plants
- Make sure pathways are accessible and safe (remove slippery moss for example)
- Deadhead flowers to stimulate new flowers
- Weed and mulch areas as necessary

Closer to the opening date;

- Ensure outdoor furniture is clean
- Tidy up empty pots, trays, tools, etc all to one location
- Add useful signs/labels to unusual or interesting plants or other Permaculture Features

Access to your property

How will people tour your place?

Options are:

- Self guided with or without a basic map
- A tour by one of the owners or someone who knows it well enough at a specific time
- Multiple tours at regular intervals
- 2 tours at the same time, but starting at different points and following different routes

Whether you produce a map or not, it is a good idea to have a route planned out of where you will start and in which order you will visit different parts. Some signs showing the best route could be helpful.

Evaluate hazards

Do this well ahead of the open day to ensure you have time to do any necessary repairs. Hazards can be cordoned off and signed posted in case there is no way to mitigate the risk.

Workshops and buildings with fuels or chemicals should be secure and locked on the open day.

Swimming pools should be compliant with your local authority. Other open water features such as ponds, dams, etc should have a hazard warning sign in place.

Check items on the property such as children's swings and cubby houses to make sure these are structurally sound, in case visiting children decide to use them. If they are not safe, plan to cordon these off to prevent access (with a sign).

How will people get to your property?

- Public transport
- Cycling
- Driving
- Carpooling
- And so on...

Allow parking for bicycles in addition to cars - have a backup in place in case more people come than you anticipate - can you use a paddock or a neighbour's paddock? Ensure there are durable signs for where to park (and where not to). It's a great idea to have someone actively supervise the parking. Allow spaces for elderly or disabled that are closer to the viewing areas.

Think about how people will find your place. Is the road you are on well signposted? Is your number in place and easily visible? Check whether google maps and other nav systems correctly lead people to your front gate. Is it necessary to put out extra signs to help people find your place?

Decide the best spot for entry and welcome table

Choose the most accessible point of entry and ensure some shade over a table. Have change available according to your entry fees. It may not be a good idea to rely on an honesty box system. Have a trusted person on the table at all times: perhaps 2-3 trusted people taking turns through the day?

If you have water hazards (or others) signposted on your property, have this also signposted/highlighted at the entry point.

Property Open Day

Promotion of your open property

Permaculture Australia will help with this to a certain degree, but you need to promote more locally yourself.

Marketing suggestions

- Write an article for the local newspaper
- Contact your local radio station
- Post flyers/posters in your local shopping areas
- Make use of local websites that promote 'What's On'
- Post on social media - eg instagram, facebook (esp local groups)
- Post on your own website/blog or other media channels
- Share amongst local groups who may have interested members eg probus, rotary, garden club, organic group, landcare group, etc
- Email to your mailing list(s)

Refreshments (if applicable)

Having an area for refreshments is a welcome addition for visitors. This may be where items are available for purchase or for refreshments that are included in the entry fee. It's a good idea that this is sheltered in the case of bad weather. Ensure there is adequate space for everyone and at least some chairs for people who need them. A large tree may be appropriate for fine weather.

People will appreciate eating or drinking 'out of your garden', so highlight that when appropriate. Examples could include herbal tea, roselle tea, elderflower cordial, ginger flower water, kombucha (esp using herbal tea), homegrown coffee (or substitutes), etc. Set examples of minimising waste by avoiding single use items and providing a container for compostables or worm food.

Plant stall

There are many variations on this depending on your context. Plants could be available for purchase, swap, or give away to guests. Seeds could be a feature as well. Have someone knowledgeable to supervise this table/area. This is best in a shady area.

Label plants accurately - preferably with the latin name. Encourage people to look for more information at home before planting out.

One could get a local gardening club, permaculture group, scout group, or similar to run the plant stall on your behalf.

If people buy plants early on in the day, have an area for them to leave them; perhaps behind the stall. Have a pen and labels on hand to mark them clearly. Think about how people can carry their plants home. Perhaps collect small cardboard boxes beforehand in case people want to buy lots of plants!

House security

How will you make your house secure during the open day? Will it be locked? Or can you have someone inside at all times? If refreshments are available then access to the kitchen is necessary.

It isn't advisable to allow visitors into the house except under emergency situations. It is preferable to have an outside toilet available to visitors. This should be regularly checked throughout the event to ensure it remains clean. It should be clearly signposted and all people helping should know where it is.

The property owner(s)

Engaging with visitors is important. People often want to meet the owner(s) and ask questions. Wearing a name tag that identifies you clearly could be helpful. Try and free yourself from doing too much during the event - get help from friends and family.

Visitors will be more likely to ask questions or get into conversations with helpers if they are easy to spot - consider name tags, hi-vis vest or wearing common coloured tops to make yourselves easy to identify

Insurance

Something to consider is insurance in the case someone hurts themselves while at your place. They would be covered medically through Medicare, or their own health insurance, but if they wanted to sue, then insurance cover will mitigate this. Your property insurance may cover this. Auspicing your Open Property event under another group eg local permaculture group is another option to ensure you're covered.

Other activities/ideas

Live music

Talk (by someone passionate and knowledgeable)

Forum (discuss a locally appropriate topic)

Display of local craft or local art

Market type stalls

Picnics

Campfire