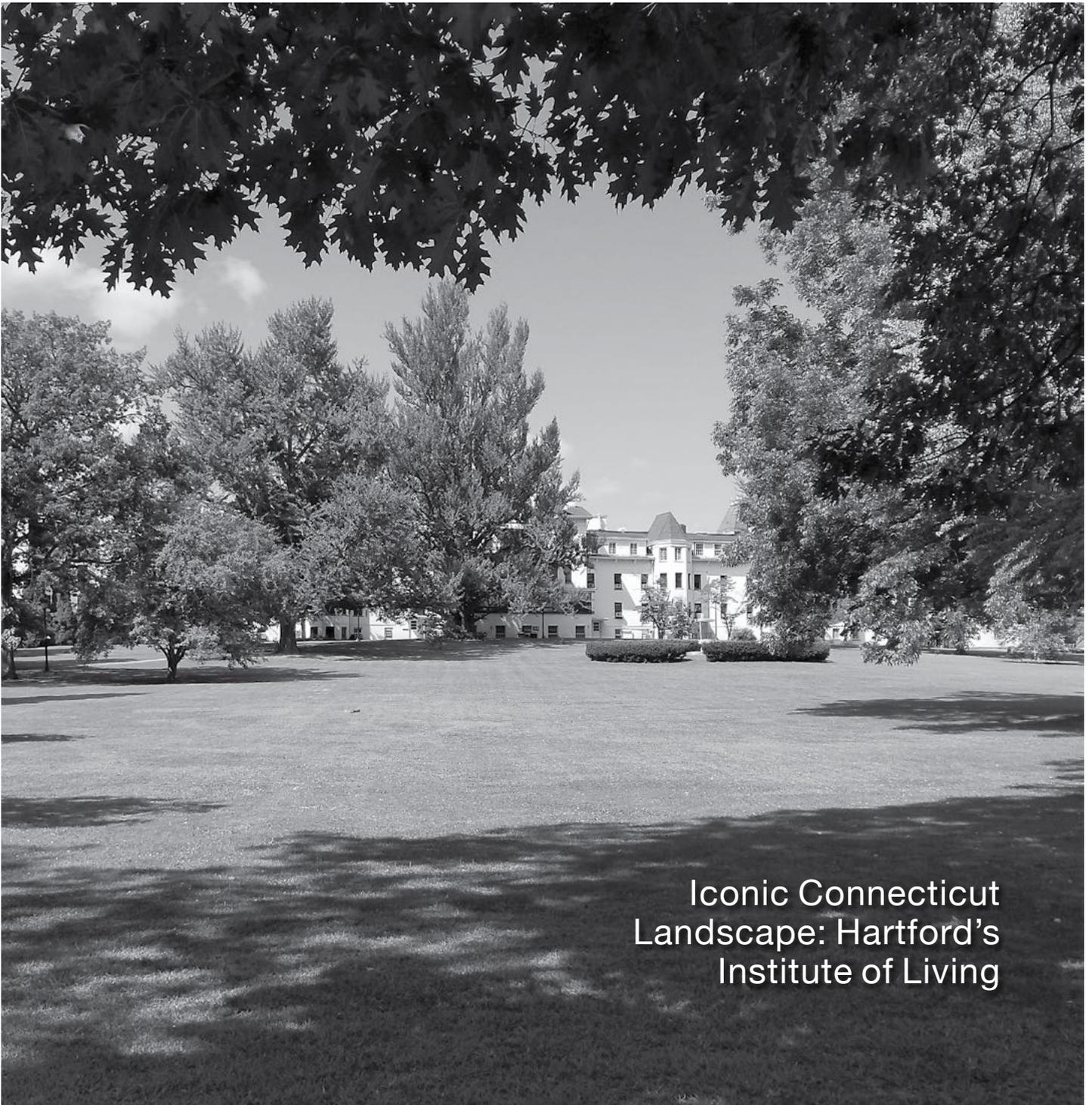


The Connecticut Landscape Architect

FALL 2019



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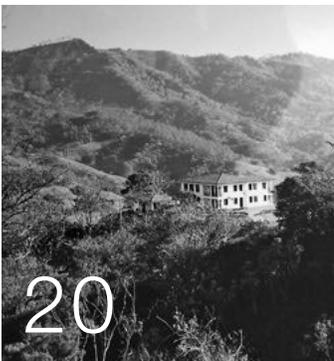


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The Connecticut Landscape Architect

FALL 2019

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From the Editor



Teaching the UConn Professional Practice course as an adjunct, I recently gave a presentation where I displayed three images — one of a child in a cape, telling the students that this is how many landscape architects see themselves, as superheroes who will save the world through

good design; one of a man sweltering in the heat as he pushes a mower, i.e., how the general public sees us; and a third of a group of professionals. The point was that the third image is who we really are: solid professionals who are providing a needed service to society. A second exercise that I worked through with the students was to have them come up with an “elevator speech” as to what a landscape architect does. Most responded with a few dozen words that left even this seasoned practitioner scratching his head. My point? While we are misunderstood by the public, we add to that misunder-

standing by inflating our skill set and providing indecipherable descriptions of “what we do.” Google describes what *they* do as “organizing the world’s information and making it universally accessible.” Short and sweet.

This issue of *The Connecticut Landscape Architect* attempts to highlight the solid professionalism and diversity of the work of Connecticut landscape architects. Working alongside and in collaboration with other design professions, we are contributing to society with our unique skills. Stuart Sachs has made a career out of service to the citizens of Bridgeport. Jane Didona in Danbury and Natasha Andjelic in New Haven are expanding the boundaries of landscape architecture on a variety of projects.

This is landscape architecture in the 21st century. Go forth and conquer serve.

W. Phillips Barlow, ASLA, AICP, LEED AP

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ON THE COVER

The Institute of Living, Hartford. The plan for this bucolic campus, featuring large expanses of open lawn and strategically placed specimen trees, was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux in the 1860s, then executed by Jacob Weidenmann. (Photo: Phil Barlow)

From the Trustee

As you read these words, the annual Conference on Landscape Architecture in San Diego has just come and gone. If history is a guide it was a successful gathering of landscape architects from throughout the United States (and beyond), and those that attended came away with a renewed enthusiasm and fresh perspective on the profession. As the trustee of the Connecticut chapter, it has been my privilege to represent you at these events.

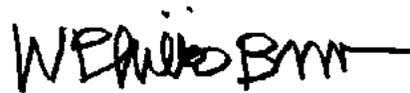
One of the ASLA initiatives that I find most exciting is the ongoing study of the public perception of the profession. Hopefully through this exercise the Society will be better able to address the gap in understanding by the public that has plagued the profession since the term “landscape architect” was first used by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux (on their resignation letter to the Board of Central Park).

At the state level, as articulated in this issue by chapter president-elect Oliver Gaffney, leadership is experiencing a shift from “seasoned practitioners” to a new guard of Millennials. You should feel very good about

this shift as the executive committee will have a renewed vitality and energy. Assisting Oliver with governance of the chapter will be several newcomers to the “ExComm.”

ASLA national is also experiencing a shift, not only with incoming president Wendy Miller, FASLA but also with the executive vice president position. After 18 years as executive vice president, Nancy Somerville has moved on. Roxanne Blackwell and Curt Millay are sharing interim duties as we look for a new leader.

As always, please let me know if you have any issues or concerns that you would like for me to bring to our national deliberations at ASLA. Each of the trustee meetings has an “open forum” where issues from membership can be presented, and every comment is addressed by the executive board before the end of the gathering.



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From the President-Elect



Changing of the Guard

In scanning parts of the CTASLA archives over the past few months, I've come to appreciate the breadth of information and history we've amassed. A few of my favorite items so far? All of the back issues of *The Connecticut Landscape Architect*.

A black and white photo of the executive committee taken at the 1965 Annual Meeting held in Hartford. A mint-condition copy of the conference coverage in *Landscape Architecture Magazine*. An 8mm film print of the documentary "A Legacy for Living."

These items represent a legacy of trust given to us by the founding fathers and mothers of our chapter to grow and advocate for the profession. Forty-one individuals have answered the call to serve as president since George Yarwood first held the post in 1954, and hundreds of other chapter members have volunteered as treasurers, secretaries, trustees, or members-at-large. We owe a debt of gratitude to each of these individuals who have gone before us and petitioned for licensure, expanded our right to practice, and defended our profession from deregulation.

Over the next several weeks, our chapter will undergo its annual changing of the guard. Newly-elected executive board members will begin their duties, and outgoing officers will be recognized for their service. But this year, a bigger generational transition will be occurring. Millennials and Generation X will occupy a majority of the officer slots, and Millennials will serve as both president and president-elect for the first time ever.

I'm humbled by the trust my fellow executive committee officers have placed in me to lead CTASLA for the next year. Our chapter history is still being written, and I hope to uphold and expand that legacy with the help of the executive committee, our chapter members, and other advocates for the profession.

— Oliver Gaffney, ASLA

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The Diversity of Landscape Architecture

BY JANE DIDONA, ASLA

I remember a professor at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry stating that the best part of landscape architecture is the diversity of projects, and the worst part of landscape architecture is the diversity of projects. After 40 years of practice, I agree. Landscape architecture is the art and science of site design and can encompass sites of several square miles to sites of several square feet. A landscape architect can masterplan a downtown or design a pocket park. The vast amount of knowledge, expertise, and experience required to practice landscape architecture can be daunting. Therefore, many times, a firm may specialize.

Specialties can be size or kind of project to a specific design philosophy. In our first 10 years as a firm, we realized at Didona Associates Landscape Architects that our specialization would be around a design philosophy: “Water is a Resource.” We strive to include design elements into every project that will protect and enhance our water resources. After 30 years, DALA has designed a diversity of projects with the consistent theme of incorporating features, structures, and plantings that treat water. This focus has opened up many opportunities including the design of beautiful streetscapes with permeable paver tree trenches, school plans that incorporate stormwater management BMPs not only for water treatment but as places for outdoor education and recreation, senior housing with a beautiful entry courtyard that includes permeable pavers and a rain garden bio filtration strip. We are now known for our designs that incorporate beauty as well as features for water quality and that has provided us with a diverse client and project list. These three projects show how water quality features can become vibrant elements in public, commercial, and residential landscapes.

— Jane Didona, ASLA is principal of Didona Associates Landscape Architects in Danbury, CT.



A rainwater fountain with water catchment and bio-filter is part of a focal point of a residential native plant garden and a soothing backdrop to the dining patio.



Permeable pavers and tree pits provide water quality treatment but are also a part of an active streetscape.



Kenosia Park's riparian buffer provides a beautiful backdrop to the park, educational opportunities for the school, and a water quality treatment structure for Kenosia Lake.



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Impact of Low-Emissivity Glass on Site Design

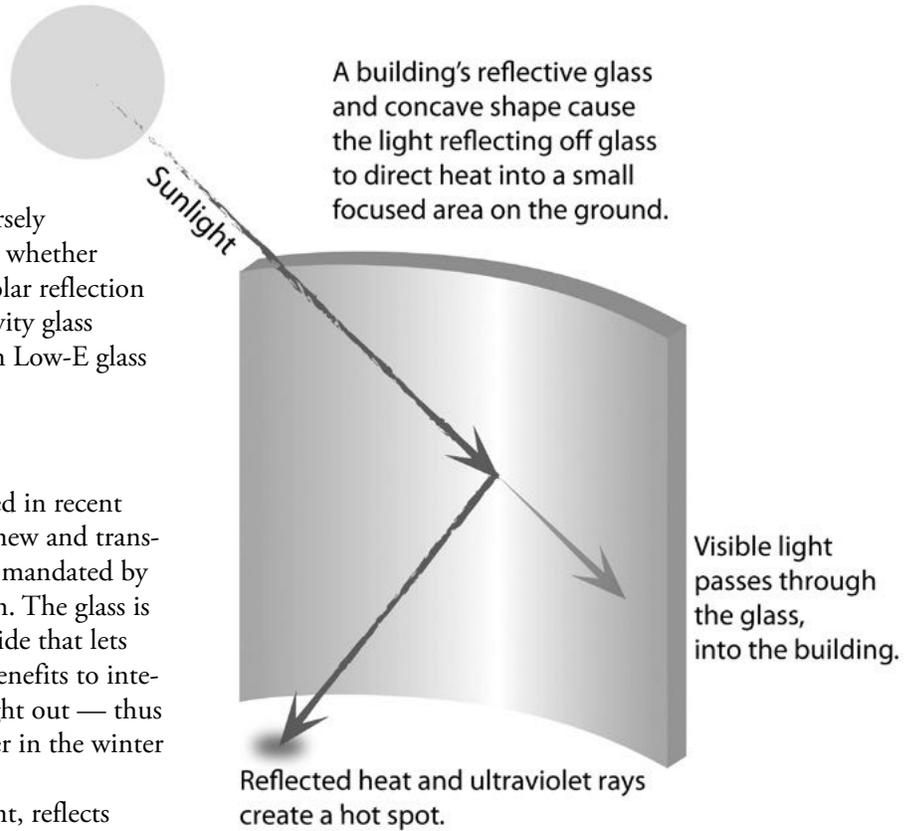
BY NATASHA ANDJELIC, ASLA

As landscape architects we bring our expertise to select appropriate planting and hardscape materials for the health and wellness of plants and people alike. Sometimes, however, even the most well-conceived planting plan can be adversely impacted by unforeseen environmental factors, whether natural or man-made. One such factor is the solar reflection hotspots created by energy efficient low-emissivity glass (Low-E). In some cases, the reflected light from Low-E glass creates extreme temperature micro-climates.

Low-Emissivity Glass Effects

The popularity of glass facades has exploded in recent years and spread globally as an expression of a new and transparent Green Architecture. Low-E glass is now mandated by building and energy codes for new construction. The glass is coated with a thin layer of metal or metallic oxide that lets visible light pass in, hence providing thermal benefits to interior spaces, but it also reflects the ultraviolet light out — thus efficiently keeping buildings and homes warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer.

Low-E glass, which typically has a green tint, reflects 30-50% of the sunlight's energy compared to clear glass, which reflects only 10%. It is this characteristic of Low-E



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Example of brise soleil at UMass-Amherst Life Sciences.

glass, that can at times reflect light beams measuring upwards of 200°F. At those temperatures, vinyl siding on houses can melt, cars parked in the beam's light can be damaged, and there have even been reports of people feeling a sensation of 'burn' from such reflections. At 140°F and above, skin burn can occur. A hotel in Las Vegas and an office building in London are two of the more high-profile examples of this issue.

When the glass façade surrounds a planted courtyard, the reflected solar heat can raise the ambient temperature of the space, creating a very specific microclimate. As designers, this can work to our benefit by extending the season of outdoor use in cold weather climates, but conversely it can also be a concern during high summer temperatures.

Identifying Potential Hotspots

There are several methods for evaluating whether or not installed glass in new construction (or building renovation) may have an issue with reflected solar hot spots in the landscape. A number of modeling software including AutoCAD, Rhino, and Energy Modeling Software/Energy Plus, can assist in evaluating the areas of potential solar hot spots as well as the potential temperature the concentrated reflections might be emitting. This modeling is particularly important to review in curved or sloping building facades, as the curve can



Sunscald damage to the trunk of a green ash tree.

amplify and/or concentrate the collective solar reflections.

If it is identified that the project might have an issue with solar hot spots, solutions for mitigating the problem during design should be implemented. These include architectural interventions such as brise soleil or any vertical or horizontal feature that can break the continuous plane of a sloping or concave façade. Solar orientation of the building should also be assessed to minimize the potential for solar hot spots. These solar hot spots are typically most intense when the sun angle is low (fall, winter and early spring).

On site, materials proposed that are in the direct path of a hot spot should be reviewed for temperature tolerance/melting points as specified by the manufacturer. This includes items such as bollards and light posts as well as irrigation heads and other plastic covers. Permanent or temporary shade structures such as trellises or umbrellas are also highly effective in providing user comfort.

Sun Scalding

Plants, even cactuses in the desert, have a range of temperature extremes they can tolerate. Here in the northeast,

the maximum ambient temperature tolerated by trees is approximately 120°F. If a tree is located within a reflected beam hot spot, it can develop sun scalding and trunk damage, thus leaving the tree susceptible to infections and potential long-term structural issues. Sun scalding happens in nature as well and is usually the result of the freezing of bark cells when cells are awakened by high solar glare from snow and are unable to go dormant before the dropping temperatures of nightfall. Europeans have a long history of painting young trunks white to mitigate the issue. Such an approach can be evaluated with consideration to aesthetic goals.

In addition, concentrated hot spots warm the earth and can impact root activity, spinning the trees into a continuous freeze/thaw cycle and sometimes resulting in cracked tree bark. The heat can alter the cycle of dormancy needed by most temperate plant species, with a deleterious effect on the plant's health.

Tree Selection

The best option for trees is to avoid planting them in solar hot spots. However, sometimes the need for shade and the benefits afforded by trees outweigh the risk of planting them in close proximity to hot spots. At such time, tree selection can help sustain the long-term health of the trees. Compound leaf arrangements and small leaves create less transpiration and exposed surface that might be susceptible to scalding than large simple leaf trees such as oaks and maples. In addition, specifying tree species able to tolerate extremes of temperature and water, such as those often listed on recommended urban tree lists, are suggested and include:

- *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* / Dawn Redwood
- *Taxodium distichum* / Bald Cypress
- *Styphnolobium japonicum* / Japanese Pagoda Tree
- *Ginkgo biloba* / Gingko
- *Ulmus parvifolia* / Chinese Elm

Other considerations for tree specification including specifying small caliper trees (2" typ.) rather than larger ones, as they have a better chance of adapting to extreme growing conditions. In the long run, the young trees will typically grow quicker, bigger, and healthier than their larger-caliper counterparts. Soil mixtures and depths should also be carefully considered, with the recommendation to install up to 3' of topsoil in urban courtyard areas where subsoil compaction and existing utilities compete with healthy root growth. Irrigation is recommended, as the added solar spots can cause the trees to transpire at an augmented rate. Irrigation should be concentrated on the



Warm season grasses at UMass West Experiment Station.

roots to promote the natural cycle of transpiration and be activated with soil moisture sensors. Spraying the leaves with water in an effort to cool the trees is not recommended as water droplets on leaves can create light prisms that may burn the leaf surfaces.

continued next page

Low-Emissivity Glass cont'd

Other Plant Material

All proposed planting materials should be assessed for heat tolerance. Planting deep-rooted grasses such as tall fescues or warm season grasses that go dormant when the solar hot spots might be most intense will perform better than a Kentucky blue grass lawn, for instance. From a maintenance standpoint, replacing a few ornamental grasses if required is also easier than replacing a patch of burned lawn.

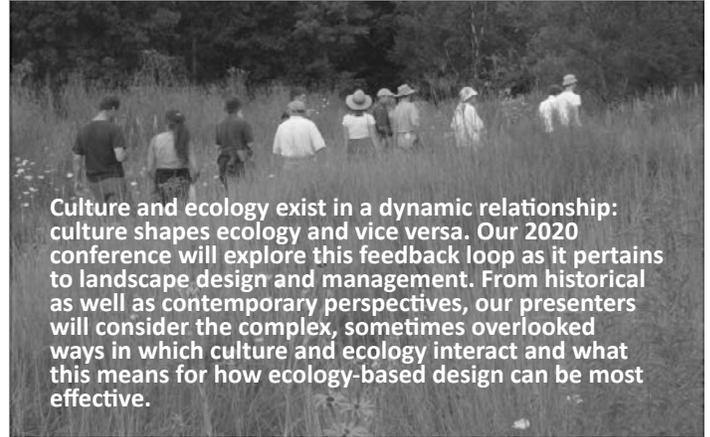
The increase in use of Low-E windows creates wonderful opportunities for large interior spaces that visually connect to the outside and nature. Understanding both the opportunities and constraints this material embodies has become part of the analysis landscape architects perform to design for successful sites. Architects in collaboration with landscape architects can study the siting of both new buildings and exterior improvements with an understanding of how large expanses of southern-oriented Low-E glass can potentially impact adjacent open spaces, and design for buildings and site to minimize the potential adverse solar radiation impact on the health and wellness of its occupants, as well as potential adverse impacts on neighboring flora and fauna.

— *Natasha Andjelic, ASLA is an Associate of Towers|Golde, LLC in New Haven. She can be reached at Nandjelic@towersgolde.com.*

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The New Urbanist City of Houten: The City of Bikes



BY SYBREN HOEKSTRA

The suburb of Utrecht, The Netherlands designed for getting around on bicycles. (Flickr: davsot)

Houten, a province in the Netherlands located south of Amsterdam, is one of the new low-emission cities which was designed to prioritize cyclists and pedestrians, reducing the need for vehicular travel. It was in the mid 1960s that the Netherlands realized the potential of the growing suburb and city planners worked long and hard in order to see their vision become a reality.

Prior to the new development, 3,000 people lived in Houten. Dutch city planners were realizing its potential for growth, and wanted to expand to 100,000 people. In 1968, the Dutch architect Rob Derk created a plan for a network of routes for cyclists and pedestrians. The city also hired four planners who were experts in architecture, city planning, and transportation engineering. The reason why this plan succeeded was due to this collaboration of experts. In 1974, a major step resulted from funding to create the first ring road. In 1994, a second train station was created, surrounded by another ring referred as South Houten.

One of the main priorities in the city is sustainable transportation, which is revealed in its planning and

continued next page



The roads marked in white represent the ring which surrounds the city for vehicular travel.

The City of Bikes cont'd

design. Cycling and walking are encouraged and enabled by more than 80 miles of cycle and pedestrian paths. In the city center, the paths are completely separated from vehicles. Motorized scooters are allowed access on these bike and pedestrian paths, but there are plenty of speed bumps that force the scooters to slow down. Bollards block the paths, completely restricting cars from entering. In areas where cars are allowed to enter, bikes share the road with vehicles.

Although this may seem like a city where the only people who live there love to bike, it is not true. According to a survey, many people who did not bike often prior to moving to Houten now bike daily. This shows that infrastructure can have a huge impact on the way people travel day to day.

One of the reasons Houten is able to be a leader in urban design in the Netherlands is due to street networks. Houten has two ring roads, a north and south ring. Each ring has a web of roads leading to the residence zones. This creates an



David (Flickr)



The suburb of Utrecht, The Netherlands designed for getting around on bicycles.

ideal environment for bikes and it forces people to bike or walk as it saves time. Another outstanding aspect of Houten's urban design is public transportation. In this city no one lives more than 1.2 miles from a train station. Public space design also contributes to civic involvement. In addition to manmade structures such as canals, buildings, and roads, an abundance of play areas and parks means that people do not have to travel far in order to find green space, allowing for a healthy mix of urban life and the outdoors. Overall, the urban design of Houten allows for a life of simplicity and efficiency.

Houten is a city which has taken a step forward in the new urbanism movement. There are many reasons why Houten is excelling, but its transportation stands out the most. Planners put people first, rather than the vehicle. Everything in Houten is accessible by bike and the city encourages people to travel less via motor vehicle. Designers of new communities should follow Houten's lead.

— *Sybre Hoekstra is a landscape architecture student at the University of Connecticut. He can be reached at sybre.hoekstra@uconn.edu.*

Northeastern Delft (Flickr)



Jarrett M (Flickr)



Houten's main train station is an elegant design that seamlessly connects cycling with the regional rail network. In this photo, there are 4 tracks on two viaducts with an island platform above the bike parking area which has space for 3,000 bikes. Stairways and elevators connect the bike parking area with the platform above. There are multiple entrances that connect directly to dedicated bike paths, so it's easy to ride up, park the bike, and board a train. Didn't bring your bike? No problem! This station is plugged into the OV Fiets bike share system which allows you to borrow a bike after you arrive on the train.



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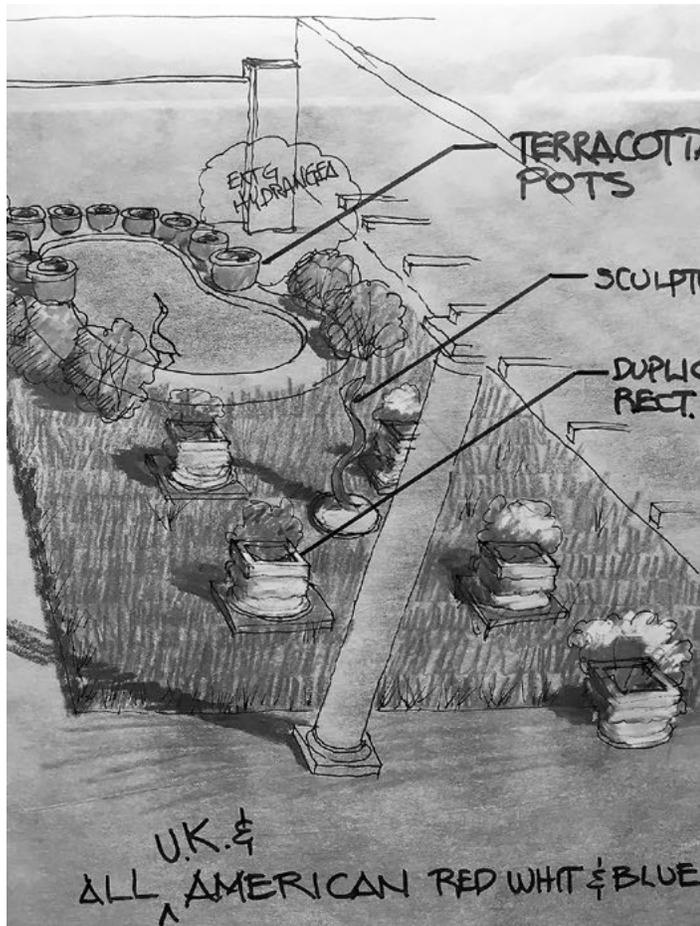
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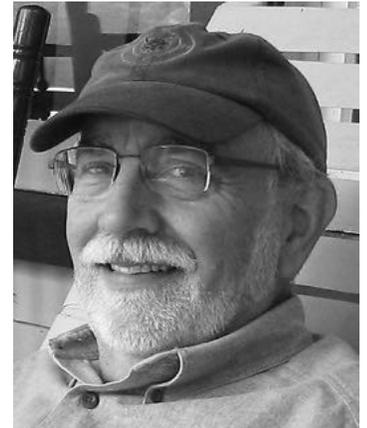
BY PHIL BARLOW, ASLA

Arriving at Stuart Sachs's home and office I was immediately filled with envy. In the driveway sat a recently purchased Mercedes Benz Sprinter 4x4 van. What's more, he soon regaled me with plans for an upcoming road trip to Alaska. But I digress... Stuart has worked hard for his success; his legacy in Bridgeport, as well as across the state, will be secure no matter how far he roams.

Born in Syracuse, New York to a salesman father and a guidance counselor mother, Stuart was one of six siblings (all of whom went on to be self-employed adults). After, as he puts it, surviving childhood he worked summers through high school for a landscaping company. He enrolled at SUNY School of Environmental Science and Forestry with a vague plan to major in forestry. After his freshman year (underwhelmed with the forestry program), at his guidance counselor-mother's encouragement, he enrolled in a six-week summer course in landscape design at Cornell.



Stuart was hooked on design and immediately transferred into the SUNY landscape architecture program. Four years later, with a BLA to his credit, he realized that he was now very eligible for the Vietnam War draft and would likely soon be drafted into the Army Infantry. Not one to leave things to chance, Stuart instead joined the construction division, training at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri and eventually becoming a platoon leader in Vietnam. According to Stuart, the outrageous scenes from the movie *Apocalypse Now* were not far removed his experiences. Nevertheless, in order to get home faster, he did two tours, arriving back in the states three and a half years after enlisting.



Soon he found himself living in Berkeley, California and in the employ of EDAW in San Francisco, where he worked for two years until the recession of 1975. True to the experience of untold numbers of entry-level landscape architects, he was laid off.

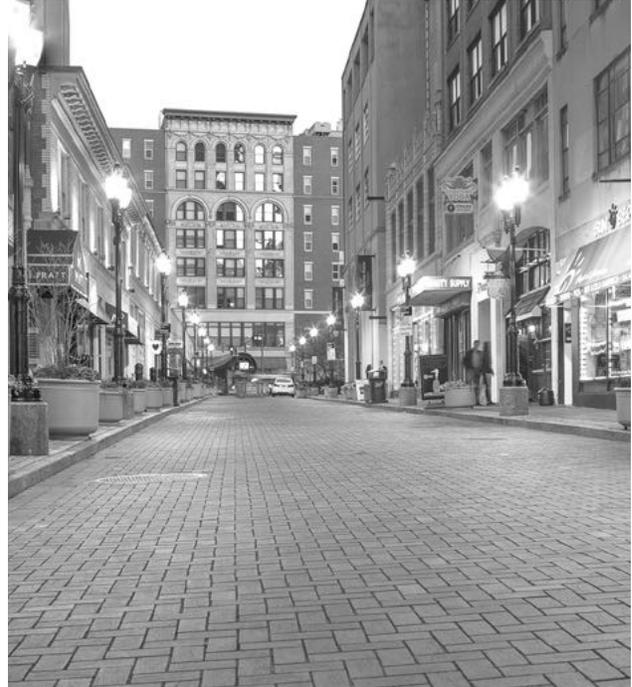
So what do you do if you are young, have an adventurous spirit and no job? Travel the world of course! Stuart and his girlfriend Linda set off to travel the ancient Silk Route, hitchhiking through most of Asia, from Japan down through Malaysia, over to India, Nepal, South Asia, and then Europe for nearly two years. That set the tone for their life together that was to follow. They were married in 1980.

But after traveling, they were back in the U.S. and it was time to resume their careers. Stuart found himself working first with geophysicists and later being a park planner in Reno, Nevada before heading off to the Graduate School of Design at Harvard. He was eventually awarded the position of a Teaching Fellow as an assistant to the landscape historian John Stilgoe; while there, he also worked as a research assistant for Carl Steinitz. After Harvard, Stuart headed off to academia as a professor and landed at the University of Illinois for a teaching gig (replacing the departing Michael Van Valkenburgh). It was a rewarding experience, but living with the academic bureaucracy proved to be too big a price to pay, and Stuart decided to return east to be near family. Actually,

continued on page 26



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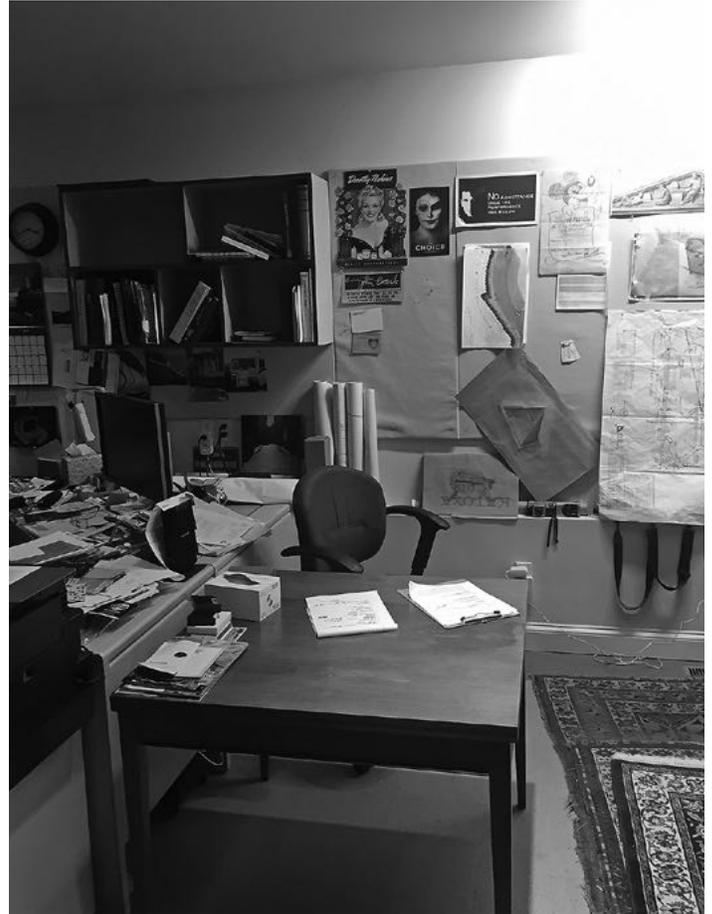
Stuart Sachs cont'd

he claims an old classmate called one day and asked if he'd like to work in Connecticut. He never looked back (thank you Channing and Dickson!), but economics has a way of impacting even the best offices. He got laid off, again.

What now? Well, with a master's degree and no job he opened his office, PRE/view Landscape Architects, in Bridgeport in 1989. Specializing in visual simulation in the early years of that technology, his practice prospered. He is on his way to 30 years and counting, serving the Bridgeport community. Reviewing Stuart's résumé and online articles about him, one is struck by his public service (in other words, things you don't get paid for). When I asked Stuart where this inclination to serve others came from, he quickly responded, "faith and family."

Stuart is a founding member of Groundwork Bridgeport, an environmental organization that provides environmental improvements and education, and he is now the recently resigned president of this exemplary organization that has planted over 2,000 trees and coordinated the efforts of over 7,500 volunteers for projects in the region. His other accomplishments are too numerous to describe in full but highlights include: Chairman of the Bridgeport Historic District Commission, Vice-chair of the Bridgeport Master Planning Steering Committee, and recently appointed as Chairman of the Environmental Task Force Committee — a product of the U.S. Department of Justice and the Connecticut Coalition on Environmental & Economic Justice. He also volunteers at SUNY and UConn.

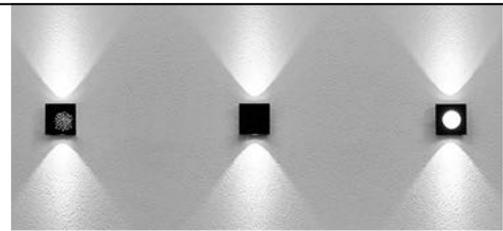
The busy landscape architect is currently working on a memorial to Goody Knapp, the last person to be hanged as a witch in Connecticut, as well as



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numerous residential properties in the area. On this late afternoon, he was off to a cocktail party with Bridgeport's mayor to bend his ear over some "Community issues that need to be resolved." My last question about accomplishments that he was most proud of led not to a review of an "ego wall" or a recent award, but to a discussion of his being proclaimed the MVP of a Bocce Championship in Westport. The tournament games, incidentally, were held on a court that he designed.

Stuart Sachs remains humble to the core.

— *Phil Barlow is principal of To Design and editor of The Connecticut Landscape Architect.*



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Editor's note: It has been said that landscape architects never retire, they just fade away... But Dean Johnson and Dick Bergmann prove otherwise. Here they present two very different takes on their new homelands.

Between Two Oceans: A Mountaintop Home With A View

BY DEAN A. JOHNSON, FASLA

After visiting Costa Rica in the 1990s and loving it, we returned 20 years later and decided we loved it so much, we would look for land to build on. The ultimate goal was to live there during the winter and eventually retire in the country. We have achieved our goal of constructing a home that we truly love — in spite of the challenges of language and local building methods — though living there permanently will be limited due to the need for quality healthcare in our advancing age.

After a search, we eventually found about 20 acres of land on a rise between two small mountain ranges in an area of Costa Rica called the Pacific Highlands — about 15 miles from the Pacific Ocean and 3,500 feet above the coast line. The village nearby of Atenas was known for having maintained its Spanish origins, with an authentic town green in its center. The property was situated on the far western edge of town and called Alto del Monte (Top of the Mountain). It was the highest part of the town and had commanding views of the valley to the east. Twenty miles to the east was the capitol, San José.

The land was actually three lots of six-plus acres each. We decided to build on the highest lot, which had commanding views to the east of a central mountain range 40 miles away and the Atlantic Ocean beyond that. To the west of our property was a saddle between two smaller mountain ranges. A ten-minute walk or couple-minute drive revealed a grand view of the Pacific Ocean and a bay to the ocean. The two mountain ranges essentially provide us a surrounding no-build zone since they have very steep side



slopes and only coffee plantations and cattle can utilize them.

Access to the property was along a narrow, very steep farmer's path. It is about a 150 foot drop from the main road to the first property. The cartway became the main road but some of the path was very steep (15-17%), with no chance for a switch-back. Costa Rica has no limits on its road slopes. It was decided to create two 24-inch-wide tracks for the drive to retain the feeling of the informal farmer's pathway. The ground on either side of the drive and in the median is covered with Mani, a ground cover with small yellow flowers, not unlike our Birdfoot Trefoil. The big exception is that Mani is green all year round and very tough. This simple treatment to the drive has worked very well as it has matured. The concrete strips with angled grooves to remove rain every 8 or 9 inches have weathered

into a dark surface.

To give the driver a feeling of safety, both real and imagined, Bamboo Palm were planted about eight feet apart on both sides of the drive. Some of the side slopes to the drive dropped off for 50-75 feet to jungle so safety was paramount in those cases. After 12 years the palms have filled in and become an impenetrable barrier. At the same time they remained a graceful addition to the drive. The palms are continuous on both sides of the drive until one reaches the automated gates. Then the house is visible and only a low hedge screens the parking in the forecourt.

There is a small garden as part of the main entrance to the house. That garden planting and the low, simple planting on either side of the pool are the only planting near the house. The remainder of the land around the house



is left unplanted — the reasoning being that the views in all directions were so interesting and intriguing that the viewing platform (house and setting) should be simple. The pool was built on the east end of the house to make a dramatic setting for the sunrise and to be shaded in the afternoon and early evening.

Originally the second lot was a flat space about 150 feet away and 50 feet downhill from the first lot, because it wasn't

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Between Two Oceans cont'd

known whether the lot would be developed as a house or not. An orchard seemed to be the way to go. All plants are inexpensive in Costa Rica and if time is not of the essence, an orchard is the answer. One of the best fruit trees visually is a mandarin orange tree. It has dark green leaves and a full form. When the tree is fruiting, it is spectacular and the fruit is always delicious.



The major tree used strategically around the house was a Foxtail Palm. Its appearance only gets better as it matures, with its full head and dark green foliage. The hedge which screens the foreground to the house is Benjaminia Ficus which is normally a tree but will be maintained at four feet. A lower hedge separates the forecourt from the garden at two feet high as one approaches the front entrance. In the garden itself, Dwarf Exora outlines the entire area and creates smaller patterns within the planting area. A small fountain provides the sound and sensation of cooling.

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With the house isolated from any views of development, the major panorama is to the east. During the day only farmland and pastures are visible. As night approaches, the valley slowly fills with thousands of small lights and yet it remains quiet because of the distance. That silence is always maintained, day or night. To the west a brilliant sunset is usually in store. At other times and for a short time only, cloud cover flows up from the Pacific Ocean and the engulfs the house and views. This makes for a brief but dramatic experience.

Designing a home for a tropical setting and using plant material which one had only used previously on interior planting was a challenge, but one that expanded our horizons by doing.

— Dean Johnson, FASLA is an Emeritus member of ASLA.



Sometimes landscape architects “do” architecture, too. Dean used Mexican tile on his kitchen island. “In Costa Rica an engineer can seal anybody’s design as long as the engineer draws it up. That’s how I was able to do both exterior and interior design.”



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(Still) Learning from McHarg

BY RICHARD BERGMANN, FAIA, ASLA

In today's mail I received a package from a friend regarding Ian McHarg and his works — my favorite landscape architect and planner.

When I first heard of McHarg in 1970 or there about, I became fascinated with what he had to say and immediately bought his book, *Design with Nature*, and read it several times, as it made sense to me. At the time, however, I was not into landscape work as I am today.

Once I arrived in Florida and saw what has happened here since 1900, a realization occurred to me that this state violated everything (and then some) of what McHarg stood for. I started reading again, first about the history of the state, and the ruin of its ecosystem. Wow, what a disgusting and discouraging read.

First, the land grab over the past 100 years in this state was hard to believe, with so many folks trying to get rich — and they did — at the expense of the wildlife and the indigenous people. The worst of it was mandated by the Corp of Engineers, in alliance with crooked politicians. These last hundred years have been scary for Florida. Fortunately, nature knows how to take care of itself if left alone, but nobody will let it alone.

I am finding it somewhat alarming that 1,000 people a week move to the Sunshine State, which means that 1,000 houses will be bought each week. The developers are having a field day.

I strongly feel that I must do something about what is going on. There are some groups that care, and some people have come to realize that all this pollu-

tion and disturbance is costing money in failing infrastructure, etc. So there are some ears out there. Now is the time to bone up on McHarg and start making noises about our environment.

continued next page

I am finding it somewhat alarming that 1,000 people a week move to the Sunshine State, which means that 1,000 houses will be bought each week. The developers are having a field day.

Florida Keys Public Library (Flickr)



My favorite McHarg quotes are:

“Man is a blind, witless, low brow, anthropocentric clod who inflicts lesions upon the earth. It is not really necessary to destroy nature in order to gain God’s favor or even his individual attention.”

“We are the bullies of the earth: strong, foul, coarse, greedy, careless, indifferent to others, laying waste as we proceed, leaving wounds, welts, lesions, suppurations on the earth’s body, increasingly engulfed by our own ordure and, finally abysmally ignorant of the way the world works, crowning our superiority over all life.”

God bless McHarg — he says it better than anyone I have heard. How I wish I studied under him.

— Richard Bergmann, FAIA, ASLA is principal of Richard Bergmann Architects, of Venice, FL.



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Highlighting A Few New Plants

BY JACOB HODSON, ASLA

As the leafless grey cold of last winter dug its claws into my psyche, I yearned for the sight of something green. Before winter completely buried me under a torrent of darkness, I reached out to a dear friend for the latest Bailey Nursery catalog. Over a cup of tea, Brand & Business Development Manager Natalia Hamill and I discussed the plants that were rolled out this past spring. As we sat down at the kitchen table, Natalia said that I'm the first landscape architect to ask her about new plants. My perspective may be different than most given that I started my career as a horticulturist and researcher, but I was surprised to hear that no one else in my profession is craving to hear about the avant-garde. Natalia informed me that in her experience, landscape architects lean towards the "tried and true" while retail nurseries are begging for new plant stock. Specifying common plant varieties eliminates one variable in a demanding design process, but it can lead to monotony. How many Autumn Blaze Maples does the world really need? But I also understand that demanding deadlines can make it hard to take the time out of the day for a nursery tour every year to learn about new plants. So, I decided to bring a glimpse of the nursery to landscape architects by highlighting a few plants that have gained the attention of producers.

The characteristics of new plants that appeals most to designers is "compact." Whether designing for a fast-food restaurant or an intimate private garden, compact varieties that require less pruning maintenance are appealing to both the client and the designer. One plant that caught my eye in this year's catalog is a compact *Heptacodium miconoides*.



Heptacodium Tianshan

The Tianshan™ Seven-Son Flower is half the size of the straight species. A height of 8-12' and a spread of 5-7' makes it a great choice for a small flowering tree in the landscape. Dubbed the "Crapemyrtle of the North" by Bailey's Connecticut sales representative, this late-summer bloomer reveals terminal clusters of fragrant creamy-white flowers. The flowers give way to beautiful fruit with showy rose-purple sepals that last for a few weeks. The Tianshan™ has a balanced branching habit with shiny, dark green foliage that changes to yellow in late fall. The tan, exfoliating bark and branching nature makes this plant attractive throughout the winter. This plant commands attention in the landscape and deserves consideration by designers.

Before I could get my hands completely wrapped around my cup of tea, Natalia had the catalog open and was pointing out the plant she was most excited about. A columnar *Ligustrum vulgare* "Swift" with the trademark name Straight Talk™, this Privet lives up to its name. At only 2' wide and tightly upright it is a legitimate substitute for "Sky Pencil" holly in cold climates. Reaching 12' in height and adaptable to a wide range of soils it is ideal for screening hedges or a vertical accent in the landscape. Tolerant of drought and urban conditions in combination with its ability thrive in full sun to part shade, Straight Talk™ Privet is a great new option for challenging commercial landscapes.



Straight Talk™ Privet

Another new plant that has potential in tight urban landscapes is the Parkland Pillard™ Birch. At 6-7' in width, its narrow, upright, and dense habit can fit in the smallest of right-of-ways. This Birch will quickly reach 40' in height making it a suitable choice for private gardens (with impatient owners), screens, or boulevards. Parkland Pillar™ is heat, drought, and alkaline soil tolerant; this tree is a great addition for the urban landscape. The tree's striking white bark is contrasted by dense, dark green foliage that turns golden in late fall. Because raising a tree is a lesson in patience, before you specify new tree varieties contact your local wholesale nursery to ensure they can get the caliber you want. New varieties often haven't had enough time in the field to reach a 2.5" or 3" caliber. When a designer specifies a caliber that is unattainable the nursery will substitute it for completely different variety in the caliber that is called for. This not only leads to frustration for the designer and the nurserymen, it also perpetuates the overuse of common varieties.



Betula First Editions Parkland Pillar™ Birch

There are too many new plants to cover in one article. The breadth of plants that came out this spring was vast, and breeders are constantly trying to increase bloom rate, create better habit, and improve disease-resistance. The always-changing varieties add to the confusion at your local nursery. Before you start that next planting plan, contact a local wholesale nursery and ask for information on new stock. The sales representatives at wholesale nurseries would be happy to give you a tour. If that doesn't fit into your busy schedule, arrange for a rep to come to you. Without a doubt, staying current on new plants adds to the workload but plant knowledge should

be an area of pride for those in the profession. Plants are the medium that fill the palate of the landscape architect. Be confident you are selecting the perfect species for the location.

— *Jacob Hodson is a 2013 graduate of the University of Connecticut. He now lives in Kansas City and manages a small design-build landscape firm.*

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Retreat for the Insane — The Institute of Living

EXCERPTED FROM *JACOB WEIDENMANN, PIONEER LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT*, BY RUDY J. FAVRETTI, FASLA

In 1843, Dr. John Simpkins Butler was appointed superintendent of the Hartford Retreat for the insane. The Retreat had been founded in 1822, twenty-one years before Butler arrived. There was a very large complex of buildings, all connected, on the Washington Street side of the grounds. Behind it to the east was a large 37-acre expanse of land, much of it “rough, and a broad swale of low land extended through the center of the lot, most of the year wet and impassable; it was of little use, except for grass and distant view.” Many of the trees were crowded and interfering with one another and most of the planting had originally been made “without a systematic plan.”

Dr. Butler strongly believed that natural beauty was “an important element in the successful treatment of insanity,” and he wanted a “therapeutic Arcadia” where he could ramble “with patients about embellished grounds, and wax poetic about flowers — the ‘best of medicine’ — and hold parties on the green.” He would invite the public to see “these pleasant changes so that they would be disabused that an asylum was repulsive.”

With this premise in mind, Dr. Butler hired Hartford native Frederick Law Olmsted and his partner Calvert Vaux to produce a plan to improve this wasteland behind the main Central Building. They found time to go to Hartford in 1860 to commence work on the plan, which they completed for presentation in the spring of 1861. The plan was well received by the Retreat Board, and arrangements were made to proceed with the project.

The plan was in the English natural landscape style, with a strong buffer of natural plantings around the entire perimeter of the property. The southern boundary, also thickly planted,



Phil Barlow

separated the Retreat grounds from neighbors on the south. Within this heavy buffer planting, consisting of a mixture of evergreens and deciduous and flowering trees and shrubs, was a circular drive, part of it for the public with the remainder reserved for patients.

Large expanses of the open lawn were left in the center of the site, but strategically placed specimen trees enhanced the area. Some of these original trees remain to this day, such as the Sweet Gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), a Connecticut State Champion; a Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*), a New England Champion; and another Connecticut State Champion, the Honey Locust (*Glonditsia triacanthos*). Another huge specimen, the Pecan (*Carya illinoensis*), is believed to have existed even before the Olmsted and Vaux plan. Edward D. Richardson, a prominent member of the Notable Tree Committee of the Connecticut Botanical Society, stated that “within this relatively small space is perhaps the greatest concentration of historic trees in Connecticut.”

Near the central building, a large, circular flower garden with a conservatory in the center was planned, clearly a place where patients could enjoy a variety of flowers, both tropical and temperate. Taking off from this large garden was a tear-shaped circular walk that focused upon a building designed by Calvert Vaux called the Museum.

The plan that Olmsted and Vaux drew was strong in concept, but many of the details for implementations were

lacking. This was probably because shortly after its presentation, Olmsted took a leave of absence from his landscape work on Central Park in New York to become executive secretary of the United States Sanitary Commission during the Civil War. Fortunately for him and Dr. Butler, Jacob Weidenmann had just been hired to come to Hartford as superintendent for the City Park, and he was asked to execute the Olmsted and Vaux plan.

Retreat Park was officially opened in 1863, and in his annual report for the previous year, Dr. Butler said, “Your Committee...thinks it due to Mr. Weidenmann, to express

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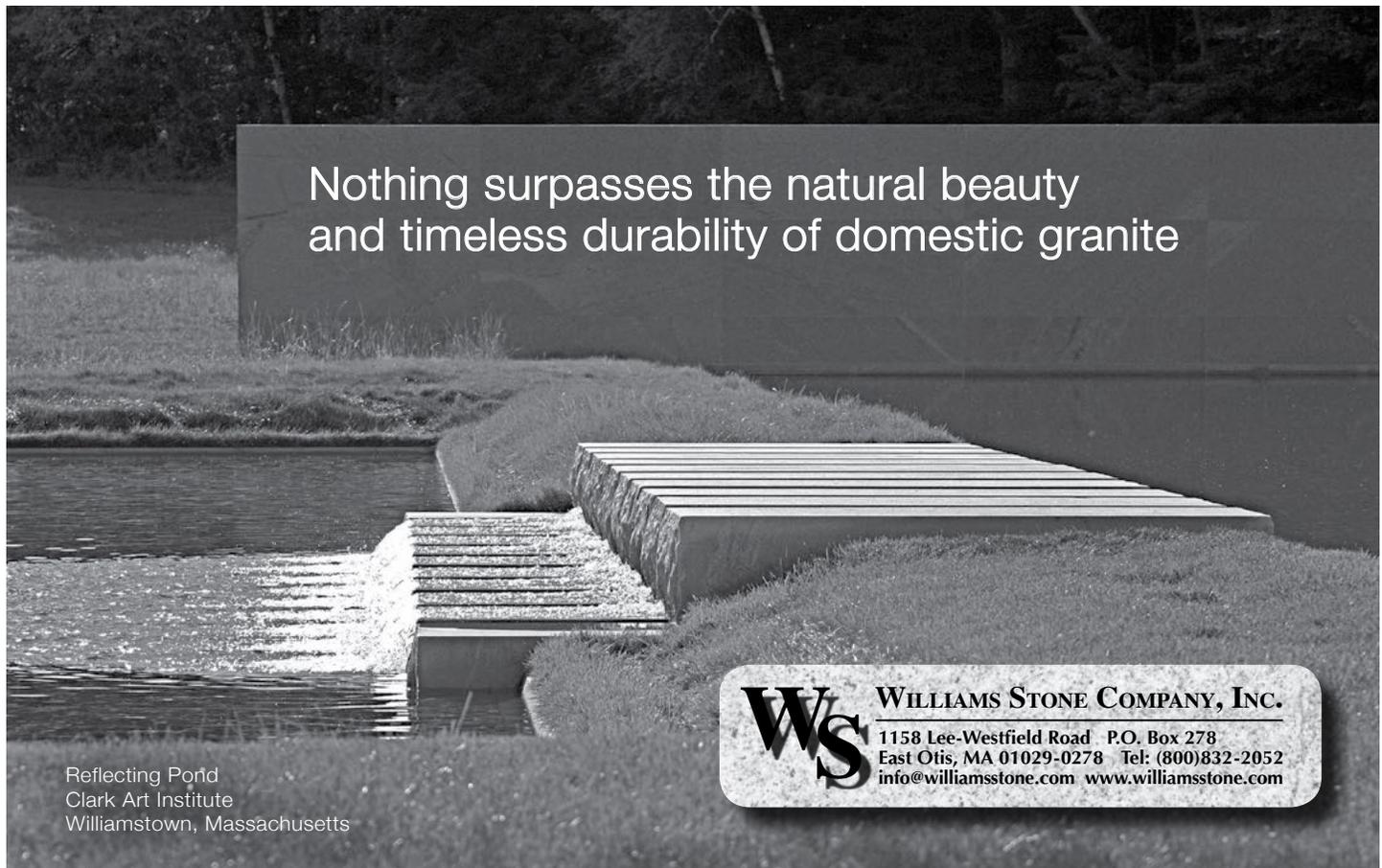
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Institute of Living cont'd

their entire satisfaction with good taste and sound judgement he has shown in carrying out the plans, and with efficiency and shrewdness of his general management. The results are greatly to his credit."

It attests to Weidenmann's energy, patience, and expertise that he was able to perform these tasks while also getting started in implementing the plans for Hartford's Bushnell Park.

Much of Retreat Park exists today just as Olmsted and Vaux designed it. The inevitable parking lots have infringed along its edges, but Retreat Park still retains a similar main entrance on Retreat Avenue, the flowing circular walk around the perimeter, with cross walks between. Vaux's Museum building also stands. As intended by Dr. John S. Butler in 1863, visitors are still welcome to use the park, as are the patients at the Institute.



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