Discovering a Sense of Community Through Gardening: The Unexpected Benefit

The power of landscape design is such that it can create a sense of place. Sense of community, however, adds a significant dimension to the design process. Community is the intangible quality often overlooked as we study, create, and, at times, impose our landscape designs. This article invites you to consider the dynamic between community and design as it occurred in three urban gardening efforts in Boston: on Hancock Street and Temple Street in Beacon Hill, and at the Old North Church. We'll take a walking tour of the sites, and then go back a decade or two and visit them before their transformation. Finally, we'll explore the sense of community in each site and how community became expressed through landscape design, or how a design opportunity nurtured a sense of community.

On a walking tour of historic Boston neighborhoods, you stroll through two parallel streets on the North Slope of Beacon Hill. Both streets intersect with busy Cambridge Street. On Hancock Street you see trees with tree-bed plantings protected by wrought-iron fences and bollards. Doorway gardens and window boxes make individual design statements and all are well maintained. The number of mailbox on each house signal that some are single family homes while others are apartments or condominiums.

Two blocks over, on Temple Street, you notice that Suffolk Law School dominates the middle of this one-block-long, tree-shaded street. In spite of this building, the overall feeling is quite residential, even though it is diverse. It has rooming houses, single family homes, condominiums, and apartments. Temple Street has brick sidewalks and a street with speed bumps, although there's little vehicular traffic and people are walking in the middle of the street. A vest-pocket park, opposite the Law School entrance, is planted with shrubs and flowers surrounded by a low protective fence. One side of the street has wooden barrel planters, each filled with annuals; the other side has trees with Hostas planted around the tree beds. Temple Street's variety comes more from its window boxes, not the barrel plantings, and you note that the streetscape reads as a cohesive statement.

Continuing your walking tour, you stroll through the North End to the Old North Church to view another garden design. There's a brick house dated 1712 on church property. It's not a grand house; a sign says it was rented by tradesmen and their families in the eighteenth century. Behind the house you see a charming hodge-podge of flowering plants from the same period. The flower colors are a bit garish, and some blossoms are much smaller than their twentieth-century progeny. You think, "How nice that the Church maintains this garden relic from its past."

If you were to look back 20 or even 10 years, you would have seen dense yews, a few annuals and twentieth-century roses behind this house, and back on Hancock and Temple Streets, you would have encountered bare, patched road surfaces, few trees, an occasional tree fence or bollard, a well-maintained house next to boarded-up buildings, and buildings where signs proclaimed, "Rooming House". The apartment houses were stark and unadorned.

In comparing the "before" and "after" time frames, you might have concluded that these three neighborhoods organized a design process and implemented the design, the result being the

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FROM THE EDITOR

Even as the bloom fades from our gardens and the foliage gives its last vibrant hurrah, it is time also for beginnings: the first issue of Volume 15 of Perspectives signals a new academic year for students, graduates, and faculty in the landscape design and landscape history programs. On behalf of the Radcliffe Chapter of BSLA, welcome! This issue marks the transition of Perspectives to a quarterly format, a change made to allow for more in-depth feature articles. Whether you’re a returning student or new to Radcliffe Seminars, we welcome your ideas and contributions to Perspectives. Of course, our Calendar Connection will be mailed monthly as in the past, to keep members up-to-date on the latest Radcliffe Chapter and regional events.

Gardens, it has been said, are the first sign of commitment to a community. As New York Times garden columnist Anne Raver noted, “When people plant, they are in effect saying, ‘Let’s stay here.’ By their connection to the land, they are connected to each other.”

In this issue of Perspectives, we consider the sorts of connections to the landscape — temporal, physical, philosophical, that inform and inspire our ideas of “community.” Marcia Casey examines the process of community-building through the design process in three neighborhoods in Boston. Also in this issue: Rosalie Johnson writes about the Community Outreach Group (COG) — a vital organization that offers an opportunity to gain “real world” experience by pairing interested students with community projects, some of which may be appropriate for Independent Thesis Projects and course credit.

If you wish to be more involved in the community, want day-to-day learning experiences, or are restless waiting to apply your design skills, this program is for you! In addition, Ann Townsend reports on the Fall Tea, and Natalie Delvaille has dug up a source for heirloom bulbs (sorry for that pun). Finally, please take note of membership renewal, another fall occurrence.

Through membership in BSLA, we strengthen our connection to the land and to each other.

— Cynthia Ruffner

NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS

Perspectives is a quarterly publication of the Radcliffe Chapter of the Boston Society of Landscape Architects. We do like to hear from you! Contributions to Perspectives are welcome at any time and should be submitted to the Editor.

Suggested subject areas for articles: Design, Events/News, Construction, History/Preservation, Plant Materials/Horticulture... you’re invited to submit proposals for articles in other areas, as well. Book Reviews are solicited by the editor; the reviewer should include complete citations, including ISBN, price, and publisher.

To facilitate editing, articles should be double-spaced in 12 pt. Helvetica if possible, and accompanied by a disk with the file in MSWord or ASCII. Author’s name, article title, and program format should be written on the disk label. Photo-graphs, original illustrations or photocopies of technical drawings should be submitted with the article, with captions and attribution included. Artwork cannot be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Articles, ideas, or questions may be directed to:

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FINALLY.....INC!!!!

E xciting times for the BSLA Community Outreach Group....after two years of talking and working, we are incorporated. What does that mean for COG? On the most basic level we have entered the world of downtown Boston lawyers and downtown Boston accountants. We are the possessors of many pages of legal documents and are now on the mailing lists of the Internal Revenue Service and the Department of Employment Security. We are an independent legal entity with an Employer Identification Number and a fundraising certificate from the Secretary of State. We are "real".

By this time last year COG had finished a successful and rewarding first year. Students and graduates were matched with clients to provide design services to community groups. Projects were undertaken in class and as independent theses. Then, with all the excitement of these successes came reality. In order for COG to be successful it was going to take more time and more organization than first envisioned. And COG would need an income.

Grants seem to be COG's best chance of securing funds to provide stipends to both designers and administrators. In order to apply for these grants, COG has to be a non-profit organization.

Over the past winter, this has been our primary goal, and incorporation is the first big step. The next few months will see our pro bono attorney filing the many forms needed to obtain our 501(c)(3) status. On a less governmental level, this fall will see COG become a small "company": refining our administrative procedures, setting up working budgets and accounting procedures, documenting past projects, assembling information packets for designers and clients — in short, all the pieces that will make COG a strong and efficient organization.

What does all this mean to the BSLA and to the larger Radcliffe community? We will continue to offer rewarding projects that give students real experience, professional contacts, material for resumes and portfolios, and working relationships with the community. We will serve as an umbrella non-profit organization to students applying for grants. In the near future, COG hopes to organize projects into a course undertaken for certificate credit. We can help develop funding for special projects such as exhibits, symposiums, competitions, and scholarships.

Indeed these are exciting times for COG... and the best is yet to come. If you would like to help, come join us. We need each other.

For more information, call Lucia Droby at (617) 566-0018 or Rosalie Johnson at (978) 369-7056.

Our Fall Tea

T he Radcliffe Chapter of the BSLA held its annual tea September 30, which happened to be a perfect fall afternoon, in the Cronkhite Center Living Room. The tea is the first event in a series of programs, which this year will focus on the breadth of landscape design practice and the varying roles of landscape designers and historians in the profession.

Lucinda Brockway, the guest speaker, is principal and owner of Past Designs, a firm in Kennebunk, Maine. In the past 15 years, while juggling the demands of family life, she has built a full-time landscape preservation and design firm that specializes in the research, design, preservation, and management of historic designed and vernacular landscapes. Her presentation was lively and entertaining, illustrated with a variety of projects that demonstrate the interweaving of landscape history and landscape design that characterizes her work: the Jardin du Roi at Fort Ticonderoga, New York, the Cushing House in Newburyport, Massachusetts, and private residences in Newport Rhode Island, and Chestnut Hill and Marion, Massachusetts.

Ms. Brockway addressed the issues she encountered in specific properties — selecting what to preserve or restore, correcting erroneous history, negotiating funding with non-profit organizations, finding historically appropriate precedents for new design work, and dealing with extensive hurricane damage. She also spoke to the large, complex issue of understanding and defining the American landscape.

She called to our attention the work of William Hoskins in The Making of the English Landscape, who compares landscape to "a symphony, which it is possible to enjoy as an architectural mass of sound... without being able to analyse it in detail or to see the logical development of its structure. The enjoyment may be real, but it is limited in scope... But if instead... we are able to isolate the themes as they enter, to see how, one by one, they are intricately woven together, and by what magic new harmonies are produced; [to] perceive the manifold subtle variations on a single theme, however disguised it may be, then the total effect is immeasurably enhanced. So it is with landscapes of historic depth and physical variety.

Only when we know all the themes and harmonies can we begin to appreciate its full beauty and discover in it new subtleties every time we visit it. It is a challenge to all of us, designers and historians alike, to work for this understanding of landscape, to perceive and reveal "the logic that lies behind the beautiful whole."

—Ann Townsend

FALL 1997
BSLA BOARD NOTES

Our BSLA Board has been actively launching Fall programs; preparing a new format for our newsletter, Perspectives, planning for our annual dinner, and generally getting used to working with new members! At a board meeting in June at John Furlong’s house, we approved the annual budget, formed an ad hoc committee to review the bylaws of COG (Community Outreach Group) and gave heartfelt thanks and a fond farewell to the members of the Board who served for many years and are leaving to make room for new blood! (Your new Board members are listed on page 2.)

The new Board met in September and Rosalie and Lucia reported that COG is now incorporated and can expect approval of its nonprofit status (i.e. 501(C)(3)) within the next months. We congratulate both Rosalie and Lucia on their success in planning a structure for internships and projects undertaken for credit.

Look for a new and expanded format for Perspectives, which this year will be a quarterly publication. To keep you up-to-date, we will be publishing a monthly calendar with all the events here at Radcliffe as well as around the state.

At the same meeting, Marie Elena discussed her plans for Networking Meetings and she has some very interesting ideas and speakers. The new co-chairs are going to try different meeting times to see when the most people can attend. To do this Marie Elena plans to use an informal survey to find out what time is best for you; so look for the survey and indicate your preference. The first Networking meeting will already have taken place by the time you receive this newsletter. Both Laura Eisener (of Hort Resources and APLD as well as Radcliffe) and Nancy Boyle (from the South Shore Businesswoman’s Network) were to speak at the October 9 meeting, so see what you missed if you weren’t there! The next Networking meeting is November 8 at 12:30.

Alice Evans and Ann Townsend presented their program plans for the next few Brown Bag Lunch meetings, the first one of which will be on Thursday, October 16 from 12:30-1:30 pm. Ann and Alice have done a terrific job lining up some very interesting speakers. On October 16, Roy Blomquist from the Boston Housing Authority will discuss developing landscape management programs; on November 13, COG will be presenting; and on December 11, Anne Barker, who has her own private practice, will be the speaker. So mark these dates down in your calendar!

Denise King and Diane Nichols have prepared a tentative schedule of exhibits for the upcoming year. From September 29 through October 27, check out the 1997 Independent Project exhibit; then from October 27 through November 24 you can view an exhibit of Radcliffe Seminars Alumni projects; and from November 24 through January 2 you can see what the new students are up to in their Fall ’97 Design I classes.

Your new Board is excited and enthusiastic about the events of the upcoming year, and we look forward to your comments and suggestions. Please become active in your BSLA Chapter — you’ll be glad you did!

—Karen Wakefield

GARDEN TOOL SHARPENING WORKSHOP
Sponsored by Hort Resources

Does the last branch you used your loppers on look like it was gnawed by a rabid animal? When you get your shovel out of winter storage does it look a bit worse for wear? If you answered “yes” to these questions you need to learn how you can easily sharpen your most frequently used garden tools yourself. You’d be amazed at the difference a sharp tool can make.

Beth Ireland, expert tool handler and professional woodworker/wood turner and teacher with 18 years of experience will demonstrate different methods of sharpening your tools and then guide you as you try it yourself. This is very much a “hands on” workshop.

The many possible ways to sharpen tools include sandpaper, stones, files, diamond stones, or grinding wheels. You’ll see them all demonstrated and then try them out on your own equipment with Beth’s guidance. Bring one or two favorite tools in need of sharpening and your whetstone if you have one. Shovels, hoes, knives, pruners, loppers, axes, scythes, machetes, and reel-type lawn mower blades are all fair game (no serrated saws or chain saw blades).

When: 7:00 pm, Thursday, October 23, 1997.

Where: Woodworkers’ Store, 2154 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, Massachusetts, between Porter Square and Route 16. Easy walking distance from Porter Square Red Line, parking usually ample. Some gardening tools and sharpening equipment are available at the store.

How much: Hort Resource members $6.00, non-members $10.00 This price is a bargain—you’d pay much more than this if you just sent out one tool to be sharpened—and after this workshop you’ll know how to sharpen all your tools forever after.

PERSPECTIVES IN LANDSCAPE DESIGN
I hope all of you out there have had a wonderful summer with time to rest, work, and create. Many of us have had time to combine travel with study and work. Others of us have worked hard both on our design practices and BSLA matters. Alice Evans and Ann Townsend have spent hours setting up a fabulous program schedule for BSLA for the upcoming year. Look through the Calendar Connection for announcements and scheduled events.

So are you sick of hearing about the same ole gardens as people travel about? How many times can we hear about Sissinghurst, Bomarzo, and Giverny (ho-hum) and not ask ourselves, “So what else is out there that I can learn from and put on my itinerary?” BSLA members were on many different tour routes this summer and have reported back to me that there are some gardens that we don’t discuss in depth in our classes that are “must-sees”.

I myself spent three weeks in France and Italy visiting as many gardens as I could pack into each day. The Loire Valley absolutely knocked me out. Chenonceau, Chambord, Cheverny, Bizy, and on and on. And the Bagatelle. No one seems to rave on about Napoleon’s garden that in classes. But if you have to continue to be one of my all-time favorites. A new twist on the classic Garden tour...they now offer golf cart rentals to the visitors so that you can cover every inch of the landscape in a reasonable amount of time. It’s a great way to study the garden (after you have walked most of it at least one time). Le Notre, a master of illusion, created the illusion of flatness in his garden, but the real grade changes become all too clear as you speed along a pathway that abruptly ends in a 15-inch drop that had been undetectable to the naked eye. I’m sure some of you are groaning at the thought of “driving” around this landscape, but give it a chance, it’s a very efficient way to explore. You even get to ford the canal via golf cart. Plus you have time to retrace your steps to check out the landscape from different angles. And have you ever seen Vaux by candlelight? Aahhh - every Saturday night they light the entire chateau with candles and line the paths with thousands of candles for walks and tours. Don’t miss it.

Italy was wonderful with its sunflower-covered hills and vineyards. Villa del Balbionello on Lake Como is a must-see for anyone headed to Italy this year. And I’ve been showing everyone I know my incredible slides of Balbionello. Villa Lante remains the jewel of the Italian Gardens.

I had the chance to spend time with the owner of Villa Gamberaia. He is building two rental apartments on the property that will be available by the month to the serious garden writer or landscape designer beginning next summer. If this is of any interest, give me a call. I can give you a little more information and put you in touch with him. Villa Gamberaia should be on everyone’s travel list, as should Palazzo Farnese in Caprarola. Remember that you have to write to the Italian Government at the Palazzo well ahead of your trip to gain admission to this incredible garden that just goes on and on. It’s fabulous, but the people in charge are very officious and less than accommodating - so be sure to have that permission letter from the government to get you in. They do a lot of stamping of papers and discussion of who will let you into the back and upper gardens - but it’s worth the treatment - just smile at them and know that you are in for a great treat.

I could go on for pages about what we saw. I took 48 rolls of film, saw dozens of gardens, and my husband is still talking to me! He’s even raving about some of the gardens. (His favorites were Chateau Bizy, Vaux-le-Vicomte, Villa Gamberaia, and Villa Lante - pretty good taste I’d say).

Sally Kahn is putting together a tour to England and Wales next May. Diane McGuire will act as historian and guide on the tour. Sally and her husband previewed the gardens this summer...which is a very smart way to organize a successful tour...and removed three gardens from the tour plans because they didn’t excite her. Instead she added three others, a little off the beaten track, that she believes will make for much better viewing: a private garden in Shrewsbury (with a lovely tea); Sudeley Castle, home of Lord and Lady Ashcombe, with its collection of old-fashioned roses (and voted one of the best historic gardens in England); and the very romantic Iford Manor, a terraced Italianate garden designed by the architect Harold Peto. Sounds wonderful. Check it out.

Karin Stanley was off to Ireland to shoot new slides for her lecture series on the “Uniqueness of the Irish Garden” from the formal seventeenth-century style to the Robinsonian, and through to the recent preservation efforts. Karin presented one of her lectures at the Massachusetts Horticultural Society in early October and was as entertaining as ever. She always manages to find a lesser known

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Sco tt Kunst, of Ann Arbor, Michigan, publishes a catalog he describes as “America’s Only Source Devoted Entirely to Rare, Antique Flowerbulbs, from the 1500s to the 1940s.” And what a treat it is. This black and white catalog, with exactingly beautiful line drawings taken from older catalogs and herbals, reads like an adventure story as it offers a small, select group of bulbs whose histories entertain as well as inform, and revive our appreciation of the rare, the beautiful, and the old.

Quoting from the poems of Vita Sackville-West, and the opinions of people like E.A. Bowles, the “great tulip expert A. D. Hall”, and “the great Latvian Crocus expert (who remained unnamed), the catalog also conveys a terrible sense of urgency — The Hyacinth ‘Marie’ (1860) is “the oldest named Hyacinth you can buy anywhere;” and Tulip ‘Dillenburg’ (1916) is “the last available survivor of the whole class of early twentieth century tulips called Dutch Breeders;” and of Muscari botryoides (1576), “the original grape hyacinth that has been so eclipsed by recent-arrival (1878) Muscari Armeniacum and its modern cultivars that it has virtually disappeared from commerce,” he urges, “So buy a few and help it hang on!”

It is clear from this catalog that “old” does not always mean “rare” (Crocus Mammoth Yellow, a common offering in today’s catalogs, has been around for 300 years.) Nor does “old” imply “better” in terms of hardness or disease-resistance (Kunst admits that Lili um Candidum still carries the virus that spreads to other lilies), But Old House Gardens makes trial plantings of every variety they sell, every year, and offers refunds for bulbs like last year’s “imposter”, ‘Clara Butt’. OHO authenticates their bulbs and tells you where each is grown (The Netherlands, Texas, Louisiana, Nebraska, Minnesota, Georgia, Oregon, Oklahoma). They also tell you when a variety has been confused with others in the trade, what has been substituted for it over the years; and when hardiness may be a consideration.

In tulips, by the way, Kunst is offering “six rare tulips from the Dutch National Bulb Nursery, the Hortus Bulborum,” which has auctioned off for the very first time, some of its excess bulbs: ’Lac Van Rijn’ (1620), and ‘Duc Van Thol’ (1620) and four of its later color variants. The cost? $6 to $9 per bulb. (Prices on the whole range from 40 cents to $15 per bulb.) There’s also Dahlia ‘Bishop of Llandaff’ (1927), very popularly planted in Britain, and an important element in Joe Eck and Wayne Winterrowd’s North Hill, Vermont garden, as well as Gladiolus ‘Atom’ (1940) named not for the atomic era but for its small size (Kunst is “recommending it for the Red Border at Hidcote”) — and finally, Daffodil ‘Mrs. Backhouse’, the very first of the “pink” daffodils.

His whimsically wonderful bulb collections are of note, also. Two that intrigued me were: ‘Grandma’s Jewel Box” containing six tulip varieties, “a hodgepodge no garden book would recommend, but that always looks just fine: an artless, time-rich jumble”; and “Women of Spring”, seven varieties of tulips named after women who have played a leading role in the history of gardening. Old House Gardens also sells reprints of certain old bulb catalogs, and books about bulbs and historic landscape design.

To receive their catalog, contact Old House Gardens, 536 Third Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48103-4957. Phone/fax (313) 995-1486. E-mail OHGBulbs@aol.com

--- Natalie Delvaille

Hort Resources (New England Horticultural Network) is a non-profit organization that connects horticultural enthusiasts of all kinds — individuals, businesses, and institutions (nurseries, masonry suppliers, contractors, and landscape educators, just to mention a few). Hort Resources began in 1993 as a diverse group of people with a common interest who talked in the Sherborn living room of Elizabeth Cole, its founder. Many trade organizations cater to one particular profession, and many that separate professional from non-professional. Each type has its strength, but Hort Resources helps all types of horticulturally-inclined people to share their interests and expertise. Our goals are:

• To bring together all those who appreciate, grow, design with, care for, and maintain plants
• To improve the art and science of gardening with respect for our environment
• To exchange resources, including information, goods, and services, among members
• To improve and develop high quality horticulture through education

Some of the Hort Resources names and faces are already familiar to Radcliffe students. The current president is Laura D. Eisener, a Radcliffe Seminars instructor who teaches “Shrubs and Vines”, “Trees”, and “Perennial Garden Design”. John Furlong and Paul Rogers are on the Hort Resources advisory board. Many other members

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to find a lesser known garden and show you a view of Ireland that you have not seen before.

And closer to home, at least on this continent, Ann Townsend and her significant other (See! We've got our partners all interested.) traveled to the West Coast and visited Mount St. Helens. They were astounded at the landscape. Ann wrote to me that the policy of the Forest Service, which administers the 110,000 acres of the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument is not to intervene in the natural process of recovery... "more than 200 square miles; as clean a slate as scientists are likely to find," the guide book says, and the slate is still pretty clean 17 years after the big eruption. There's been a lot of regrowth, but most of it is fairly inconspicuous — no big trees. It's an extraordinary opportunity to see the land unclotted — a contour model of a verdant landscape without vegetation. The visitor centers and the interpretive trails are quite elegant, designed to fit unobtrusively into the landscape. No one there could tell Ann anything about the landscape architect (!!!), but she did learn that Spenser and Associates in Palo Alto were the architects for the building at the Coldwater Lake Visitor Center. Ann thought that it was "hard to say exactly what is so compelling about this place, beyond the fact of the devastation caused by the volcanic eruption — which is a pretty big deal." She thinks it has something to do with the sense of the human presence (very small, but insistent) in this natural disaster, and with being able to see such a vast area all at once. So travel west, folks; sounds like this is worth checking out — I love Ann's image of the life-size contour model.

Judith Tankard traveled to Italy and Lake Como this summer also. She agrees with me that Villa del Balbi­nello is a must-see, and has offered to show her slides to BSLA members at one of our monthly lunch-time programs. She also had access to a few other private gardens that she will share with us this winter. Other BSLA members in Italy this summer — Cricket Lewis and Heidi Kost-Gross. When the three of us ran into each other in the hallway at Cronkhite in early September we all compared our thoughts on Villa Lante — and we all agree, it too is a must-see.

Cynthia Zaitzevsky combined travel with research this summer. She is currently working on two books. One is a general history of American Parks. Her research took her to San Francisco and San Diego for much of the summer, and she's off to the Pacific Northwest and Canada this month. Many of you know that Cynthia has been teaching an American Parks course at Radcliffe for almost 15 years. Her survey seminar examines parks from all parts of the United States and Canada. The book she is working on will make a great text book for the course and will be useful for all of us who have already either taken her course, or who hope to in the future. Cynthia is also working on one of a two-volume set on the Buildings of Massachusetts for the Society of Architectural Historians.

Let me hear from more of you about travels to some of your favorite gardens. Let's use this column to expand our horizons — we can all benefit from hearing about these less frequently discussed gardens. I'm easy to call, fax, e-mail, or snail mail. And I'm ready to start planning another trip.

Though often found traveling, Marie Stella Byrnes has been busy designing and installing a roof-top terrace garden on the East River in Manhattan. She has found lots of technical problems to solve — such as not being able to attach anything to the building — and, fearing blow-away, had to design everything to tightly interlock. Marie custom designed modular furniture which expands for entertaining and self stores at the end of the season. She used Brazilian cherry for all the woodwork, which proved to be amazingly strong at 3/4", and reduced the weight on the roof. Marie found that designing small spaces where the client "wants everything" can be challenging, but great fun. I think we would all love to see a picture of this project when it is completed and hear more about how she put it all together.

Judith Siporin headed back to her "day job" last month teaching high school literature and art history. She must curtail (with a bit of sadness, I might add) some of the garden design/build/maintenance work she has worked so hard on all summer. Judith designs and tends gardens in Newton and Cambridge and will continue her work on long weekends and afternoons during the Fall.

Behulah Shah, has just landed her first full-time job since graduating last May from the Seminars. She went to Chatham College (which is connected to the Rachel Carson Institute in Pittsburgh) looking into what courses they had to offer in Landscape Design. This, of course, just to keep her energy level up while she was actively working in a small landscape design firm. After the people at Chatham had a chance to meet her and realize that she was way ahead of whatever they had to offer (because of her classes here at the Seminars, of course) she not only was offered the position of Director of Landscape Design, but was hired to teach a preservation course this Fall. Now that is what I call a success story. Congratulations, Behulah.

Word comes to me from the not-so-far-away island of Nantucket that Cynthia Ruffner has assumed the role of Associate Director of the Preservation Institute: Nantucket. The program focuses on historic preservation education for architecture students. This is quite a feather in Cynthia's cap. It is extraordinary to be the first director in twenty five years who is not
organized a design process and implemented the design, the result being the present-day streetscape. However, urban living is infinitely more complex that that. Coming together, whether for a neighborhood issue or a garden design is a daunting experience in group dynamics, an experience most would avoid. These three urban gardening efforts illustrate how landscape design in a neighborhood is more than participating in the design process. For example, a neighborhood’s sense of community can nurture a change in the landscape or, conversely, the change in the landscape can spark a sense of community. The resulting benefit is more than the completed landscape design: the intangible benefit is the sense of neighborhood or community that has engendered the process or has emerged from it.

Temple Street’s appearance demonstrates almost 25 years of community activism to meet familiar urban challenges. Confronting urban issues has shaped this neighborhood’s sense of community. In the 1970s the street was an amalgam of displaced West Enders, urban visionaries, university interests, and apartment dwellers. Over time the neighborhood has addressed lighting, speeding traffic, construction, an attempt to locate a fast food restaurant, and the predictable conflicts between a residential neighborhood and a university building busy with day and evening classes. Neighbors assumed various roles: the spokespersons, those that hosted organizational meetings, the family that maintained the master list of residents and sent out notices. The Temple Street Neighborhood Committee didn’t coalesce for a garden project, but added the street’s appearance as one of its many concerns.

A turning point in this neighborhood’s sense of community was the planning for the 1976 Bi-Centennial. Residents and Suffolk University worked with the Boston Redevelopment Authority to widen and pave the sidewalks with brick and install granite benches. The neighborhood assisted Suffolk in planting an area the University had been leasing from St. John’s Church for parking. And by the early 1980s, another phase of neighborhood gardening emerged; notices invited all residents to contribute to purchasing flowers and barrels for the street. A year or two later, crocuses were planted in the tree beds. The structure for a unified street design was in place.

Discussions between the Temple Street committee and Suffolk on many issues included the renovating of the Temple Street Park. In the early 1990s Suffolk agreed to pay for the landscape design and project management services of Temple Street resident (and now Radcliffe Landscape Design graduate) Denise Hirschel. The joint effort to create a vest-pocket park solidified Temple Street’s neighborhood identity. Suffolk also paid for materials, a protective fence, and ongoing maintenance.

The residents organized to install the garden, and what followed was the fun part of gardening and community: the neighborhood was decorated with holiday wreaths on the light poles and greens in window boxes and barrels, and celebrated with a now-annual pre-Christmas pot luck supper. Spring clean-up, Spring planting, Fall clean-up and bulb planting are also regular events. Residents, condominium associations, and Suffolk University contribute to these annual efforts.

The Committee still views itself as urban and cause-related: The neighborhood rallies to address issues that might affect the residential street. But it was also with some delight that a women’s book club was recently formed for purely social and reading enjoyment. No causes!

Hancock Street has a slightly different history. A tree planting, and then a gardening effort evolved into an organization to confront problems on the street. What precipitated the Hancock Street tree planting effort is a bit unusual. In 1990 the relentless noise and dirt from construction on the corner of Hancock and Cambridge Streets for a new Suffolk University building caused one irate neighbor to complain in writing. The construction crew was violating the terms of the working hours agreement with the neighborhood. The University agreed to better manage the construction project and offered to donate funds to purchase trees for Hancock Street, but the funds would go only to a valid community organization that had raised additional funds.

So after many years of attempts to improve a barren appearance, the neighborhood organized to plant trees. The Hancock Street Garden Club formed to raise funds for this challenge grant. A core group of 25-30 residents met in space provided by Suffolk. Some prepared a list of building owners, condominium associations, and residents for the fundraising component. Others called the City of Boston for assistance. An ironwork company was contacted to design and build protective tree fencing and bollards. By Spring of 1991 trees were planted, and in 1992 fences were installed. Over the next few years, more trees and fences were added.

An important but less visible networking effort, however, occurred at the Garden Club meetings. Problems on the street caused the club to mobilize a neighborhood watch group. Representatives from Suffolk University and the Boston Police Department advised on how to attack specific concerns before the street had more serious problems. These initiatives were successful and residents remain vigilant in preserving a healthy urban neighborhood.

At the Old North Church, yet another form of community evolved, one which provided an opportunity to North End, Waterfront, and Charlestown residents involved in this active Episcopal Church. The demographics in all three
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neighborhoods have changed dramatically over the past 15 years with an increase in singles, couples starting families, and "empty-nesters" moving in from the suburbs. Many sought spiritual, historical, and other connections to their adopted urban community.

One of the many connections is the Church's eighteenth-century interpretive garden project. It began with a vision of showing tourists a garden created by ordinary people living in Boston during this prominent period in the Church's history. The site was compelling. Located behind Boston's oldest brick residence, the garden would be easily viewed by thousands of Freedom Trail walkers.

As work began, cutting back the seriously overgrown garden created an unanticipated benefit. It signaled to worshippers, neighborhood residents, and tourists that something was happening. Volunteers offered assistance. Most were, however, heavily committed to full-time careers, available only on occasional weekends, and with little gardening experience. (The research, design, and project management were also a volunteer effort.) People wanted to be part of a church-related activity with a social and outdoors orientation. The challenge, thus, was to create a welcoming, inclusive community through meaningful but delimited volunteer opportunities.

The tasks, in a sense, were on two levels. First there were the physical tasks required for every Saturday's three-hour gardening session, and second, the organization of tasks to build relationships and a sense of community. Hence, tasks were isolated into manageable units, strengths and talents balanced, and teams for the day were created. Just having fun was emphasized.

Now, by noon on any Saturday, the Old North Church gardeners can savor what they have done. They see the enjoyment of tourists who ask about the garden and the plants. Gardeners with muddy clothing and dirty fingernails the day before can greet each other warmly on Sunday at Church or when seeing one another during the week. And the "urban reality" conversations common to Temple Street and Hancock Street also happen in the eighteenth-century garden.

These three examples illustrate that the design process, at least in these urban neighborhoods, is more than site analysis and problem solving. It can evolve from a sense of community, it can create a community, or it can even strengthen community and ownership.

—Marcia Casey

Marcia Casey is an attorney with John Hancock in Boston. She has a passionate avocational interest in garden history. In her spare time, when she's not working in the Old North Church Garden, she takes landscape history classes at Radcliffe.

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landscape to these students, so that they may have "the epiphany of context". (Sounds like Karen Madsen's Methods Class had some serious effects on Cynthia!) Of note, Cynthia invited John Dixon Hunt to lecture to her students, he said yes, arrived, spoke on the concept of reading the landscape, and received what was probably the first standing ovation in the history of the Institute. Cynthia has kept up a dialog with Hunt and is responsible for encouraging him to come speak to the BSLA in early December. Read Calendar Connection for more on this. It will be a sold-out event.

The Massachusetts Horticultural Society is hosting a symposium on October 25 at Elm Bank entitled: In Harmony: Gardening and Nature. Our very own Natalie Delvaille, the lead speaker, will focus her talk on environmentally-friendly gardening. Other speakers who will follow Natalie include Laura Eisener speaking on Designing With Nature in New England. The symposium is full of simple, common-sense gardening tips to help you make nature a neighbor. You can sign up through the MHS.

Maria von Brincken, Mary Dewart, Sally Muspratt, and Marie Stella Byrnes are busy polishing up the final details for the lectures that they are presenting at the MHS this fall and winter.

Sally Muspratt and Heidi Kost-Gross chaired a symposium for The Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts in early October entitled: Designing For Your Community: Civic Projects That Make A Difference. Lynden Miller was the keynote speaker. About 100 participants attended the two-day seminar. Many BSLA members assisted Sally and Heidi either as panel speakers or round table leaders. Those sharing their knowledge were: Lucia Droby, Margaret Pokorney, Natasha Hopkinson, Cricket Lewis, and Allyson Hayward.

You can (and should, and really must) contact me at Dirt Diva, 21 Albion Road, Wellesley Hills, MA 02181. Tel: (781) 235-3307; Fax: (781) 431-7272; or E-mail: AMHayward@aol.com
Members are listed in the annual Hort Resources Directory with a brief description of interests and areas of expertise. Each entry is cross-referenced in a list of 43 specialties — ecological restoration, lighting, stonework, garden center, speakers, for example, so that it is easy to find the information you need. This is a great "telephone book" of horticultural resources.

Events for members have included two fairs at LaSell College, which feature symposia by experts as well as displays and sales of plants, books, and garden-related items. Lectures and demonstrations over the Hort Resources’ first four years have covered many topics— from seed-starting methods to rhododendron breeding and growing, to perennial garden design.

Tours have included private gardens and specialty nurseries.

This spring, Hort Resources developed a Speaker’s Listing. Members who offer lectures, slide shows, or demonstrations are eligible to join the Speaker’s Listing, where they describe their topic(s) of expertise. The listing is available to program chairs of garden clubs and other organizations.

Late fall and winter meetings will include our second annual "Show and Tell" at which members can share triumphs and frustrations through slides and photos of their gardens or their clients’ gardens; and a book discussion meeting to share opinions on the most useful garden books and recent horticultural literature.

For more information about joining Hort Resources or to sign up for this workshop, please contact Laura D. Eisener, 14 Oakcrest Street, Saugus MA 01906-1314 or call (781) 231-5988

—Laura D. Eisener