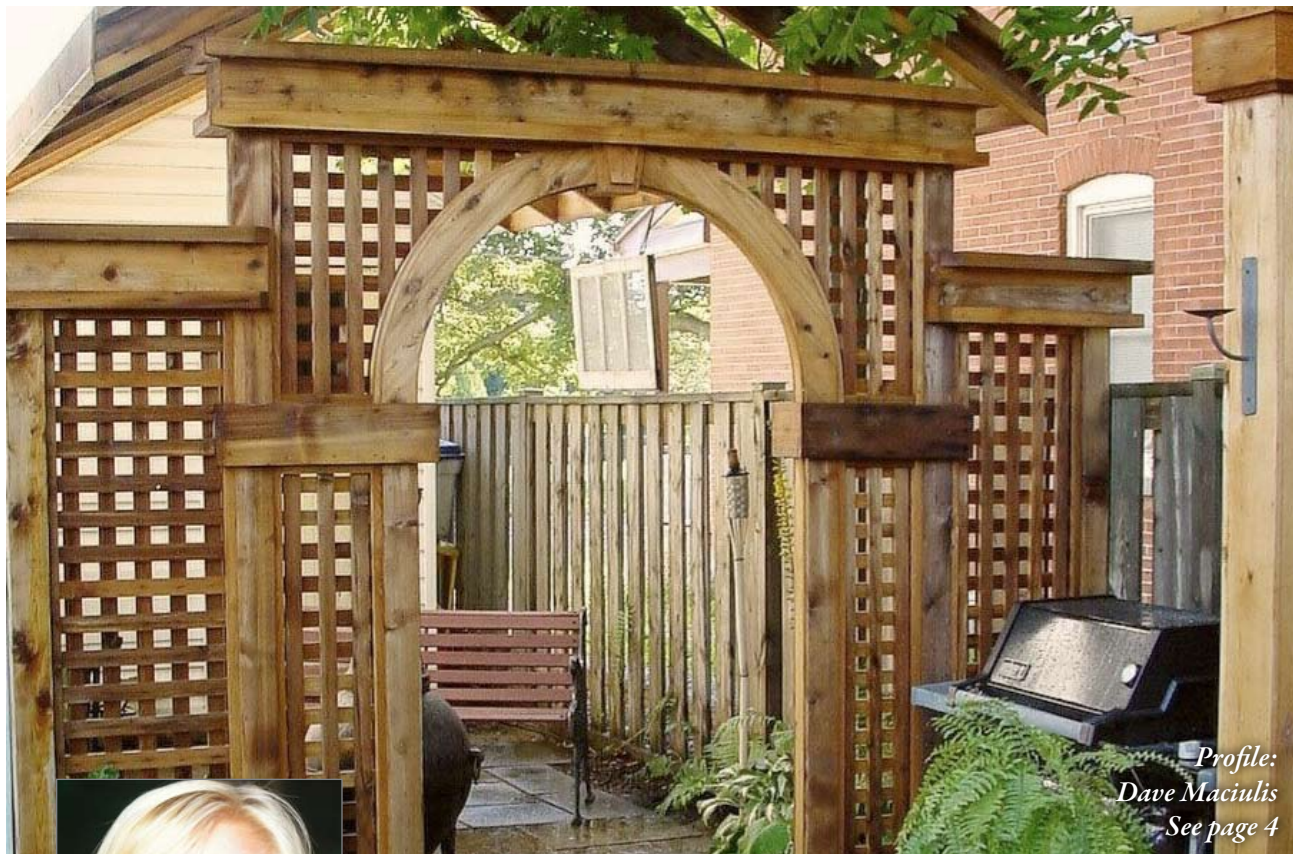


LANDSCAPE DESIGN

HORTICULTURAL TRADES ASSOCIATION
 landscapeontario.com
 Green for Life!

SECTOR GROUP NEWSLETTER



Profile:
 Dave Maciulis
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welcome comments from the chair

With spring well underway, I am experiencing a very busy planning season. Some of my colleagues have been questioning the economic environment and how it will bear on their design business. Landscape design is an essential service that must be included in any project's scope of work. In times of economic strain, a designer can help a client spend wisely while achieving a great end result.

I have often said that anyone can take a huge budget and create a wonderful landscape design. The true challenge and test of your design skills is to work with a client's modest budget and create something spectacular with it.

If a client does not accept your design proposal, don't falter. There will be work out there for you. Remember, your work is valuable. You just might have to diversify your clientele. For freelance designers out there, this is a golden opportunity for you. With uncertain work prospects in the current economic downturn, many medium-sized landscape firms are not hiring in-house designers. They will be looking for your services this year.

A quote that is at the top of mind for me these days is "Great companies are made in times like these." Have a prosperous and healthy season. ■

Beth

LANDSCAPE DESIGN

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featured article

Lighting the landscape

By John Scanlon

Lighting is an artful science, and a crucial element of exterior décor. As with an interior space, an exterior space has two zones; the public zone (front yard) and the private zone (rear of the house).

The front yard is the setting for viewing the house from the street, and the public area for arrival and entrance into the house. It's a matter of preference how much to show off architectural details, plants and garden features in the front of a home. Pathways and grade changes must be visible, and the front door should always be the brightest point. The relationship between one level of brightness and another creates a visual hierarchy, spanning safety, security and aesthetics.

The best time to design a lighting system is when the overall bones of the landscape have settled and the specimen plants have been selected. Begin with favourite views from certain rooms, and build the landscape lighting design from there. Each lighting designer has a preferred approach, but all use some calculus of fixtures and wattage to sculpt each scene.





John Scanlon
Lighting Designer

Light fixtures direct light either up or down. Down lights create a natural way to view the landscape, while up lights create dramatic effects, such as shimmering leaves and shadows.

Landscapes and gardens flourish over time, therefore lighting plans may need to be flexible until the plants have fully grown into the landscape. Oversize the transformers, and don't over load wire runs; this will allow for expansion of the lighting system in the future.

Most homeowners see landscaping as an investment in their home. Landscape designers and contractors can help customers recognize the value that professional outdoor lighting adds to that investment. People spend tens of thousands of dollars on their landscapes. By setting aside part of their budget for outdoor lighting, they can get more hours of enjoyment out of their investment.

Customers may choose you for your design expertise, but one of the foundations of good design is technical knowledge. Technical expertise goes hand-in-hand with lighting. If the lighting system is thoroughly understood before it goes in the ground, it is installed

much more easily and makes for a much more trouble free operation.

There are a number of choices available for Landscape Lighting ranging from inexpensive to high-end systems and materials. The old saying "You get what you pay for" holds true for landscape lighting. The current trend is to use natural products in the landscape such as copper or bronze fixtures. These units will age naturally, turning a darker bronze and eventually acquiring a statuesque patina.

For only a few dollars more than the inferior quality aluminum fixtures you can light a property with solid bronze or copper fixtures.

When budgeting for landscape lighting, it is safe to say you should allow 10% of the total landscape cost for a lighting budget. Most professional lighting contractors will charge on average \$275.00 to \$350.00 per fixture to supply and install the landscape lighting system. New regulations from the ESA Electrical Safety Authority require that permits be taken out for the installation of Low Voltage Lighting systems.

As a supplier to the industry, I have been involved with landscape lighting for over twenty years. I work with a number of Landscape Architects and Landscape Designers by assisting them with the lighting design and finding the contractors to install the lighting system. ■

For landscape design questions, or more information on landscape lighting products, please contact John Scanlon at johnscanlon@rogers.com.

in every issue

designer profile

A conversation with Dave Maciulis Natural Landscape Inc., Dundas, Ont.

by Jennifer Hayman

You started your business almost 20 years ago. How did you evolve from being a designer to managing your own design/build firm?

I began working as a designer and consultant in 1990, and registered my business in 1993. Clients started requesting that I remain onsite during construction. That's when I realized the demand for onsite services. It just evolved, and eventually my clients began asking me to select contractors, organize time-lines, select finishes and so on. I then became the design/build firm.

I oversee all aspects of the outdoor project, including details such as paints and stains, hardscape finishes, electrical, gas and plumbing. I'm hands-on in all aspects. I guess you could call me the general contractor.

Technology is obviously a very important tool for your firm. Can you tell us what software you are using, and how your clients are responding to this new technology? How are you billing for this extra, value-added service?

We use an assortment of software: ACAD 2009, SketchUp, Photoshop and Designware. Clients pay a separate fee for any renderings and 3D Sketchup models. These additional fees are quoted separately in the design process.



Who is your biggest inspiration?

Frank Lloyd Wright

Best client experience?

Given the trust to make all decisions for my client

Worst client experience?

Being asked to do something, and finding out the client did not want to pay extra. Long story, but I realized how important change orders are!

Favourite saying?

"I am not going to create a landscape... but I will create an outdoor experience."

Best new word?

inspiration or inspire (old favourite)

Currently reading?

Being Happier than God!

By Neal Donald Walsch

You offer online design services. Can you explain why you decided to offer this service to clients, and how it benefits your business?

We found there was a market for the homeowner or contractor to achieve designs on a small scale, which are completed more quickly by our studio and save our clients a few dollars. The client or contractor does all the leg work, measuring, etc. and we offer concept ideas and planting suggestions on their site plan. This on-line service helps with reducing time at my end as well.

How has the CLD certification helped your business?

I think that stating to homeowners that I am a CLD gives credit for my education and experience. Poten-

tial clients seem impressed by my certification, and feel more confident knowing that they are hiring a designer as a recognized professional within our industry, not a self-proclaimed designer. There are too many one- or two-year designers claiming to have all the experience, and calling themselves landscape designers. To me, that's not right.

Given the current economic situation, do you plan on making any changes to your business model this season?

Yes. I plan to focus on design only, with minimal project management involvement. I want to scale back and step away from the build side of things. I will not be 'the general contractor' this year. I also plan to continue providing 3D Sketchup models of our work. My clients love it and it really helps to sell the project and the idea.

I have recently built a design studio, and plan to ask my clients to make more visits to the studio for presentation. It's easier for me to make on-the-spot revisions and it's impressive for my clients to view their drawings on our big-screen monitor.

I think I may also begin calling more contractors to use our services too. Networking is important.

Many designers are finding their clients are requesting multiple quotes. How are you respond-

ing to this? Any suggestions on helping clients compare apples-to-apples?

If a client asks me to oversee the implementation of their design, I explain that I have a network of contractors that I have worked with for several years. I explain that these contractors understand my expectations for customer service and quality. I have working relationships that have lasted more than 10 years with these individuals, and they work with me as if they work for me. A contractor-designer relationship takes time to build and it is hard to find.

If a client insists on multiple quotes, I explain that to compare apples to apples they should hire Landscape Ontario-member contractors with a minimum of 10 years' experience. It's also important that their sub-contractors (electricians, gas fitters, stone masons, carpenters etc.) have professional credits to their work.

You have recently built a design studio workspace. How has this helped your firm?

The design studio has helped me present the ideas in an environment that inspires my clients. We have a series of natural stone tables, a water feature inside the studio and one outside in the front garden. We have a tour garden at the front entrance, which helps to show off the products and plants we use without having to drive to several locations to explain components of the design. ■



featured article

The cornerstone of Persian garden design: The Gardens of Pasargadae

By Judith Humphries, CLD

Formal or informal, for some it's a personal choice, but in the distant past it was sometimes a political statement. The earliest excavated remains of a quadripartite garden used as a political statement date back to the 6th century BC, to the gardens of Pasargadae in Western Iran.

Created by Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Achaemenid Empire, the landscape design consisted of a principal garden and water courses. The rectangular principal garden (230 by 200 m) was set in the heart of a royal park, edged and quartered by finely dressed stone watercourses. Watercourses ran parallel on the outside of the rectangular paths, the widest path being about 40 m across. The water courses were built of tightly finished limestone blocks which echoed the workmanship of the adjacent palaces. The preserved sections were 25 cm wide and punctuated at 13 to 14 m intervals by square basins 80 by 80 cm. Built on a slight slope, the running water passed through sluice gates on one of the channels, serving both to irrigate the plants and delight the senses.

The garden was designed to inspire admiration, awe and expectation in the royal visitors. From the outside, the view of the inner sanctum would have been obscured by lines of cypress trees. A palace stood at the end of the long axis. The visitor entered through a columned portico at right angles to the long path.

He had to negotiate the wide paths around the central garden to reach the throne, where he would have made suitable obeisance. Protected from the afternoon sun, with the columned hall of his palace behind him, Cyrus sat on his throne and surveyed his domain. Cyrus was known as 'the king of the four quarters.'



Judith Humphries, CLD

The 'chahar bagh' or 'four gardens' is the cornerstone of Persian garden design. The quadripartite garden spread east to India, and west to Spain and Africa with the spread of Islam approximately 1,000 years later. ■

Reference

David Stronach 1994 "Parterres and Stone Watercourses at Pasargadae: Notes on the Achaemenid Contribution to Garden Design *Journal of Garden History*" Vol.14 No.1 pp 3-12

in every issue

Plant

by Paul Zammit



Caryopteris 'Summer Sorbet'

Also known as blue mist shrubs, *Caryopteris* 'Summer Sorbet' is a recent introduction that is attracting some much-deserved attention. Much of the appeal of this deciduous woody shrub is from its vivid golden foliage with irregular grey-green centres. In addition to the eye-catching foliage, bright blue flowers are produced along the ends of each stem in late summer. The blossoms are a magnet to both butterflies and bees. For the best growth, position plants in full sun and in well-drained soil. Once established, plants appear to have some drought tolerance. *Caryopteris* is hardy in zones 5-9 and are also deer resistant. To maintain the best form, prune shrubs back hard in late spring only once growth has started. In my two years of growing *C.* 'Summer Sorbet', plants have grown to about a meter in height (3 ft.) by the end of the season. This makes them a very appealing addition to small gardens, containers and mixed borders.

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upcoming events

August 15, 2009

CLD Exam Date
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
LO home office, Milton

August 13-14, 2009

Ottawa Garden Tour
For reservations, contact Kathleen Pugliese at 1-800-265-5656 x309
www.horttrades.com for more details and registration information.

Toronto Chapter Meeting Review

By Janet Ennamorato, Creative Garden Designs

On February 4, the Toronto Chapter hosted an all-day conference at the Doubletree International Hotel. Topics of discussion included industry by-laws and how landscape businesses can overcome the current economic situation.

The by-law session was lead by local government officials discussing forestry issues, right-of-way by-laws, permits and transportation concerns — knowing your property limits, minimizing encroachments, protecting sight lines and getting municipal permission. Their PowerPoint presentations, available at the link below, include the Sight Distance pamphlet, the Municipal-right-of-way, the Toronto Building Divisions' permit and green roof by-law presentations.
<http://www.horttrades.com/displaynews.php?n=601&categoryID=13>

The business discussion was moderated by Bob Tubby of Arbordale Landscaping and Moonstruck Landscape Lighting. The session featured guest panelists Juergen

Hermanns, Peter Guinane of Oriole Landscaping and J. Paul Lamarche, author of *What the Market will Bare*. Some of the topics that Tubby posed for consideration, and the panel's response included:

Leadership – get your employees to believe that 'tomorrow is another day'. You should be open with your employees and encourage them by getting the company to work together as a team; lead them through change and stay positive and proactive. This attitude will filter through the company in a progressive way.

Financials – have a good grasp on the finances of the company. It was suggested that you 'sell your price, don't price to sell'. Be confident in your selling and maintain your price. It is important to remember that the average age of a landscape client is 45, and that there is a willingness to pay for good service. J.P. Lamarche spoke at length about overhead as the biggest concern for a company and that efforts should be made to lower this percentage in the run-

ning costs of your company. Cost is a key ingredient to our business and we should be able to manage our expenses through cash flow. It is important to arrange for lines of credit to allow for more flexibility. Debt is not a bad thing, in fact, it was suggested that it can be positive; buy a vehicle on credit to retain cash for other, unforeseen expenses.

Sales success tips:

- Listen to your clients
- 'Wow' clients with your plant knowledge, experience and flair
- Sell them on the process and the reasons behind your methods and material selections
- Be confident in your abilities
- Be prepared to say 'no' to a request for a lower price. The next client will need you at your price when other, lower-priced landscape contractors are already busy
- Customers for life: an asset to your company
- Take the following steps to demonstrate your company's dedication to your clients:
 - Return to your client's home the following season to review their gardens
 - Maintain a comprehensive client database
 - Distribute a newsletter to keep clients up-to-date on industry events and various awards and environmental initiatives your company earned. ■

in every issue

Landscape Design Conference 2009: A positive outlook will reap positive results

By Tony Lombardi, BA, CLD

I have to admit there were a few times during the planning stages of the Landscape Designer Conference when things looked very discouraging. The economy was in the dumps, our costs were way up, the attendance numbers were way down and we weren't sure how to turn things around. We looked at a number of options; more advertising, more topics, more speakers ... but the easiest thing we found was to simply — BE POSITIVE.

In light of all the negative economic publicity, there was a constant and growing undertone from the group of attendees that we were all looking to hear; something that would give us direction and motivation.

The conference provided attendees with an opportunity to self-improve, network, and overall, to better the design sector of the landscape industry. This appears to be a growing and infectious trend. Sponsorship participation increased, which gave us an opportunity to expand our space and allow us to give more choice on speakers and subject matter. The calibre of the speakers was outstanding and the presentations were “stimulating and full of great information,” as

quoted from one of the feedback sheets. The biggest problem was that we couldn't finish sessions on time because the groups were so engrossed in each session. We had to force some of the sessions to wrap up, as there were so many questions and so little time. The networking reception was such a success that we had to order three times more food than in the past. These were definitely some good issues to have.

I think the biggest lesson I learned from this year's Conference was that the more positive the attitude, the more positive the result. It was something that my mother always told me, but it never really sank in until now. Life and work is always challenging — and it will always be that way. In fact, it will always get even more challenging, all the time. The most important thing to do is to take the negative and use it as motivation and inspiration and turn it into something that can be used for constructive purposes. Be Positive. You will thank yourself for it!

Regards, Tony

P.S. - See you next year at the Landscape Designer Conference 2010. ■

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