

**BCSLA 2022 ANNUAL CONFERENCE BACK TO THE GARDEN
OPEN CALL FOR PRESENTATIONS
Coast Coal Harbour Hotel Vancouver | October 14-15, 2022**

In the not-so-distant past of 2019 the BCSLA Continuing Education (CE) Committee planned a 2020 conference theme that would acknowledge and celebrate the half-century since Joni Mitchell released *Woodstock* (1970), in which she describes a journey to Yasgur's Farm in Bethel, New York for the Woodstock Music & Art Fair (which she did not attend). *Woodstock* was originally titled '*An Aquarian Exposition: 3 Days of Peace & Music*'. The song, since covered by many, touches on the utopian ideal of getting back to the original garden in an intensely dystopian time of unwanted war, wacky American politics, and generational differences about life, destiny, and the universe.

*We are stardust
We are golden
And we've got to get ourselves
Back to the garden*
— **Joni Mitchell** (*Woodstock*, 1970)

The two-year pause triggered by the COVID-19 global pandemic has severely disrupted personal and collective notions of normal social life. Lockdowns and “stay home” orders were mandated in the spring of 2020 to slow the spread of the coronavirus, with precious minutes a day permitted us to go outside for essential shopping and a breath of fresh air close to home. Local parks and open spaces previously un-noticed were suddenly “discovered” and helped ground people in urban nature.

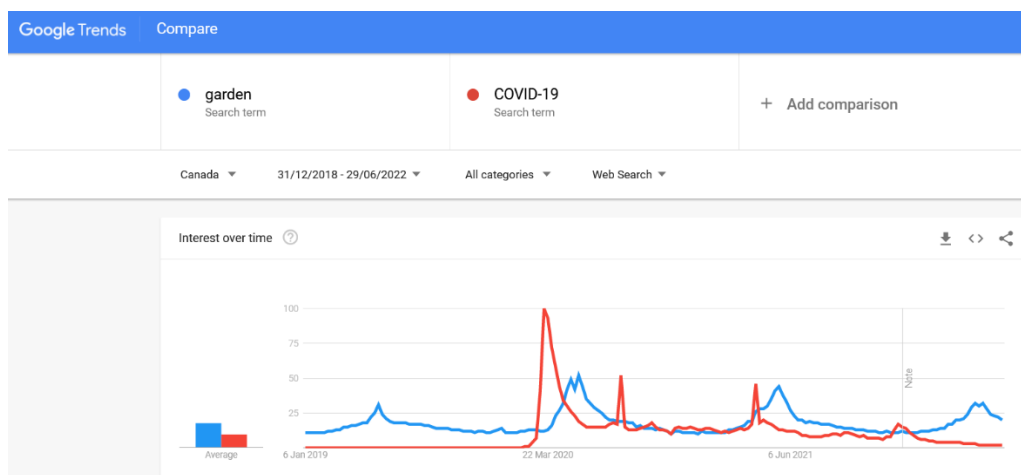
Birdwatching became a thing, because with only essential traffic on the roads, cities quietened enough to hear bird song and the dawn chorus. Media reported that interest in gardening had boomed globally as humans tethered closely to home place, observing the daily coronavirus statistics, tried to find new ways to connect with the living world around them. The local plant and seed supply had difficulty keeping up with popular demand, which ultimately impacted the landscape and nursery production trades. The supply chain became a thing we started to pay attention to. Plants we could specify with the certainty of delivery were and continue to be unavailable.

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The BCSLA offices are located on unceded Coast Salish territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations. We recognize and respect the history, languages, and cultures of the First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada, whose presence continues to enrich our organization, our lives and our country.

This brief chronicle is backed by data. Evidence-based science is another thing we embraced during the pandemic. A quick analysis using Google Trends to compare the search terms “Garden”, and “COVID-19” shows that every time the infection rates peaked, Canadian searches for information about gardens followed, often doubling over the average 5-year trends

As landscape architects vested with upholding human health and well-being, what can we glean and learn from the past few years? Why has gardening become a “thing” that reached far beyond those that have always been gardeners? How does gardening play into the parallel realms of public/private and personal/community? Where do gardens and gardening belong in this new post-pandemic world? Who decides?



Reflecting on the question “Why gardening?” these thoughts provide some timely and timeless insight:

And a garden is a grand teacher. It teaches patience and careful watchfulness; it teaches industry and thrift; above all it teaches entire trust.

— **Gertrude Jekyll**, “Wood and Garden: Notes and Thoughts, Practical and Critical, of a Working Amateur”, 1899, p.21)

The smell of manure, of sun on foliage, of evaporating water, rose to my head; two steps farther, and I could look down into the vegetable garden enclosed within its tall pale of reeds — rich chocolate earth studded emerald green, frothed with the white of cauliflowers, jewelled with the purple globes of eggplant and the scarlet wealth of tomatoes.

— **Doris Lessing** (“African Stories”, [1956] 2014 edition, p 547)

It's the sense of walking back into the Garden of Eden or something like that. Where suddenly everything is perfect and you see how you're connected to everything in the world. You understand your place in it, and you feel an incredible love for everyone and everything, and you're just sublimely happy, and then you're suddenly jolted back to reality, and you've got to deal with the world as it is. And you've got to deal with the world with all of its troubles, while you've still got this alternate image.

— **Larkin Grimm** (Interviewed by Rick Moody for *The Rumpus*, April 20, 2012 in “Swinging Modern Sounds #35: The Location of the Soul”)

So, how now the garden? We wrote the following pre-pandemic:

Patrick Geddes noted in 1904 that ‘*City improvers, like the gardeners from whom they develop, fall into two broadly contrasted schools, which are really, just as in gardening itself, the formal and the naturalistic*’ (*City Development*, Edinburgh, 1904). In referring to “city improvers, Geddes clearly saw both the links and the distinction between private garden design, the public realm, and city planning. These thoughts are re-iterated in his *Cities in Evolution* (1915), which was a major influence on town planning in the 20th century. We are twenty years into the 21st Century and in many ways a very different world than that of 1970.

In his *Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture* (Belknap Press 1971), Norman Newton noted that [in the US], the shift from garden design to the notion of landscape architecture marked a transition from private commissions to working primarily in the public realm. The most traditional scale of work for landscape architects was all but abandoned by the profession in favour of pressing urban, regional, and global challenges. However, the most prestigious award in the profession in landscape architecture honours Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe, the leading garden designer of the 20th century. Interest in gardening and garden design has never waned. For example, the Chelsea Flower Show hosted by the Royal Horticulture Society has capped ticket sales at 165,000 since 1979, and now covers 23 acres, 500 exhibitors and gardens. The RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show is even larger. Both shows anticipate needs and trends in how we design gardens, and what we put in them.

Some say there is no place for garden designers in the profession of landscape architecture; that we are urban designers, planners, and managers, or that the garden is the domain of DIY gardeners. For example, “Garden Design” is not a general searchable category of expertise in the BCSLA member directory, while “Single Family Garden Design” is separated from “Multiple Family Residential”. In densifying cities and neighbourhoods multi-family is now the 21st century norm for housing. Can the unbuilt space around multi-family residential be the garden of 21st century and contribute to public life at the same time? What does a garden in a high density urban area mean; what should it look like, and who decides?

The garden then, whether a high-rise balcony, a community garden, the commons for a co-op, a community park, urban agriculture, the street, or a front or backyard, is the landscape people most personally relate to, and connect with as we address global climate and biodiversity crises. The garden realm of landscape architects spans the full scale from tiny balcony planters to the entire planet, our only “Garden of Eden”.

Finally, and to be blunt, self-preservation (resilience) must be central to our professional and personal concerns about climate change and the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts affecting human life and survival. Plants, their habitats, and ecosystems are primarily destroyed by human greed that has induced and accelerated climate change. Yet plants are essential for human life – food, shelter, material goods. Given space and time though, plants are superbly adaptive beings that will mostly survive the changes we humans have thrust upon them, including recombining into new communities and ecosystems in created, repaired, and protected spaces. We must, with great urgency, find the garden in all our work, get back to it, and give plants the places and spaces they, and us, need.

Our addendum for 2022: The urgency is even greater today than it was 2 years ago.

CALL FOR PRESENTATION PROPOSALS

This Call is open to all BCSLA Members and allies. University students and recent graduates in landscape architecture are especially invited. We invite abstract submissions from any area or discipline of landscape architecture, from wide points of view (and especially from Indigenous, interdisciplinary, or collaborative perspectives and practices), in response to any of the conference framing, and thought-provoking questions. We are interested in hearing about your pandemic experiences and post-pandemic responses.

Ten Conference Framing Questions

1. What garden or gardens have you been involved with through design or personal experience that are exemplary of Joni Mitchell's "*Back to the Garden*" sentiment from 1970?
2. Can a re-focus on the garden (at whatever scale: from very local to global, and from private to public) be a way to engage broader communities in the tenets of the *Canadian Landscape Charter*?
3. What must a garden in the 21st century look like? Are there elements of traditional (18th, 19th, 20th Century) garden designs still relevant or are they now irrelevant post-pandemic, given the pressing and urgent needs to adapt now (or die)?
4. As designers tasked with land stewardship, have we become too specialized and siloed and lost focus on the garden roots of our profession? How do we collectively get back to the garden, acknowledging that some of us have never left it?
5. If landscape architects are climate adaptation leaders, how can we lead the profession back to the garden, where we can do the best for the planet and its inhabitants by helping others become more resilient where they live? If nearly everything governing human life is the result of political decisions, what policies and bylaws need to be changed to enable the gardens of today and the future?
6. How can gardens, and their designs leave no one behind as we strive to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals intended to get all of humanity to the year 2030?
7. Reflecting on the pandemic experience, is provision of space for gardens more essential than the design?
8. In getting back to the garden how can we give back what we have taken from the plant kingdom?
9. How do we make the very small and local personal garden a contributing part of the ecological whole?
10. How do we reconcile the siting of the garden in public and private realms with unceded Indigenous lands?

Resources:

UN SDGs <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

Canadian Landscape Charter <https://www.csla-aapc.ca/charter>

PRESENTATION FORMAT

Presentations must focus on thoughts, actions, results, measures of success, and their broader significance to the profession and society. Podium presentations will be restricted to 10-minutes in length.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- The **deadline** for abstract submissions is 12 Noon PST, Friday, **26 August 2022**.
- All submissions will be peer reviewed by the BCSLA CE Committee.
- Notice of acceptance will be sent to you by Friday, **16 September 2022**.
- Please note that presenters must be registered for the conference.
- Notwithstanding, and recognizing the fact that most of contemporary BC is situated on the unceded overlapping lands and territories of many Indigenous Peoples we request that any proposals for presentations about garden projects located on Indigenous lands must include an Indigenous co-presenter involved in the project or have the written permission of the First Nation, Métis, or Inuit community in lieu.

Abstracts for presentations must be submitted in a MS-Word document, in single-space, Arial 12 font. They must include:

- Title
- Author(s)
- Email address of the corresponding author
- Physical address of the corresponding author
- Indicate whether you are a student (current) or recent graduate and the name of the institution
- Abstract of no more than 250 words

NOTE: In order to accommodate as many presenters as possible, we anticipate 10-minute presentations. Because of the lack of professional social interaction over the past 2+ years we are not planning on having breakout rooms – everyone will be able to hear all the presentations!

Please indicate whether you would be interested in expanding your presentation into a longer peer-reviewed written paper for publication.

Also note that the CE Committee is well-prepared to shift the conference to an on-line virtual platform if required by public health orders.

Send abstracts as an attachment to: admin@bcsla.org with Attn: BCSLA CE Committee as the subject

Send queries regarding the Conference Framing Questions directly to Dr. Kathy Dunster
unfoldinglandscapes@gmail.com

PEER REVIEW + SELECTION

Submissions will be reviewed by the CE Program Committee. Criteria by which submissions will be assessed are provided below to guide the development of your proposal.

1. Alignment with theme: Does the proposal resonate with the overall theme, *Back to the Garden*?
2. Meaningful content: Does the proposal provide meaningful information that will contribute to our understanding of the garden in pandemic and post-pandemic times?
3. Engaging or Informed: Does the proposal appear to be interactive, engaging, energetic? OR is informed by the relevant theory, practice, and/or research on the garden (in its broadest meaning)?
4. Audience appeal: To what extent would the presentation be of interest to members from a variety of perspectives (e.g., diverse disciplinary backgrounds and diverse roles within the profession).
5. Collaboration: Does the proposal include multiple authors, perspectives, or roles?