

**BCSLA 2020 Annual Conference**  
**Vancouver: June 11-13, 2020**  
**Open Call for Papers and Presentations**

## **Back to the Garden**

Fifty years ago, 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)

Joni Mitchell was interviewed for the documentary *Woman of Heart and Mind* (Eagle Rock Entertainment, 2003) and said of those times:

*I began to dislike more and more being a public person, so I isolated myself and made my attempt to get back to the garden. I moved up into the Canadian back bush to a small sanctuary where I could be alone. Lived with kerosene, stayed away from electricity for about a year. ... I took my own advice and I got myself back to the garden. Well, I am too urban, as it turns out, and in a year or so I was back in the cities again.*

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Some other thoughts on the garden:

*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", p.21)

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*Gardens are not made by singing 'Oh, how beautiful,' and sitting in the shade*  
— **Rudyard Kipling** ("History of England", 1911: "The Glory of the Garden")

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*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", 2014, 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”)

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## **So, how now the garden?**

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 20<sup>th</sup> century. We are twenty years into the 21<sup>st</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century norm for housing. The tendency is for designers and planners to treat the unbuilt space around multi-family residential as “landscape” rather than a garden that invites hands-on interaction with plants, soil, and water.

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The garden then, whether a high-rise balcony, a community garden, the commons for a co-op, a community park, 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 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. 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.

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS: PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS**

This Call for proposals is open to all BCSLA Members and allies. University students in studies related to the conference topic are especially invited. We invite abstract submissions from any area or discipline of landscape architecture, from wide points of view (and especially from interdisciplinary or collaborative perspectives and practices), in response to one or more of the conference framing, and thought-provoking questions.

**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 21<sup>st</sup> century look like? What elements of traditional (18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> Century) garden design are still relevant or now irrelevant, given the pressing and urgent needs to adapt now (or die)?
4. As designers tasked with caring for the land, have we become too specialized and siloed and have 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 most good for the planet and its inhabitants by helping others become more resilient where they live?
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. In getting back to the garden how can we give back what we have taken from the plant kingdom?
8. How do we make the very small and local garden a contributing part of the ecological whole?
9. How do we reconcile the situating 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 15-minutes in length.

#### **SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

- The **deadline** for abstract submissions is 12 Noon PST, Friday, **31 January 2020**.
- All submissions will be peer reviewed by the BCSLA CE Committee.
- Notice of acceptance will be sent to you by Friday, 28 February 2020.
- 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 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 it is a student paper and the name of the institution
- Abstract of no more than 250 words

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**NOTE:** The presentation format anticipates a Powerpoint presentation at the conference. However, should there be sufficient breadth of topics submitted, selected presenters may be asked to submit a longer paper for publication if they so wish.

- Indicate whether you would be interested in expanding your presentation into a longer written paper for publication.

**Send abstracts** as an attachment to: [admin@bcsla.org](mailto:admin@bcsla.org) with Attn: BCSLA CE Committee as the subject

**Send queries** regarding the Conference Framing Questions directing to Dr. Kathy Dunster [unfoldinglandscapes@gmail.com](mailto:unfoldinglandscapes@gmail.com)

### **PEER REVIEW + SELECTION**

Submissions will be reviewed by the Program Committee. Criteria by which submissions will be assessed are provided below to guide the development of your proposal. The Program Committee may approach applicants to request changes to their proposals to better fit the Conference theme.

1. Alignment with theme: To what extent does it resonate with the overall theme, *Back to the Garden*?
2. Meaningful content: To what extent does the proposal provide meaningful information that will contribute to our understanding of the Garden?
3. Engaging or Informed: To what extent 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 session be of interest to members from a variety of perspectives (e.g., diverse disciplinary backgrounds and diverse roles within the profession).
5. Collaboration: To what extent does the proposal include multiple authors, perspectives, or roles?

*The BC Society of Landscape Architects (BCSLA) was formed in 1962 and registered in 1964 under the BC Societies Act. BCSLA regulates the profession of landscape architecture according to provincial statute. Landscape architecture is a comprehensive discipline involving land analysis, planning, design, management and conservation and rehabilitation. Typical projects include site design, urban planning, environmental impact studies, parks and recreation planning and residential garden design. The BCSLA promotes continuing education and high standards of professional practice in order to assure the health, safety and welfare of the public in British Columbia.*

The BCSLA offices are located on unceded Coast Salish territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səilwətaʔt (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.