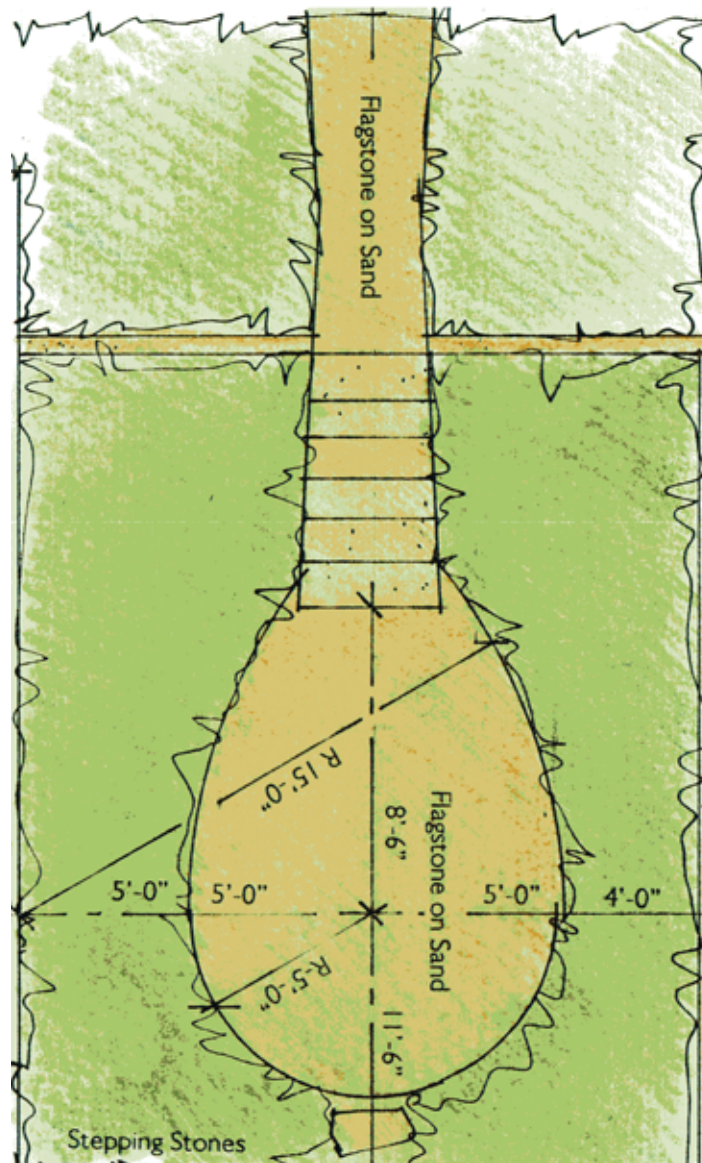


# SITELINES

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December 2005



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The purpose of Sitelines is to provide an open forum for the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to the profession of Landscape Architecture. Individual opinions expressed are those of the writers and not necessarily of those of the BCCLA.

# Les Jardins de Metis Revisited

BY CLIVE JUSTICE, FCSLA

*A garden is a work of art. It is also a number of other things, such as a place for rest and recreation, and for the pursuit of horticulture, but to be garden in the true sense of the term it must be an aesthetic composition.<sup>1</sup>*

Christopher Tunnard



*Gentiana sino-ornata, photograph provided by Clive Justice*

Susan Herrington's fine report on *Les Jardins de Metis* in the August *Sitelines* brings to mind my first discovery of this heritage garden before the inauguration of the annual festival.

When I went to SFU to begin my doctoral studies in Garden History, I had to prove to my advisor in the History Department, Professor Hannah Gay, that there was such a field of study as Canadian Garden History. Professor Gay suggested I do a little research and to report my findings in an essay, before starting my doctoral studies.

I titled my ramblings *What Constitutes Canadian Garden History? A Survey with Commentary*. It had 54 pages, 126 footnotes and listed 75 books, professional journals, and guide books of historic gardens in the bibliography. All 75 entries I had acquired over the years and had in my library at home; all but one. This I picked up one day while waiting in my doctor's office. It was the magazine *Elm Street*. Until then I'd never heard of it. On reading an article I became quite incensed and here is what I wrote.

"...In the Canadian context, a guide book or garden description usually falls short of the National Trust standard. Sometimes articles also appear under the guise of Garden History in popular magazines. Such a disguised Garden History occurred in the May 1999 issue of Canadian women's magazine *Elm Street*. In the magazine's Decor section, Donna Nebenzahl wrote about a garden that Elsie Reford developed at her uncle's fishing lodge on the Metis River along the northside of the St Lawrence in the years between 1926 and 1958. Then the lodge and garden was called Estevan. In *Elm Street*, Nebenzahl describes the garden now called *Les Jardins de Metis* as 'the only authentic historic garden in Quebec and among the most beautiful ornamental gardens in the country'.<sup>2</sup>

These superlatives: 'the only authentic' and 'the most beautiful' are unsupported by her writing or by the accompanying spread of seven colour photos of flowers and plants in the garden. These photos, while beautiful, could have been

*Continued on page 4*

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# Les Jardins de Metis

- continued from page 3

taken anywhere. They give the reader little sense of the history or form of the garden that Elsie created that was *'etched out of spruce woodland and ground as a series of captivating gardens'*.

Each area, evidently with specialized plantings, was located among the groves of natural spruce trees on the property. The illustrations are of flowers showing colour concepts that are popular today; but not what Elsie grew or how she arranged them.

*Les Jardins de Metis* is now a popular tourist site with some 100,000 visitors annually. Donna Nebenzahl did describe the attire Elsie wore while gardening and fishing for salmon in the river that runs through the garden. This may be appropriate fashion history for an article in a women's magazine but is hardly Garden History. The property is now back in private, Reford family hands, after a stint from 1961 to 1988 as a provincial

heritage site. This perhaps speaks to the lack of commitment by the province and the difficulty of developing and maintaining it as a heritage artifact in today's political climate; since it is representative of an Anglo Quebec 1920's, 1930's and 1940's garden. In private hands the commitment to authenticity can be compromised. A change of name from the English name for the garden *Estevan* to *Les Jardins de Metis*, has undoubtedly made the garden a more attractive and profitable venture as a display garden in Quebec. Let's hope that someone will write more in depth on the design and plant material history of *Estevan* for the visitor guide book that will preserve some of the record of this garden.

The statement, *'Les Jardins de Metis houses the largest collection of blue poppies in North America'*, may also need to be changed. It is certain that *Les Jardins de Metis* does not have the largest collection of Blue Poppies in North America, either by numbers or species. This title is held here in the West, either by UBC Botanical Gardens or by the Devonian Gardens, in Edmonton. However,

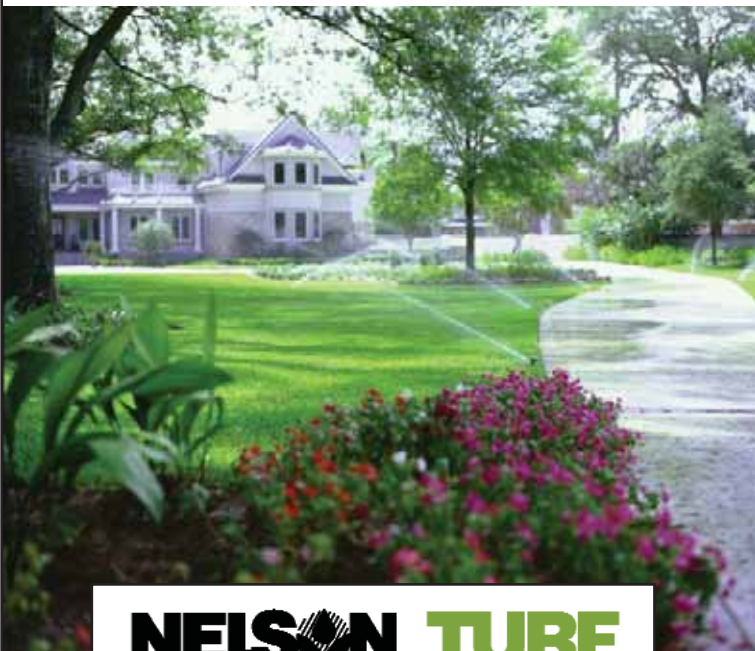
Edwinna von Baeyer, who is perhaps Canada's premier garden historian, has previously uncovered an article by Elsie Redford, that she with Pleasance Crawford, included in their *Garden Voices: Two Centuries of Canadian Garden Writing*, written in 1944, when Elsie was 72.<sup>3</sup>

The article she wrote, was about a plant she grew in her garden with intense blue flowers. It was not a *Meconopsis*, but another blue alpine garden plant, the *Gentian*. Elsie writes :

*'The growing of Gentiana Wellsii began at Estevan in 1935 when some two dozen plants were purchased in England and the following year another fifty were imported. ...For five years Gentiana Wellsii were planted in various parts of the garden. ...Nowhere did they fail to thrive; but in positions most favourable to them the increase was phenomenal, so much so, that by 1940 the problem of providing with greatly extended space had to be given if their cultivation was to be continued. ...To abandon growing Gentiana Wellsii could not be contemplated. The alternative was to break new ground for*

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them and this was done. The ground prepared has since been named the *Gentian Walk* and it is in the form of a curving path of one hundred and forty feet in length, running between two borders of four to four and a half feet in width..'

'During the latter part of August, through September, and well into October there is to be seen along that path a miracle of beauty; for there, stretching out in long sweeps are tens of thousands upon tens of thousands of the glorious blue trumpets of *G. Wellsii* at the height of its flowering. Truly a breath-taking Spectacle. ...Into the borders of the *Gentian Walk* there were replanted in October, of 1944, three thousand three hundred and fifty four *G. Wellsii*. Many were sent to other gardens, while over two thousand went into reserve to await the day when more time and labour will become available for the pursuit of the ancient craft of gardening, when the heavy war clouds will cease to cast their long dark shadows of sorrow and peace will return to men's lives over the face of the earth.'

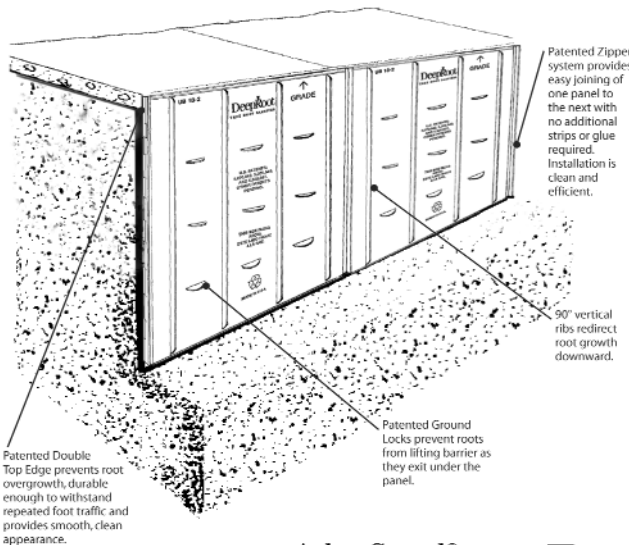
The blooming time of most of the Blue Poppies, *Meconopsis* vars., is May and June. *Les Jardins de Metis* in 1999, may well still have the largest collection, not of the early summer blooming Tibetan Blue Poppies; but the autumn flowering Well's variety of the Blue Fringed Gentian in North America. This certainly seemed to be the case in 1944. On the other hand, the exigencies of today's tourist visitor garden, that it be a spring and summer garden, in order to meet and maximize its visitor potential, perhaps overshadows the historical authenticities of *Les Jardins de Metis*."

It was with the above I ended my diatribe before going on to tackle *Kingsmere*, McKenzie King's Gatineau garden of reconstructed ruins.

The International Garden Festival still disturbs me. The entries may well be works of outdoor art, but they are not Garden Art, as I understand it. And they tell us nothing about garden history, design, plant introduction, use or improvement. To forego and

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ignore the art of arranging and displaying well grown plants in a landscape setting for a filigreed garish red screen, in a field of red gravel with not a plant in sight is not my idea of a garden. Nor does it tell me anything about Canadian Garden History, or of the story of the *Les Jardins de Metis*, which is well worth telling.

1. Christopher Tunnard, *Gardens in the Modern Landscape* Architectural Press, London, 1938

2. Donna Nebenzahl *Les Jardin de Metis*, Elm Street, May 1999

3. Edwinna Von Baeyer & Pleasance Crawford, *Garden Voices Two Centuries of Canadian Garden Writing*, Random House, Toronto, 1995

# 2006 CSLA/CELA Conference

## Landscape Architecture in the Age of the New Normal June 14 – 17 / 2006 • Vancouver British Columbia Canada

BY ADRIENNE BROWN MBCSLA

The first thing you are probably thinking is:

*'What is the New Normal and What does it have do with Landscape Architecture?'*

You will run into the term 'New Normal' in a variety of places. In the realm of entertainment, there is an album by cog, [www.cog.com.au](http://www.cog.com.au), and a musical with an original cast recording [www.new-normal.co](http://www.new-normal.co). There are also references in the media, notably to a new book by an American venture capitalist Roger McNamee, who states that the 'New Normal' began on March 10 2000, when the NASDAQ fell from its historic peak. Others say that it began on September 11 / 2001.

Many analysts see the *New Normal* as an era characterized by economic and political strife; while human rights advocates see it as a loss of personal freedoms. Regardless of how we choose to define it, the world is experiencing a dramatic series of social and institutional shifts, including: changes in the structure of the economy, environmental crises, and climate change. While such factors can result in a lack of connectedness on the part of people under stress for extended periods, such as during the Great Depression or WW2; the good news is that we eventually adjust. Uncertainty, instability and fear give way to an understanding of the opportunities. Amidst

uncertainty today, the power of the individual is increasing and this is presenting myriad choices. New technology and globalization may be challenging us, however new solutions often differ dramatically from conventional wisdom and this opens up exciting new areas of investigation.

All of this is affecting Landscape Architecture. The *New Normal* is changing how we see problems, how we solve them, how we design spaces, and what kind of spaces are required. Over the last decade, there have been dramatic changes in how we practice, in how business is conducted, and in styles of communications. What is



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the role of Landscape Architecture today, and how do we address the massive changes taking place in many of the world's cities as practitioners, as teachers, and as students? The issues are daunting, but our role is clearly defined. Quite simply, we have the power to design better cities, and environments that acknowledge and respond to the requirements of increasingly complex societies.

The conference program for *Shifting Ground* consists of six distinct sub-themes chosen to inspire delegates to present their work, their ideas and their research. The first sub-theme begins with the concept of sustainability, and the question of whether the term has become an overused sound bite. Is the label getting in the way of sound approaches to environmental management and social change? While the future of the environment is a concern around the world; effective action will undoubtedly evolve and expand beyond the confines of conventional thought. *Shifting Ground* will focus on new interpretations of sustainability, and how we are applying such approaches in practice. The second related theme addresses the *biological and cultural diversity* that provides the basis for sustainability. The state of our *Ark* refers to the condition of the environment today, and the ways in which landscape architectural practice is responding to the many specific physical and institutional challenges.

Next, as technology influences practice, we want to look at how new philosophical and psychological aspects of design are manifested in the built environment. The fourth theme addresses the dramatic increases in cultural diversity seen in many cities today and a need to balance personal freedoms with public security. We are looking forward to presentations that address questions of how inclusive approaches to urban planning and design promote comfort and safety, as well as social and cultural diversity. There is also the question of how public spaces are continually being re-scripted and

transformed, and the question of how well such spaces function after re-development. Finally, there is the role of the avant-garde in urban development and more specifically how landscape architects come up with unexpected and provocative ways to address the ills of the city.

In addition to the themes described above, *Shifting Ground* will provide an opportunity for both academics and professionals to submit design propositions relating to the overall theme: ideas that illustrate innovative design interventions at all scales. Within the landscape architectural community, *Shifting Ground* will represent the first time the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects and the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture are co-hosting such an event. We see this as an important opportunity to share research, experience, and mutual goals relating to Landscape Architectural practice on an international scale. Moreover, these two organizations are creating a program that represents a broad range of practice areas, both intellectually and geographically.

During the same week, Vancouver will be hosting Habitat Reloaded, the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada 2006

Festival of Architecture, presented by the Architectural Institute of BC, and the 'World Planners Congress', presented by the Planning Institute of BC. Following the CSLA/CELA conference, we will give delegates from all three professions the opportunity to participate in a series of shared activities. This event is called *Super Saturday*, and it will be held on Saturday, June 17. This initiative represents another unprecedented opportunity to meet people from around the world who are actively engaged in designing and building cities. Following *Super Saturday*, the Government of Canada will be hosting the United Nations World Urban Forum, Habitat +30 at the Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre.

*We invite you to participate in Shifting Ground. The Call for Papers is posted at <http://www.sitelines.org/shiftingground/index.htm>, and the deadline for submission of abstracts is December 15, 2005. Come and join us in June 2006, and take part in the truly unique convergence of talent and energy gathering in Vancouver to address the theme of the United Nations World Urban Forum: "Our Future: Sustainable Cities -Taking Ideas into Action".*

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# Qualifying Examinations A Letter to the Editor

BY MIKLOS BARANSZKY-JOB

I am very fortunate to have benefited from the qualifying examination of the BCSLA and, as a result, have worked for the last thirty-five years as a Landscape Architect. In 1970, after failing the very first qualifying exam, I passed the second inquisition. Four out of eight candidates passed and I became the thirty-fifth member to do so.

The early examinations were conducted by the senior members of the Society. The Society was composed of a mixed bag of practitioners with diverse academic qualifications and ten to twenty years of practice in the field of Landscape Architecture in Canada and some draft-dodgers from our giant neighbour, thank heavens. The old ones got to know the new members, since

every one was involved in the exams. After passing, I became involved with the plant identification exam since I was teaching the course at BCIT. Many immigrant Landscape Architects took the course and gained knowledge of our coastal and interior flora and fauna.

The exam cost very little at that time. The examiners volunteered their time and some times they paid for the celebration feast for the successful candidates. Many candidates failed and some of them shamelessly cried like the Greek heroes in the travels of Ulysses. After their depression subsided, they tried again.

The BCSLA then succeeded in creating a local University curriculum in Landscape

Architecture. The apostles of our beliefs preached all the important courses and vigorous examinations were set at the University of British Columbia. As a result Masters and Doctors were born from talent, sweat, tears and also much joy.

Now to become a member of the BCSLA you must write a qualifying exam that comes from the South. If you want to call yourself a Landscape Architect, you have to pay a hefty sum in American dollars and rewrite everything to US standards. It is not enough to have two degrees from our own local UBC and to work a few years in a Landscape Architectural firm; but it is necessary to have our Southern neighbour's approval to call yourself a Landscape Architect in British Columbia, Canada.

I started out as a labourer, and groundsman and worked hard to learn a new language, earn a new university degree and qualify for the exam with the BCSLA. I became a proud and *Continued on page 10*

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# Specimen Trees - A Beautiful Day Out

BY NANCY PAUL CE CO-CHAIR

Anyone attending the Specimen Trees Tour on October 22, was warned to wear hip-waders and bring the best rain gear they could find. Fortunately, the weather forecast was wrong and the nursery tour was conducted in beautiful fall sunshine. We were welcomed by Walt Pinder, Sales Manager and Sandy Howkins, Operations Manager with a brief introduction to the nursery's history, while we drank coffee and ate donuts.

Once everyone had arrived, we hopped on to a hay bale wagon and set out into their 480 acres of trees, which include twenty acres of container plants and eight acres of greenhouses. Our first stop was a selection of evergreens they had pulled to entice Landscape Architects into using something a little more exotic than *Pinus nigra* or the ubiquitous Mugho pines. My personal favourite looked like a large martini glass, *Pinus densiflora* 'Tanyosho'. Equally exotic was *Picea pungens glauca* 'Foxtail' with swooshing branches that resembled bushy canine tails.

Our next stop was into the long rows of deciduous trees to learn about how their tree seedlings get started. Specimen Trees use a square pot called the Anderson Pot to get seedlings started. These pots are 6" square and are 8" tall or 14" tall. The advantage of these square pots over the traditional round pots is that they discourage the circular growth of roots, which can often girdle, and eventually strangle a plant. Vertical channels in the inside walls direct roots down rather than around.

Nearby, a tree spade was waiting to give us a demonstration on how trees are neatly cut out of the ground, lifted into the air and wrapped with the wire baskets which remain on the tree even after planting. The tree cutter cut a root ball to fit a 25" basket. The tree was a substantial size at 7 cm

caliper. Specimen Trees has tree cutters that can cut root balls to fit a 66" basket and, for very large trees, they have the capability to fit a 96" basket.

We returned to the hay bale wagon for a tour of the rows and rows of deciduous trees that cover the Nursery. There were endless varieties of street trees, small garden trees and stunning 'Specimen Trees' that looked impossible to move. (A row of mature Willows appeared to be permanent but we were assured that they could be moved if the need arose). The wagon ride didn't even dent the 480 acres.

Our tour ended with a delicious lunch. While we sat in the sunshine finishing dessert, Walt and Sandy brought out a group of their 7 gallon container plants showing variations on some very familiar plants. There were many outstanding specimens but two that caught my eye were the *Rhus typhina* 'Tiger Eyes', a much brighter and more dramatic plant than the traditional *Rhus typhina*, with bright green leaves turning yellow contrasting with fuzzy purple-pink stems. Also noteworthy was a dwarf version of the Beautyberry,

*Callicarpa dichotoma* 'Issai' which was packed with clusters of metallic purple berries on a much smaller and more compact shrub.

Apart from putting on a well-organized tour that was full of useful information, the staff at Specimen Trees are extremely helpful and approachable. They welcome questions from Landscape Architects and they have lots of suggestions. For those of you who couldn't make it to the Fall nursery tour they have offered to do another tour in 2006. Another beautiful day out...



*Specimen Sweetgum Collection, photograph by Adrienne Brown*

## Letter to the Editor

- continued from page 8

independent Canadian. I find it strange that a foreign country can dictate to our newspapers what to write, at what price we can sell our softwood lumber and more. Perhaps fighting the Soviet Union in 1956 for Hungarian national resources and agricultural products has left me biased.

If some would work in the US, let them take the L.A.R.E. But at UBC, a person has taken forty examinations by the time one receives a degree. In life there are too many exams and too few good Landscape Architects.

There are many kinds of members in the BCSLA: members registered, honorary, life, associate, student, affiliate, inactive and why not 'active' members? An active member is defined as a UBC Landscape

Architecture graduate with three years working experience in the field of Landscape Architecture. This will add to the membership fifty grateful new individuals, who will pay the membership fee.

These thoughts are swirling in my mind while I admire the intelligent work of our directors, and the work of the new

generation of Landscape Architects. Yet, the computer age should teach us something about the computer, which is not infallible, and used to decide the future of a graduate. Perhaps, I should not voice my doubts and wonder why, but why not? My aim is to stimulate discussion.



## Green Roofs - Beyond the Basics: A Post Session Summary

BY DAVID B. THOMPSON, MBCSLA

The BCSLA and BC Landscape and Nursery Association presented a workshop at the BC Institute of Technology Centre for the Advancement of Green Roof Technology on September 21, 2005. The event was partly funded by the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia.

Maureen Connelly, BCIT Head Program Researcher, led fifty-four participants through a comprehensive review of Green Roof Technology, including an historical perspective, global examples and specific case studies. Maureen proved to be a dynamic and engaging speaker. Using PowerPoint graphics, she documented current research and outlined the tangible benefits of green roofs, including performance data from the BCIT research installation.

The presentation compared intensive and

extensive approaches to green roof design and reviewed issues regarding esthetics, loading, irrigation, drainage, potential wind erosion and fire damage. Practical implementation of green roof technology was covered, including: the various materials and membranes used in construction, the characteristics of suitable planting mediums, and vegetation recommendations including maintenance.

For the second part of the session, Linda George, BCIT Community and Industry Liaison, Centre for the Advancement of Green Roofs, assisted Maureen by leading a hands-on exploration of typical green roof construction she designed specifically for the workshop. Workshop participants were engaged in creating sample installations from a wide array of actual products. The

resulting 'roofs', which varied with different implementation criteria, were 'tested' for performance. The design strategy and results were then reported to all participants.

The third part of the session was a tour of the purpose-built green roof laboratory at the Great Northern Way campus.

Technology within the freestanding building monitors and records interior and exterior conditions, allowing performance evaluation of the green roof above. Several smaller study and control installations were on site for comparison. Maureen, a true ambassador for Green Roof Technology, freely distributed her knowledge and enthusiasm during an in situ rooftop discussion.

Attendees received printed material, including the PowerPoint graphics, design guidelines and a green roof bibliography, which minimized the distraction of note taking. A light lunch and refreshments were included in the workshop fee. Informal feedback at the end of the session indicated that the practical information presented was impressive and definitely beyond the basics.

# Vancouver Urban Design Forum

BY CARL JOHANNSEN AND PAUL GEDYE

Over the past decade, the Vancouver region has hosted a veritable explosion of high density development. Downtown Vancouver in particular has posted some of the highest residential growth rates of any city on the continent, with triple-digit numbers in some neighbourhoods. This in itself is not unique as many downtowns in North America are currently experiencing a renaissance in downtown living; yet what is unique is the manner in which growth and densification have been achieved. A specific architectural typology has emerged from Vancouver, as well as a reputation for a focus on urban design, each of which are components to what is being dubbed: *The Vancouver Model*.

The Vancouver Urban Design Forum (VUDF) has been created to bring together all professionals working behind *The Model*,

to explore the phenomenon, to give it a voice, and to further improve the field of urban design in the Vancouver region. Similar to the Urban Design Working Group operating in Ontario, the VUDF provides an important forum for dialogue and debate between professionals involved in urban design theory and practice, in both public and private sectors, including landscape architects, architects, planners and engineers. Larry Beasley (City of Vancouver) and David Thom (IBI Group) have been instrumental in the group's start-up and continued progress since its launch in early 2004, and the Forum extends its gratitude to IBI for their continued sponsorship. The Forum also thanks Alan Boniface of Hotson Bakker Boniface Haden for developing VUDF-related graphics.

The VUDF is looking forward to expanding its quarterly meeting schedule in the coming year with more public events, partnerships, and industry-relevant discussion sessions. VUDF members are currently gearing up to participate in the upcoming World Urban Forum (WUF) and associated architecture, landscape architecture and planning conferences, to be held in Vancouver in 2006.

Urban design is playing an increasingly important role in areas experiencing rapid growth and change, and the VUDF intends to provide a constructive venue for debating and testing urban design theory and practice, to ensure its continued relevance to the times and the citizens of our city-regions.

If you are interested in joining the organization, presenting at our next meeting, or partnering for an event, please contact Carl Johannsen (CJohannsen@abbotsford.ca) or David Ramslie (david.ramslie@vancouver.ca).



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# Continuing Education for Inactive Members

BY NANCY PAUL CE CO-CHAIR

Due to a number of letters received by the Continuing Education Committee requesting a relaxation of CE requirements for Members with Inactive status, the Committee has responded by recommending to the BCSLA Board that Inactive members get a reduction in the number of credits they are obligated to acquire. Until now, Inactive Members were required to obtain the same number of CE credits that full members do: thirty over a three year period. For Inactive Members who have taken time off for travel, to raise a family, or even just to look at alternative career options, this proved onerous and in some cases, impossible.

The Continuing Education Committee has been undertaking a substantive review and adjustment of policy based on a few years of operation and input from the membership. The most recent Draft has been

reviewed by the BCSLA Board of Directors at the latest November meeting. Most of the wrinkles have been ironed out and the revised policy and reporting form are slated to be on-line before New Years.

At the last Board meeting, Pat Harrison, CE Committee Co-chair asked the Board's permission to release the following information in advance of adoption of the amended policy, which the Board has agreed should/will form part of it when it is released: Inactive members, as a separate membership category, will only be required to attain fifteen CE credits over the three year time span - a reduction of 50% from the current standard.

There are additional changes to the CE Requirements that are in response to letters received and comments recorded at our last



*Standing Stones, photography by Gregory Dash, Vancouver Park Board*

AGM. For example, there are no longer minimum credit requirements for 'Education and Training Programs' and 'Professional Activities', or any category. This frees up members to allocate credits across any combination (and proportion) of categories that suits their particular circumstance.

These changes will be reflected in the updated CE policy and reporting form

included with this edition of *Sitelines*, also available on the BCSLA website at [www.sitelines.org](http://www.sitelines.org).

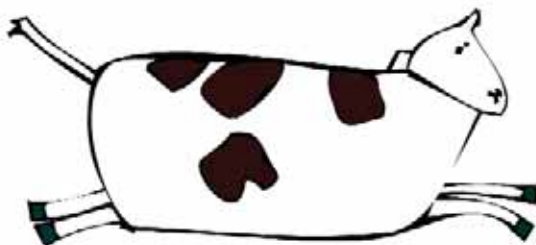
The Membership's response to fulfilling their CE requirements has been overwhelmingly positive and the concerns raised by individual members have been constructive and thought provoking. The CE Committee welcomes comments and suggestions to make the program respond to the needs of the BCSLA Membership. The CE Committee also welcomes new members, please join us!



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# Music and Landscape

BY KARIN ENGLAND

Since the beginning of recorded time people have believed that the universe is steeped in music, and that music creates order in the cosmos. Pythagoras calculated the proportions relating to musical intervals and made connections between musical and mathematical principles. These principles were then applied in understanding the organization of the solar system. He believed that the planets vibrate as they travel through their orbits and that the resulting intervals create harmonies known as the *Music of the Spheres*. This idea continued to carry currency as scholars such as Plato, Boethius, Ptolemy and Kepler all studied connections between music and the order of the solar system.

To modern readers, this idea may seem far-fetched. There are however, credible examples of humans hearing planetary sounds. *The Voyager* spacecraft collected the sounds produced by Jupiter's magnetosphere to help scientists understand that planet's polarity. Back on Earth, people claim to hear crackling sounds when solar winds interact with our planet's magnetic field during the Aurora Borealis.

I like to believe that the Greeks were right and if we could only put ourselves in place quiet enough, still enough and away from all other distractions we would hear the music of the spheres. And it would be beautiful beyond imagining.

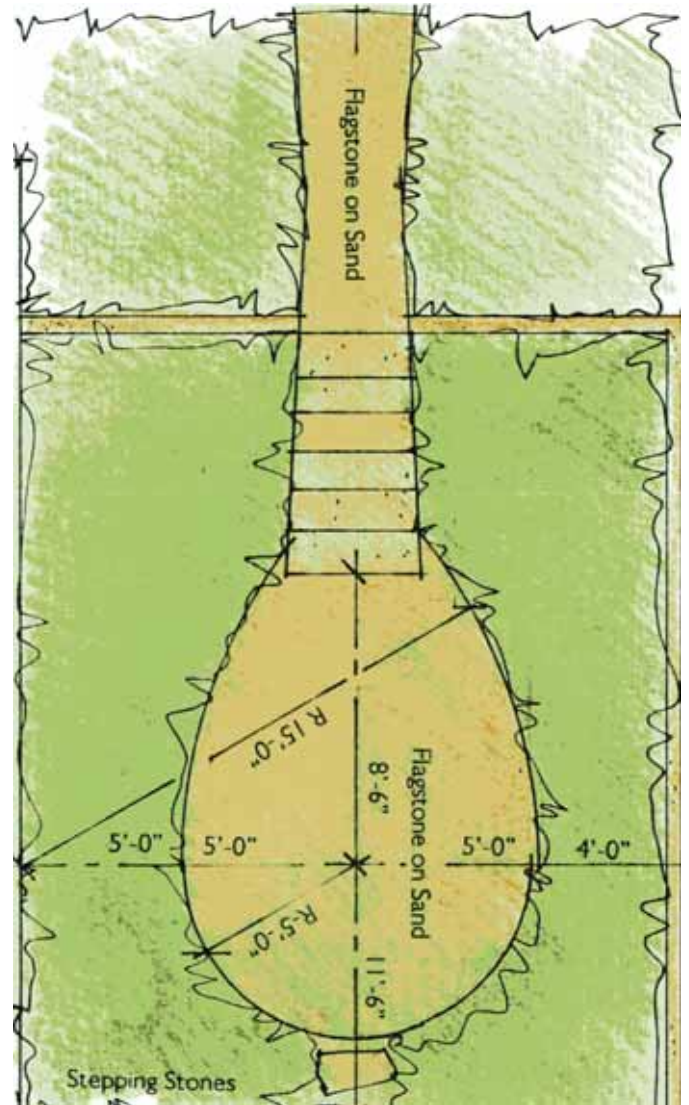
There are numerous compositions that were intended from inception to be performed outdoors. Perhaps the most famous example is Handel's *Water Music*. According to a somewhat spurious account of events, the composer had a disagreement with his patron, King George I. To heal relations, Handel arranged to have a new work, the *Water Music*, performed by a barge load of approximately 50 musicians that followed

the King on a scheduled public appearance punting down the river Thames. Apparently the dramatic appeal worked. The King reportedly liked the piece so well, he had it repeated three times that day.

Serenades account for some of my favourite music. The title suggests a romantic scene with a balcony or window above and a devoted suitor below; but by the classical era, these works usually involved a small chamber orchestra rather than a single performer. The idea that music can be written expressly for night-time adventures is a seductive one. One imagines romantic scenes of intimate cobbled streets, open patios that let light and the songs of impassioned chanteurs spill into the darkness to be shared by passers-by. The ambiance that the music provides to the scene enriches the public experience of the city at night.

There are times when music that was originally written to be performed indoors gets taken outside for some fresh air. For example, you can expect to hear *Alberta Bound* played often this year as that province celebrates its 100th birthday, and *God Save the Queen* will be heard when the Queen comes to join in the celebration.

I was disappointed as a child to realize that the rides we had at the Klondike Days fair



Mandolin Garden at Seldom Inn, drawing by Cameron Murray

in Edmonton were the same ones used at the Calgary Stampede. The rides get hauled around from place to place in the summer, and are not unique to one setting as I had imagined. So naturally, I was delighted years later when I visited a civic festival that grew from local traditions - *Fasnacht* in Basel. There, local residents join cliques that will compete during the course of the festival. Covert practicing, construction and decoration happens for months before the celebrations begin and strange noises are heard in the forests that border the town as musicians work out routines in secret. The festivities begin at 4:00 am on the Monday after Ash Wednesday. All the lights in town are turned off, and each costumed clique proceeds through town performing ethereal

*Continued on page 14*

# Music and Landscape

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music for piccolo and drum, displaying handcrafted lanterns which provide the only light for this event. Music of a different sort is heard later in the week, as marching brass bands compete to win the dubious honour of being the silliest ensemble. Poetry is also a part of the celebrations, and pokes fun at the previous year's events in the community. It is not uncommon for visitors to miss the jokes altogether, partly due to the unfathomable local dialect, and partly due to references to events that only locals would be familiar with.

Fasnacht also takes good advantage of Basel's architecture and open space. Parade routes are wide enough to allow room for spectators; but lined with buildings tall enough to create good acoustics and block wind. The route passes through civic squares where musicians can stop for a longer performance, or put their gear down for a while to grab a bite to eat at a local restaurant and warm up before continuing on their journey. Restaurants participate in the festival by staying open late and serving local specialties. Of course, the North American model for a parade doesn't allow for stopping part-way, but there are lessons we can take from the Swiss when considering parades in our cities.

One of my prized possessions is an alphorn, given to me by a Swiss relative, now sadly deceased. In addition to its sentimental value, I love the instrument because when playing it I feel connected to its history. Its preposterous length forces you to consider its traditional use as a signalling device. Made from mountain grown trees with naturally curved trunks, the eleven foot long instrument has a history that dates back two millennia. The people of the Alps used the instrument to signal day's end, soothe dairy cows at milking time, and was played by shepherds to calm sheep at the

end of the day. Long before mail service or telephones, melodies were exchanged across valleys, and could be used to signal 'all's well' or gather people together in times of need. The most exciting thing about this instrument is that when you play it, you engage in a sonic interaction with the landscape. In a very real way you are playing the mountainside when you play the alphorn. I take delight in finding places where there is an echo long enough that I can play duets with myself. Slight changes in horn's bell position can change the resonance of the instrument. Playing involves exploration of landscape, and results in a deepened understanding of place. Alphornists search out landscapes that are particularly well suited for music-making and will hike long distances to find them.

The places where music is played outdoors are as varied as the music that gets played there. Some settings are highly designed, some are rustic, and others are just where a musician happens to be when the creative urge strikes. Whatever the venue, there are things that designers can do to help create successful performance spaces.

Some method of easing the effects of bad weather goes a long way to affording successful outdoor music-making. Many devices can be used to provide protection from the elements, from roofs to temporary canopies. Wind, in my experience, is the biggest obstacle to outdoor performances. Many times I have watched music blow off of a stand, strained to hear a part that is covered by the rushing of wind, or watched equipment fall over due to windy conditions. Rain is also a nuisance as there are some instruments that should never be exposed to water. Cold hampers a musician's abilities as finger dexterity is reduced in freezing conditions. Of course, audience members would also appreciate being afforded shelter from the elements.

Some places have ambient sound that locates them in time and space. The lapping of waves and cry of gulls tells us that we live in a maritime city. Echoes and overhead traffic tell the story of a city of bridges which connect land and people throughout the region. There are the places in Vancouver with distinctive soundscapes that speak to the nature of our city. Other places have sound qualities that mimic musical forms. The daily pattern of neighbourhood street use is an example. The day starts softly then crescendos as residents rush to work, reaching a climax as children pass through on the way to school, and decrescendo-ing into the lull of late morning.

For me, the best example of a distinctively west coast sound experience is a trip on a Fraser River paddle-wheeler. The sound of the boat's paddle apparatus splashing in the water connects us with the river's past when such craft crowded the Fraser. This history could be played up with the addition of a steam calliope to the boat, as these instruments were traditionally played on steamboats to drum up business before the ship sailed. On the journey you hear sounds that speak to the physical characteristics of this place: the splashing of water and calls of gulls. The conversations in many languages that you are likely to hear on the boat tell of Vancouver's current position as an international city with a multicultural population and affluence that makes watery diversions such as this possible. This voyage can be construed as an auditory tribute to the region.

*This is an excerpt of a complete article submitted to Professor Douglas Paterson at UBC. For more information, please contact Karin @ englak@interchange.ubc.ca.*

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