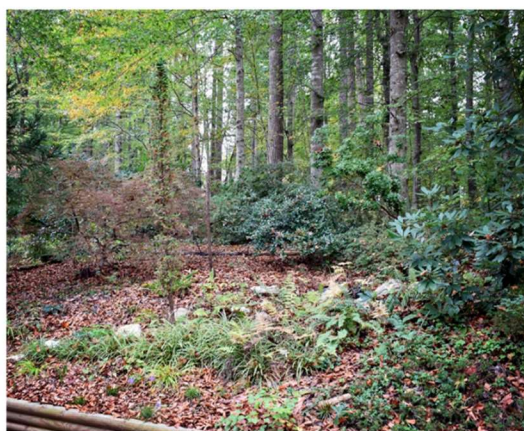


Landscape DESIGN

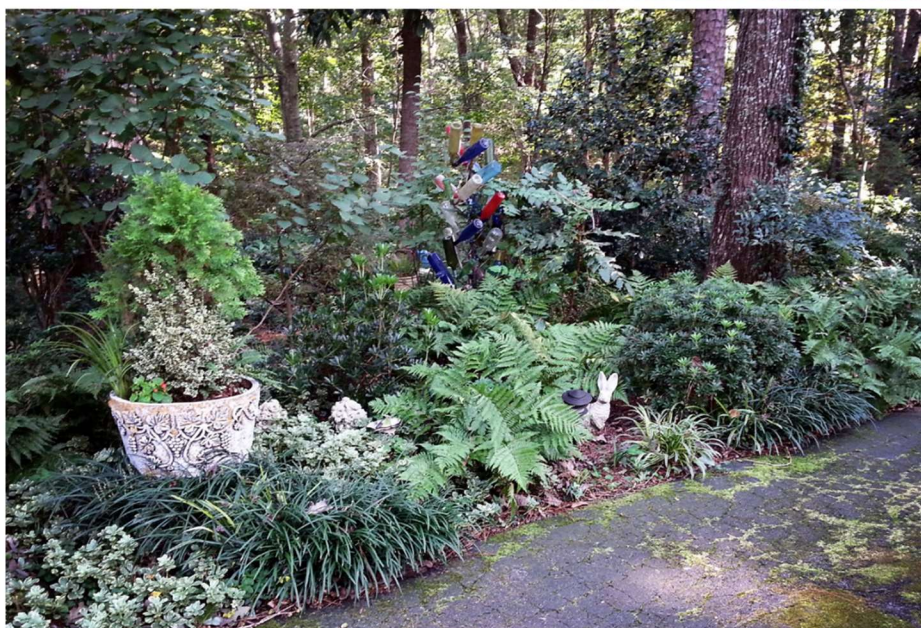
FIRST ENCOUNTERS WITH A LANDSCAPE DESIGN SCHOOL

BY ERICA WINSTON

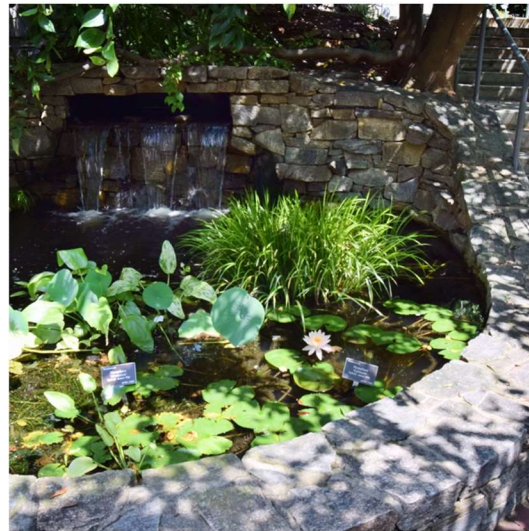
The first NGC Landscape Design School held in North Carolina in many years finished its fourth and final course in August, 2019. The timing for me was serendipitous. I had just retired, and had the time to renovate my home garden. Changing conditions had wreaked havoc with my once perennial-based plantings. For example, the local expanding deer population shrank the plant palette to a deer-resistant list. The



▲ A work in progress – my hillside garden.



◀ Deer-resistant plantings offer texture for interest.



▲ **LEFT:** Layered plantings are on display at JC Raulston Arboretum, a nationally acclaimed garden that boasts one of the largest and most diverse collections of landscape plants adapted for landscape use in the Southeast. It was the site of the landscape design school in North Carolina. **RIGHT:** A water garden at JC Raulston Arboretum.

diminished sunlight from a closing tree canopy had altered the micro climate.

The information-rich courses in the school taught me the difference between a landscape designer's perspective and my gardener's outlook. It was a transformative insight. As one instructor explained, "A garden is a part of the landscape." I discovered that thinking "bigger" to include the views beyond my property boundaries, altered the placement of some focal points and paths, creating a much more expansive feel on one side of the house.

Landforms

The school also taught me to pay more attention to my "landform," which is the term for ground level, or starting base of my site. As I started to create a site map, I discovered that this critical part of the landscape design process provided me with the opportunity to study the topography of my landform. I discovered that when I re-ordered the ferns and sedges and set them parallel to the natural depression

of the water's drainage on the hillside, a more naturalistic effect was achieved. In addition, the shape of the land was further accented by local quartzite rocks that I gently pushed into the hollow. When I adopted the landscape designer's perspective, my garden gained a more site-specific allure.

Insights into Public Landscapes

Several lectures in the school

addressed public landscapes, and the issues that drive large landscape projects. Ironically, maintenance is the major criteria for the long-term success of these projects. This means a lot more than keeping plantings healthy and neat. For example, I

had not previously considered the simple problem of trash collection in a large public space that may hold from as few as 20, or up to 100, trash receptacles that need to be emptied every day or so. An effective landscape design plan must allow for the easy access of the large vehicles that collect and remove trash.

"The school also taught me to pay more attention to my 'landform,'..."



Reflecting a trend in landscape design, "Xeriscaping: Not Just for the Desert," is a new course offered at Paul J. Ciener Botanical Garden in Kenersville, North Carolina. Medians in the parking lot all were xeriscaped.

In addition, ongoing lawn maintenance might require a hefty budget, which may total in the millions of dollars! Making an appeal to the maintenance bottom line would be a persuasive way to encourage public agencies to adopt more naturalistic areas in their landscapes.

Information gleaned in my LDS courses, particularly in the design and evaluation of public landscapes, has propelled me to be an active participant in discussions in my garden club regarding improvements to several parks in Raleigh, North Carolina. My efforts helped build support for completing an agreement to adopt a second park with the Raleigh Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department. That is a big sense of accomplishment!

Trends in landscape design

It is an exciting time for NGC Landscape Design Schools! In our LDS Course 4, the school chairman introduced part of the new curriculum, which included a workshop to evaluate a landscape design. The new curriculum reflects current industry trends in how to balance ecology and landscape design. In addition, students learn how the critical need for the support of ecosystems in landscape design encourages today's homeowner or park visitor to appreciate the beauty of naturalized plantings.

I'd like to express my thanks to Linda and Charles McLendon, who championed the landscape design school and brought it back to North Carolina. About 30 students, 16 of whom have become NGC landscape consultants, are glad

they did. Serving as the next chairman of LDS in North Carolina, we will hold a series in 2020 using the new curriculum. It will be invigorating to watch a new group of students broaden their understanding of the landscapes that bring us joy in so many areas we call home.

As members of garden clubs across the nation will attest, the champions of landscape design aren't just the industry professionals. They are parents of children using the school grounds, homeowner association boards and garden club members ... in sum, each of us. ■



Photos by Erica Winston

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▼ **Adding natural plantings to a small part of a yard supports pollinators and is an easy way to incorporate ecology into landscape design.**



▲ **A median filled with colorful zinnias supports bees and butterflies at North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh.**