



The pond features a sitting dock, a strolling path around the pond, and two small waterfalls that add ambience to the garden. A variety of wet-loving plants, such as astilbes, irises and deer fern, are planted on the pond banks. Japanese maples, hostas, and Sambucus trained in multi-stem trees are used in high spots.

Senga Lindsay is principal of SLA, Inc. in North Vancouver, B.C.

Design vision

Landscape professionals weigh in on the importance of good design

BY THERESA FORTE

Have you ever wondered how the experts see things? I've gathered a diverse group of landscape architects and designers around my cyber kitchen table for a conversation on the value of landscape design. Pour yourself a cup of coffee, pull up a chair and let me introduce you to our distinguished panel of experts.

It starts with a vision...

As a garden writer and photographer, I've had the opportunity to visit many beautiful gardens. Along the way, I've also visited numerous gardens that were difficult to photograph – while their creators may have had fascinating stories to tell, their gardens were less than inspiring. What is it that makes one garden more beautiful than another?

To get a great garden shot, I must select views, structural features or plant combinations that work together to make a pleasing composition. I also have to consider the fact that the picture may appear in unforgiving black and white when it is printed. This fact has taught me to look for strong structural components – they make the best pictures, along with the most pleasing gardens. In the process of writing about these gardens, I've also had to dissect and study the parts of each picture and then put them back together as a cohesive and hopefully, inspiring story. Each garden offers the opportunity to learn something new.

I've learned that it's the deliberate and thoughtful arrangement of the parts, cemented with passion for design that makes for a beautiful garden. This process begins with a vision. Landscape designers have the ability to see beyond the plot of land that lies before them – they can envision the space transformed into something quite new. Working with a client to translate this vision into a design, seeing it realized as construction progresses and the structure and gardens finally take shape, is the role of the designer.

Gathered around my cyber 'kitchen table' is a diverse group of Landscape Architects and Designers who are sharing a conversation with me on the value of design as it applies to the landscape. I encourage you to pour yourself a cup of coffee, pull up a chair and let me introduce you to our distinguished panel of experts.

Senga Lindsay is principle of SLA, Inc. in North Vancouver, British Columbia. She decided to follow a career in landscape architecture on the advice of her instructor at the Niagara Parks School of Horticulture, a Landscape Architect, who felt she had a knack for design, it's a decision she's never looked back on. Lindsay feels that her strong horticultural background has strengthened her design career.

What do you see as the greatest benefits to the homeowner in seeking the services of a Landscape Designer or Landscape Architect?

LINDSAY: It's the pure design aspect – a designer will pull together a vision. A cohesive landscape plan translates into cost savings for the client. We can point them to a plan that goes beyond their initial dreams.

Can landscape design improve both the image and the bottom line for a commercial client?

LINDSAY: The key is in knowing the avenues that will appeal to your client. Are they image conscious? Are they interested in community responsibility and working towards a greener world? Would they consider leaving a legacy – what are they doing for future generations? In terms of cost savings, incorporating a green roof on a large warehouse will save capitol costs in the long run. It will have a cooling effect and last longer than a conventional roof.

Can you share an example of a residential or commercial project?

LINDSAY: We are currently renovating our studio and designing a garden for the space the studio overlooks. Many of our favourite design features will be included in this project, a fire pit, pond and even a meditation pavilion. For our grand opening, we're planning a lantern party on the fall equinox. The garden will have two benefits: it will provide a healthy environment for staff which in turn may increase productivity, but it also will be a place to showcase the value of outdoor rooms to our clientele, many of whom are big developers. We can show them the value of a more humanistic design and how it can be adapted for multi-family developments.

If a promising student asked for your advice in following a career in landscape design, how would you advise them?

LINDSAY: A strong background in horticulture will really help you out. My studies at the Niagara Parks School of Horticulture really gave me credibility. This opened many doors for me with the municipalities here in British Columbia. Remember that a client knows if you really care about them – if it's coming from the heart.

Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

LINDSAY: My business philosophy is that if you are really passionate about what you do, you will really care about your clients and key into their needs. The bulk of our work is with ongoing clients and referrals from other developers. I believe that the good relationships we have with our clients, along with hard work and perseverance, are the keys to our success.