



APLD Student Spotlight

An Interview with Asta Grabauskiene, our 2009 International Landscape Student Design Awards Program Winner

By: Jules Bruck, PhD, APLD

When did you become interested in pursuing an education in landscape design?

Although I've been interested in horticulture since childhood, I've only decided on a career in landscape design about a year ago. As a child, I planted my parents yard with fruit trees and created my own secret shed out back, which I hid with climbing vines. It wasn't however until I moved into my own house as an adult, and began to shape the land, that I realized it wasn't too late to embrace a new career. After countless hours spent designing the lines of the lawn, carefully placing uncovered stones and experimenting with plant groupings, that I decided to make a change in my life and delve into a career for which I had a passion.

Explain your experience with art and/or horticulture prior to becoming a student of landscape design?

Besides my early interest in plants and design, I've experimented in singing, dancing, portraiture painting and piano playing. Although I never received a formal education in the arts, I've always been open to creative endeavors. While working as a translator of modern Norwegian fiction, I learned 2 skills that serve important roles in design: how to properly convey meaning and the persistence involved in completing a task from start to finish.

What is your favorite aspect of landscape design? Do you have a special area of interest?

I still see myself as a beginner so it's hard to say at the moment. I guess I would have to say it's the overall mood and view of the garden that interests me first. Although I may not know the exact plants I will use, I am acutely aware of what needs to be accentuated and what needs to be disguised. I'm also interested in making a garden look natural in its setting. Too often we adore plants and built elements from other climates or cultures that ultimately make a space look forced or artificial. The resources involved in implementing and maintaining such creations are unrealistic.

What is the main influence in your designs?

Although I've never been to an authentic Japanese garden, I find my inspiration in their distinct style. I think the principles used in creating this unique style, fundamental and applicable to any style garden. I particularly relate to the way they borrow from the surrounding landscape as well as their sense of modesty, purity and intellect. I'm also quite fond of and inspired by Russel Page, Anthony Paul and Tom Stuart Smith. I respect the functionality, and sustainability of their designs that reflect the needs of their clients while paying homage to their surroundings.

How do you address issues of sustainability in your design work?

I consider sustainability first when planning the layout of a garden. I try to eschew the fashionable and elaborate hardscape elements in favor of more plant based landscapes. I generally aim to create spaces that will continue to look better after each passing year while requiring the least amount of external input or subsequent replanting. I'm also a firm believer in redirecting precious rainwater that is often wasted but so valuable to a healthy garden.

When will you graduate?

I finish school next year.

What are your plans post-graduation? Do you see yourself continuing in the field of landscape design? Where do you see yourself in 5 years? 10 years?

I do see myself involved in the field of landscape design. My goal is to own my own business and to assist in elevating the profession here in my homeland. I would also like to take my business international through the aid of the Internet with on-line designs. My hope is that in 10 years I can invite you all to enjoy some of my flourishing gardens.

