

Responses to Questions submitted during March 7, 2025, Presentation

Prepared by Presenter, Lynda Ramirez-Blust

Question(s): Do you recommend any computer software instead of pen and paper? Or is pen and paper the gold standard? Lynda, do you hand draw everything? OR is there a suite of symbols you can buy to represent various plants?

Response: My personal preference is to develop ideas with pen and paper as I can work through ideas quickly. Consult the following resources for guidance on landscape graphics:

- Reid, G. W. (2002). *Landscape graphics: plan, section, and perspective drawing of landscape spaces (Revised Edition)*. Watson-Guptill Publications, Crown Publishing Group.
- Bertauski, T. (2019). *Plan Graphics for the Landscape Designer with Section-Elevation and Computer Graphics*. Waveland Press, Inc.

Depending on the needs of the project and client there are a variety of software tools that I use.

For simple but effective graphics, try Microsoft PowerPoint, Google Slides and Canva and use basic shapes – circles, triangles, rectangles. Just place a two or three letter initial representing the Latin name of the plant in the middle of the circle or use a call-out from a group of circles.

For more advanced drawing I use the Adobe Creative Suite: Illustrator, Photoshop, and InDesign or Sketchup. You can create your own, find free png images or purchase plant symbols from Adobe.

- Cantrell, B. and Michaels, W. (2015). *Digital Drawing for Landscape Architecture: Contemporary Techniques and Tools for Digital Representation in Site Design, Second Edition*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Tal, D. (2016). *Sketchup for Site Design: A Guide to Modeling Site Plans, Terrain, and Architecture, Second Edition*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Applications I have heard good things about, but not yet used, include ProCreate and Morpholio Trace which provide free hand drawing experience on a tablet. I have used AutoCAD, but there is a steep learning curve and often high price tag. Other applications include: Vectorworks, LandFX, Lumion, and Revit.

Question(s): How do you explain your choice of shapes and lines to people who wouldn't necessarily understand the importance of these choices? Is this in a write up? Or do you do it verbally?

Response: Good questions, but not easy to answer. I rarely have explicit conversations about the choice of shapes and lines as those choices are based on the look and feel the client has expressed an affinity for or desire to have. Clients tend to look at the whole composition and react to it rather than notice the specific elements that work together to create the experience.

Question(s): How would you prioritize these plant communities on a budget? I would love to convert the front lawn to a pollinator native garden but would need to do this in phases, in the most affordable way.

Response: I would start with trees and shrubs as they will be your anchor plants. Try your state forest service and buy tree and shrub seedlings. They start out little more than twigs but establish quickly and catch up to larger caliper (more expensive) trees. The seedlings will require some protection in the beginning, but the savings are well worth it. The Virginia Department of Forestry has an online store where you can purchase native trees and shrubs ranging from \$3-5 each. The seedlings will arrive bare root in the early spring for immediate planting. Here's a link to an article published by PennState Extension – [Planting Bare-root Tree Seedlings in Spring](#).

For herbaceous plants, there are local garden groups who share and trade plants. Contact your local master gardeners to see if there is a plant sale. Often you can buy native plants at a fraction of the price. You can start many plants from seed which requires more time, but costs less.

Once you have a plan in place and know what plants to be on the lookout for, you will be surprised at how many free and local options there are to source plants.

Question(s): Would love some good book recs on the science behind the principles Lynda's discussing. Could we please put that on the question list? IS there a mathematical formula to use? or are we just eyeballing it? The idea of visual weight seems very subjective. would be good to have a formula as I'm sure opinions differ widely.

Response: As mentioned during the presentation landscape design involves psychology, sociology, anthropology, human ecology, and more recently biophilia. Each design principle is linked to a body of scientific research beyond the scope of this presentation.

Here are three recommendations and starting points for further investigation and learning:

Book Recommendations:

1. Alexander, C., Ishikawa, S., & Silverstein, M. (1977). *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction*. Oxford University Press.
2. Hosey, Lance. (2012). *The Shape of Green: Aesthetics, Ecology, and Design*. IslandPress
3. Lynch, Kevin. (1960). *The Image of the City*. The MIT Press.

Research Starts:

- Proportion and Scale – research Golden Ratio and Rule of Thirds
- Balance – research the Theory of Symmetry which has roots in physics, math, and psychology.
- Repetition – research the work of Herman Ebbinghaus into understanding human memory.
- Transition – Research depth perception. Transition is used to create the illusion of depth and distance.
- Focalization – Research dominance in design. Human brains look for cues to quickly understand and process information. Focal points let humans quickly assess the most important element in space and make quick decisions.

- Unity – Research Gestalt Principles created by German psychologist Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka, and Wolfgang Kohler in the 1920s.

Question(s): In last photo on repetition, can something be used to keep pea gravel surrounding the stepping stones in place? Otherwise, could be dangerous...slip.

Response: Mulch glue, mulch adhesive, or gravel binder are products that can be sprayed on pea gravel to hold it in place. Various products have different formulations that make them better suited to specific materials and uses. Reapplication may be required. Read the packaging to confirm the product is effective for pea gravel and suited for your purpose. Mulch glue is not typically used in high traffic areas, but in the photo example, most of the walking happens on the large stone pavers. Confirm the product is safe for use around children, pets, vegetables, and other edible plants. Follow product instructions and safety precautions and test a small area before applying to the entire area.

Question(s): Where are some local spaces where one can see this? (Other than the famous traditional spaces like Dumbarton Oaks, Merriweather Post's house etc.) - churches, gardens, public or company buildings.

Response: In the DC, Northern Virginia, Maryland region, I recommend the following local, public spaces for design inspiration:

- Bon Air Park – Rose Garden, Sunny Demonstration Garden, and Quarry Shade Demonstration Garden
- Glencarlyn Library Community Garden, Arlington, VA
- Fort C.F. Smith Park, Arlington, VA
- Nature Conservancy (public garden behind the main building on Fairfax, Dr), Ballston, Arlington, VA
- Arlington Central Library, Arlington, VA
- Metropolitan (Met) Park in Crystal City, Arlington, VA
- Arlington House, Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, VA
- Green Spring Gardens, Alexandria, VA
- Meadowlark Botanical Gardens, Vienna, VA
- River Farm, Alexandria, VA
- The Bishop's Garden, National Cathedral, Washington, DC

- Smithsonian Gardens, Washington, DC
- Meridien Hill Park, Washington, DC
- Brookside Gardens, Wheaton, MD

Question(s): Could the English garden concept of "garden rooms" be considered a sense of unity?

Response: The concept of garden rooms would not be considered an example of the principle of unity, but it is a highly effective way to approach the design of unified outdoor spaces. Outdoor spaces, like rooms, have floors, walls, and ceilings. The floors may be grass, gravel, stone pavers, or wood. The walls may be trees, layers of shrubs and tall plants, fences, the exterior of a building or structure. The ceilings may be the sky, tree canopy, an awning or umbrella, the roof of a pergola, or a string of lights. The floors, walls, and ceilings each have qualities and characteristics (elements of design) that should work together to make a legible and coherent 'room.'

Question(s): Do you recommend slate chips vs wood chips for endurance on walkways?

Response: As noted by others in the chat during the presentation there are pros and cons for both slate chips and wood chips that should be considered when selecting the walkway material that will best meet your goals, user needs, budget, design aesthetic, and capacity for maintenance. For walkways, slate chips are long-lasting, weed suppressing, and aesthetically pleasing, while wood chips are natural, cost-effective, and eco-friendly providing benefits like soil improvement and moisture retention.