



Disneyland®

LARGE SCALE LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

At Disneyland, there are 76 developed acres, 15 turf varieties, a million annuals, 2,500 trees, 800 plant species, 25 miles of irrigation pipe, and 42,000 sprinkler heads. It takes 45 employees year-round to do the job.

by Heide Aungst, associate editor





"All the world is a stage..."

Shakespeare wrote those words. Walt Disney believed them.

Disneyland in Anaheim, Calif., doesn't have employees. It has "Cast Members."

There aren't any customers, just guests.

And the stage isn't a raised platform in front of an audience. It's 76 acres of green turf, towering trees, and breathtaking floral displays.

The star of the show is landscape superintendent Ken Inouye, a Disney-type character himself. Inouye has the wisdom of Snow White's Doc and the smoothness of Cinderella's Prince Charming. He can oversee a landscape with the creative eye of Gepetto, Pinocchio's creator.

Of course, he has help. Disneyland's landscaping department employs 45 people, including supervisors, foremen, and an overwhelming 30 gardeners.

The crew performs an extensive amount of work during the year. For example, three pipefitters maintain an irrigation system with about 25 miles of pipes, 42,000 sprinkler heads, and 170 automatic clocks. The tree pruning crew of seven trims 2,500 trees a year, ranging from a 12-inch dwarf spruce to an 80-foot eucalyptus.

With 800 plant species represented from 40 nations, landscaping is indeed the key to Disneyland's setting.

Walt Disney had a goal when he built the theme park in 1955. "I don't want the public to see the world they live in while they're in the park," he's quoted as saying. "I want them to feel they're in another world."

'God of horticulture'

Disney left creative control to architectural designers Bill and Jack Evans. Inouye calls Bill Evans "the god of horticulture."

Evans, 74-years old, still works as a consultant to Disneyland. Inouye hopes to co-author a book on the park's horticulture with Evans.

Evans published the book *Disneyland World of Flowers* in 1965. Copies, stashed in a warehouse, were

Far left: The patchwork garden in Storybook Land boasts more than 25 varieties of plants.

Purple and yellow-orange annuals decorate the entrance to Tomorrowland.



The theme park's hero, Mickey Mouse, made up of a brilliant display of flowers, decorates Disneyland's entrance.



Phoenix *reclinata* palm trees, donated to Disneyland by Cecil B. DeMille, originally grew outside Space Mountain in Tomorrowland. Because of the remodeling of the ride, the palms are awaiting a new home.

eventually thrown out. Inouye's copy may be the only one remaining. Still, the plant varieties have changed so much in the last 30 years that an updated version is needed.

One change was an expansion from 10 turf varieties to 15, for what Inouye describes as "evolutionary reasons." Turf covers only about three acres at Disneyland. Railings surrounding the lawn areas made it possible to replace tough varieties designed for heavy traffic with more visually appealing turf.

"I give credit to the turf industry for developing the many varieties which cater to different needs," Inouye says.

Turf includes Santa Ana, Tifdwarf, and other varieties of bermudagrass; St. Augustinegrass; the bluegrasses Pennblue and Marathon; and fescues, including creeping red fescue.

The velvet-looking bright green grass outlining the entrance to Storybook Land is really a hardy zoysiagrass.

Where turf doesn't grow, there's sure to be one of about 10 varieties of groundcover.

Inouye uses few turf mixes because it lessens the impact. He approaches flower usage the same way.

"From a design aspect large quantities are more impressive than mixtures," Inouye explains. "When we put anything in for color, we plant a lot of them."

Ever-changing color

"A lot" is an understatement. The seven acres of flowerbeds hold 800,000 to a million annuals a year.

Inouye's agricultural background sneaks through when he refers to his "croplists" of annuals. About 60 percent of the flowers are ordered three months to two years ahead of time. All flowers aren't pre-ordered because of rotation of the beds.

Beds are replanted every three to four months. Usually healthy plants aren't replaced, although about 20 percent of the time flowers are changed regardless of their condition.

Soil is also changed every several years. Disneyland soil is a combination of sand, redwood sawdust, and nutrients.

Color plays a big role in landscaping Disneyland. The flowers bring animation to the landscaping, the way Disney himself brought it to the screen.

The entrance to Tomorrowland, for example, is 4,000 sq. ft. of blue and yellow flowers—pansies in the summer; ageratum and yellow marigolds in the winter.

One day Inouye decided to change the flowers to orange and yellow. "I



Disneyland's landscape superintendent Ken Inouye shows off a topiary hippo near the "It's A Small World" ride in Fantasyland.

got bored," he says casually. "Boy, did I hear about it!"

Seems the orange just didn't match the blue and yellow umbrellas on the nearby tables.

Although seasons don't hit southern California in the form of drastic weather changes, they sweep through Disneyland in varying hues.

Winter finds the park decorated in blues and reds. Christmas poinsettias are used as bedding plants.

Spring and summer comes alive with bright pinks, oranges and yellows. White, a color used year round, is especially evident in the dozens of Easter lilies planted to mark the season.

Shrubs: time to mature

Besides the flowers, Inouye's crew uses other plant materials to define the moods of the different "lands" guests wander through.

Tomorrowland's shrubs are pruned in futuristic geometric shapes.

Frontierland, sporting a rugged look, could pass as the backdrop of an old John Wayne flick. The drought-tolerant ornamental grass, penecetum, at the entrance to Frontierland adds to the wild West look.

Few aren't charmed by the topiary animals found near the "It's A Small World" ride in Fantasyland. The shrubs, shaped into elephants, hippos and the like, take five to 15 years to develop.

The animals are made from a variety of shrubs such as junipers, including Armstrong and Sea Spray.

All in all, Disneyland has nine acres of shrub areas.

Fantasyland also boasts one of the two areas of the park which Inouye considers his biggest challenge. Storybook Land could be a horticulturist's nightmare, but to Inouye it's a dream.

Spectators take a boat ride through the mouth of a whale into the miniaturized land. The landscaping is de-

signed on a one-tenth scale.

A three-inch weed on such a scale is magnified to look like a 10-foot giant against a three-inch house. "It's one of the higher maintenance areas," he says.

The dwarf albeta spruces in Storybook Land developed when their roots were confined by a glacier. Tree roots are kept confined in metal containers to slow foliar growth. The trees live about five years.

"Turf" in Storybook Land ranges from Irish moss to Korean grass. Patchwork gardens display about 25 plant varieties of different colors and textures. At a distance the gardens look like someone spread Grandma's homemade quilt on the river's bank.

Inouye's crew is also responsible for maintaining the river and the 17 million gallons of circulating water used on rides in the park.

"We use chemicals in the waterways, but nothing stronger than pool chlorine," Inouye explains. "We dye it to make it look dirty."

Inouye tries to avoid using any toxic plant materials or chemicals in the park. After all, children will stick anything in their little mouths.

Although Inouye has four full-time licensed pest control operators on staff, he tries to use cultural methods for controlling insects.

One way of doing this is by using plant varieties with a natural ability to combat pests. Regular pruning and keeping dead foliage off trees also helps prevent infestations.

When a problem does occur, often spraying a plant with untreated water will work just as well as chemicals.

Did you know?

Disneyland is not without its share of cocktail party trivia. Like, did you know that the Phoenix reclinata palm trees usually in front of Space Mountain (they're now awaiting a new home because of remodeling) once belonged to Cecil B. DeMille?

Or, that the wood preventing the beautiful *lepto spirma* tree from falling into the water surrounding Sleeping Beauty's Castle is from a Mexican ironwood, one of the few woods which won't deteriorate in water?

Or, that the "original" live Swiss Family Robinson tree is still growing only a few miles from Disneyland? (Rather than move the tree, they built a concrete ficus, but got the striatia going the wrong way in the process).

Well, Inouye confesses, working at Disneyland is bound to make even a landscape superintendent a great storyteller.

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