

# On Design

by Will Perry, managing editor



## *In a New England garden*

**T**hanks to the work of Carol R. Johnson & Assoc., we're able to step back in time—to the mid-1880s when English-style gardens softened the urban landscape of many New England towns. This historic garden is the central focus for a group of restored 19th century houses in University Green, Cambridge, Mass.

The garden was designed to soften the height and mass of a new condominium complex and to integrate it into the rest of the historic district. Because it rests above an underground parking garage Johnson used polystyrene foam as a fill material and to complement a lightweight wire mesh product that acts as a drainage material. Expanded shale was used as a fill material under walkways and the structural loads were estimated for each square foot of the garage roof. All the plant life was tested by Johnson to be sure it could thrive in the 12 inches of soil available.

The garden itself features arched, lighted entryways, brick walks, granite cobble walls, a manicured lawn and shade trees to provide an overall sense of tranquility. Flowering fruit trees, perennial flower borders, a kitchen herb garden with bird bath and a grape arbor give added layers of detail, enrichment and a sense of place and offer color throughout the growing season.

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## Beauty along a Florida road

In 1983 the business community and homeowners of Marco Island, Fla. collected a special tax to fund the landscaping of neighborhood roadways. A. Gail Boorman & Assoc. was chosen to design the South Barfield Drive corridor, which serves as a collector to a large area of waterfront homes in the southern portion of the island. "Our challenge was to create a sophisticated residential roadway landscape that derives its characteristics from the natural history of the area," says Boorman.

To accomplish that end, the design and plant palette were kept simple, creating a visual flow of repeated elements that give the area a bold, unique identity. Berming was extensively used, symbolic of the upland rolling hills of the area. Earth sculpting and plant massing enhances the residential scale and creates a flow of visual continuity. The relationships of trees in groups is reminiscent of natural patterns found in native hammocks. Grasses (both native and ornamental) are extensively used.

Boorman used native plant selections whenever possible and non-natives were selected to complement the native look. All plants conform with the xeriscape program implemented by the local water company and require minimal maintenance upon maturation.

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## Business amongst the trees

Next door to the Morton Arboretum outside Chicago is the Corporetum Office Complex, a 75-acre site hosting nine office buildings adjacent to the Illinois East-West Tollway. It was developed to provide a prestigious office campus environment to attract major corporations.

Landscape architect John M. Ryan, of Ives/Ryan Group, Inc., Des Plaines, Ill., used large plant materials to compensate for a total lack of existing mature vegetation in the area. Five to six inch shade trees and 14-foot ornamental trees were used in key viewing and access areas. The linear nature of the site in combination with its orientation to major highways on both the front and rear exposures resulted in viewable parking lots. These lots are screened through the establishment of "native groves," which introduced the feeling of forest remnants along the project frontage. These groves are composed of plants that associate together in nature. A typical grove consists of an anchor of shade trees spaced thirty to fifty feet apart, which are then underplanted with closely spaced shade-tolerant trees and masses of shrubs that naturally colonize. The grove is mulched with a base of leaf compost overlaid with wood chips. Its edges are planted with forest edge ornamental trees and perennials.

It should come as no surprise that this design won awards from the American Association of Nurserymen, the Chicago Sun Times and the Illinois Landscape Contractors.

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