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## The giving trees of the 9/11 Memorial

**A** cold rain fell on the 9/11 Memorial the morning of Feb. 25. Then a thick fog rolled in, engulfing the New York City skyline in a sea of gray.

The dreary weather was a fitting backdrop as visitors perused the names of more than 2,700 people who perished in New York on September 11, 2001. Some of them took pictures. Others outlined the engraved letters gently with their fingers.

Through it all, the memorial's gushing waterfalls silenced the hushed conversations of visitors, leaving a resounding quiet upon the site, even as the city roared with life beyond its walls.

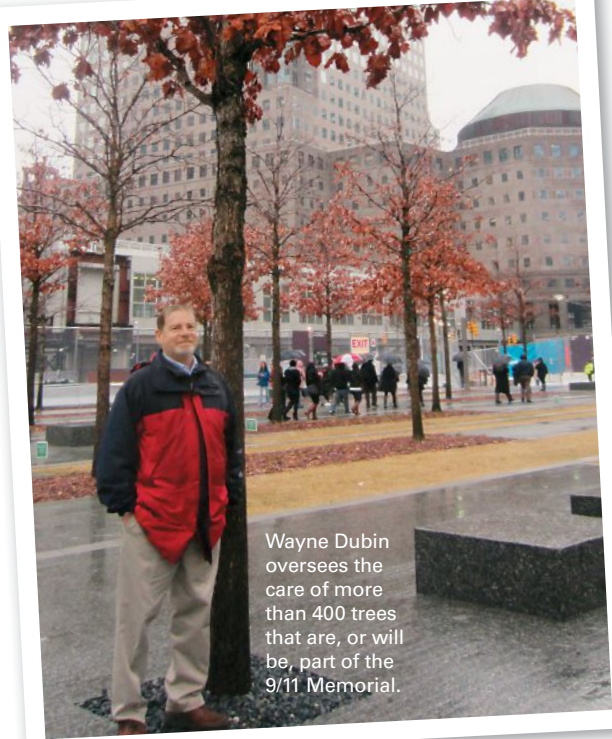
It felt strange to be at the memorial, to feel so vividly the space of 10 years that have passed since that tragic day. It's just one of many sentiments that collide at the memorial. Look at its two, acre-wide basins and you'll feel the weight of knowing that the World Trade Center once stood there. That's when you realize how truly enormous those buildings were. That's when you feel, down to your core, how much life was lost that day.

You sense it even before you lay eyes on the more than 2,700 names carved in stone on the site.

As a visitor, I was hardly immune to the memorial's significance. But I wasn't there to pay my respects. I was there for a different reason: to write about the role of the memorial's landscape — specifically its trees.

With me was my host, Wayne Dubin, vice president and division manager for Bartlett Tree Experts. Dubin oversees the care of the memorial's roughly 225 swamp white oak trees. And more than 200 swamp white oaks under his tutelage in New Jersey will join them at the site by the time memorial construction is complete.

As the one overseeing the care of the memorial's trees, Dubin feels a great responsibility for them.



Wayne Dubin oversees the care of more than 400 trees that are, or will be, part of the 9/11 Memorial.

They are, after all, his livelihood. He notices every detail about them. Pointing to a missing chunk of bark on one of the trees, he observed it didn't fall away naturally. "I'm not happy to see that," he said.

It was the voice of a man who has more than 20 years of experience in tree care. A man who takes ownership of, and great pride in, his work.

Dubin knows how important the memorial is. It's why he cares so much that the trees remain healthy and beautiful. Yet he knows darn well that people don't go there to see the trees.

Even so, the trees' role in the memorial's landscape is important. Without their shade, summertime visitors strolling the memorial's black stone would bake beneath the blazing sun.

Dubin's ardor is an important reminder that much more goes into maintaining the 9/11 Memorial than meets the eye. There are, after all, scores of people behind it. It's a collaborative effort built upon a thoughtful, creative vision and hours and hours of hard work.


It's work that makes it just a little bit easier to carve, quite literally into our memories, those who made the ultimate sacrifice on 9/11.

Read more about the memorial's trees and the people behind the 9/11 Memorial in our April cover story.



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# A *greener* land



Through their work with the *Sustainable Sites Initiative*, landscape contractors are supporting – and capitalizing on – Mother Nature.

BY **BETH GERACI** SENIOR EDITOR

**T**HE SUSTAINABLE Sites Initiative (SITES) Pilot Program has a certain obstacle course-like excitement to it. It's like the Amazing Race of the landscape world, without the race.

At a time when the landscape industry is increasingly turning to sustainable practices and LEED-certified buildings, the SITES Pilot Program is shedding new light on the importance of practicing ecological responsibility outside — on property.

The two-year pilot program launched in June 2010 and will end this June. Ultimately, it will lead to a new certification in the industry, one that will give the same panache to sustainable properties that LEED certification does to green buildings.

And for landscape maintenance contractors, SITES certification means much more than preserving the health of the ecosystem. It also can save you money, inspire your workers to be more resourceful, and strengthen your marketing power.

### How it works

At its core, SITES strives to inspire landscape professionals to be environmentally conscious, challenging them to use ecologically sound materials and methods that ultimately enable land to be more self-sustainable.

Spearheading the project are the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, the American Society of Landscape Architects and the U.S. Botanic Garden.

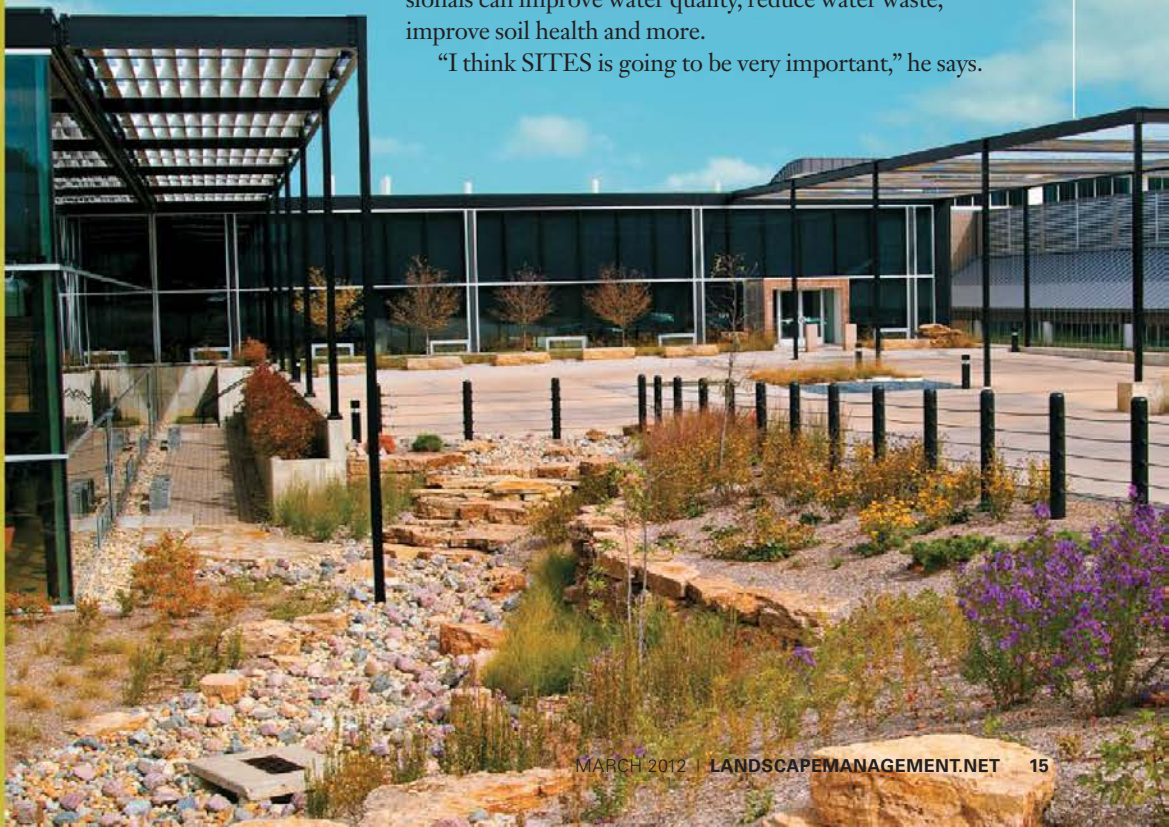
“Through the landscape decisions you make, you can bring back good things, like cleaner water, or sequestering carbon in the ground,” says the wildlife center’s executive director, Susan Rieff.

Stephen Cook recognizes that, too. A division account manager for Brickman Group, Cook sits on the SITES Materials Subcommittee, as well as the Sustainable Sites technical advisory group of the U.S. Green Building Council.

By improving the way ecosystems function, he says, landscape professionals can improve water quality, reduce water waste, improve soil health and more.

“I think SITES is going to be very important,” he says.

The Novus Campus is one of the three SITES pilot projects that have been awarded certification. The prominent area near the facility entrance had previously presented a problem for storm-water flow and drainage. Site enhancements created a rocky outcropping with native plantings and a combination of techniques for slowing runoff and improving water quality. The area has become home to native animals and insects.





As part of his SITES pilot project, Stephen Cook and his design team created this vegetated swale at Marriott headquarters to slow surface runoff and improve water quality.

***“We expect a lot of obstacles during the pilot project and embrace them because it will help the system become more robust in the end.”***

— STEPHEN COOK

It’s “riding on the momentum from the LEED rating system.... Really, to neglect the environment now will cost us greatly in the future.”

And, reducing a property’s environmental problems goes hand in hand with SITES’ second major goal — reducing costs.

“If you plant things that require lots of chemicals, lots of water, there are costs in that,” Rieff explains. “There are ways you can design the landscape that can contribute to saving money and preserving the environment.”

So whether it’s reducing the amount of drinking water used to irrigate, or transporting materials from sources near the work site to minimize fuel use, the SITES Pilot Program awards credits to participating teams who practice such methods successfully.

For a project to get stamped with certification, it must earn at least 100 credits on a 250-point scale.

It took a panel of experts in soils, hydrology, vegetation, human health and other areas more than four years to establish standards for SITES certification.

Through their efforts, they created national guidelines and performance benchmarks for sustainable land maintenance, construction and design practices.

The pilot program measures how effective those guidelines and benchmarks are once they’re put into practice.

“I do think there’s great importance for our industry,” DeSantis Landscapes President Dean DeSantis says of SITES. “It focuses on the areas where we can affect change. They’re creating essentially a guideline for landscape contractors, and if you’re not paying attention to that out here, you’re missing a lot of business opportunity.”

To be certified, the program requires projects to meet 15 prerequisites covering everything from site selection and allowed materials to soil restoration and sustainable construction practices (see sidebar, page 19).

More than 150 pilot projects across the country are in progress or have been completed. They were selected from among more than 300 applications based on size, project type and location. The process is so competitive that to date only three projects have received certification, on Jan. 25.

### **Volunteers who make it happen**

Propelling the projects are teams of professionals who volunteer their time, purchase their own materials, and if necessary, train their own crews.

DeSantis says the company’s previ-

ous work on several LEED projects prompted its interest in the SITES Pilot Program.

Whereas LEED focuses on the walls of a structure in, SITES focuses on property outside those walls, says DeSantis, whose project was a residence in Portland, OR.

“The owners said, ‘I don’t want to use any chemicals. I want this to be the greenest thing on the planet,’” DeSantis recalls. The project also entailed reuse of everything on the property.

Those things made the project a challenge for the DeSantis team — albeit a welcome one.

The DeSantis crew performed riparian enhancement on a creek on the property to promote fish health and converted a 7,500-square-foot weed field to a native and adaptive

*continued on page 18*

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**P R O V E N   S O L U T I O N S**

## COVER STORY

*continued from page 16*  
plant garden. Before the garden was created, the field was sheet mulched to improve soil quality and water holding capacity.

Sheet mulching was new to the DeSantis team. It involved covering the entire backyard with cardboard. The cardboard attracts worms, which break down the cardboard over time. The team then topped the cardboard with six inches of straw and 12 inches of compost, which, like the cardboard, break down over time and create richer soil.

Ultimately, DeSantis says, “we revitalized and re-energized the natural ecosystem on the property.”

Ron Foil, president of RG Foil Landscapes Inc. in Santa Barbara, CA, also volunteered on a residential project. His work involved rain water harvesting, installing a green roof, native landscaping, and constructing four different types of irrigation systems. Foil



For this certified pilot project at the University of Texas, Arlington, a brownfield site was redesigned, turning a past drainage problem into an amenity.

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also installed a live roof on the property, which he first had to get certified for.

The property was small — only one-third of an acre. That posed the biggest challenge.

“How you handle odd spaces, there’s a certain method to doing that,” says Foil. “It was more time consuming than a typical project. The green roof

is probably 25 feet off the ground, so just getting the materials up there was an ordeal.... Everything takes longer than usual.”

The narrowness of the driveway also made things difficult. “It was a little tiny site with a tiny one-lane drive,” Foil says. “It was difficult to transport the

*continued on page 21*

## 15 PREREQUISITES FOR SITES CERTIFICATION

1. Limit development of soils designated as prime farmland, unique farmland and farmland of statewide importance
2. Protect floodplain functions
3. Preserve wetlands
4. Preserve threatened or endangered species and their habitats
5. Conduct a pre-design site assessment and explore opportunities for site sustainability
6. Use an integrated site development process
7. Reduce potable water use for landscape irrigation by 50% from established baseline
8. Control and manage known invasive plants found on site
9. Use appropriate, non-invasive plants
10. Create a soil management plan
11. Eliminate the use of wood from threatened tree species
12. Control and retain construction pollutants
13. Restore soils disturbed during construction
14. Plan for sustainable site maintenance
15. Provide for storage and collection of recyclables



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