The Legacies of James van Sweden and Douglas Tallamy

Two recent events and a recurring one prompted this article. The first event was the death of James van Sweden on September 20, 2013, and the second event was a lecture by Douglas Tallamy at URI on September 28, 2013, hosted by the RI Wild Plant Society. At first blush, it would be hard to link the two events into a common theme: van Sweden was an award-winning landscape architect and co-founder of the D.C.-based landscape architecture firm Oehme-van Sweden (now known as OvS) and Tallamy is professor and chairman of the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware. However, both men have promoted the use of native plants, in places both large and small. The recurring event is the lectures on landscaping with native plants that I have given many, many times, with its focus on the use of natives to attract wildlife.

James van Sweden

James van Sweden (1935-2013) was the son of a building contractor and grew up in a large Dutch community in Grand Rapids, Michigan. From an early age, he had a love of gardening and plants. He sharpened his gardening skills and love of design in the small backyard of his family’s suburban bungalow in Grand Rapids and during winters in Fort Myers, Florida. In 1960, at the age of 25, he earned a Bachelor of Architecture degree from the University of Michigan and went on to study landscape architecture at Delft University of Technology in The Netherlands. After three years, he returned to the U.S. and became a partner at Marcou, O’Leary and Associates. In 1975, he founded a partnership with Wolfgang Oehme (1930-2011). The Washington, D.C. firm, now known as OvS, encompasses architecture, landscape architecture and urban design. In addition to a large residential practice, OvS’s work includes the New American and Friendship Gardens at the U.S. National Arboretum, World War II Memorial in D.C., the Gardens of the Great Basin at the Chicago Botanic Garden, the United States Embassy site in Kabul, Afghanistan, and the Native Plant Garden at the New York Botanical Garden. Most of these designed landscapes utilized what the firm called “The New American Garden Style.” Inspired by Jens Jensen’s approach to Prairie Style landscape architecture, the New American Garden Style is a metaphor for the American meadow. It reflects the beauty of the natural landscape, in all four seasons, liberating plant materials from forced and artificial forms, allowing them to seek a natural course as they weave a tapestry across the garden plane. The style relies heavily on the use of native plant
President’s Letter
Jennifer Judge, ASLA

Hello Everyone,

I want to thank you all for not only taking the time to read our newsletter but I would like to say a special thanks for having been given the opportunity to serve as President this past year for the Chapter. I have really appreciated the teamwork within the Executive Committee and fellow Associations, traveling to Washington, D.C. and the annual meeting representing our Chapter, as well as the outreach to organizations and professional groups. Collaborating with others to organize various events including the Women In the Dirt documentary showings, PARK(ing) Day and updating our website have been a few of the highlights during my term and I look forward to continuing these efforts as Past-President next year. As I pass the baton to Kurt Van Dexter, moving forward within our positions of the Chapter, I know that you will be in good hands and look forward to working with him this year.

As Kurt and I advance in our Executive Committee positions this fall at the annual meeting and expo in Boston, I want to share a great opportunity while at the meeting and expo with you designed for landscape architects (or anyone visiting Boston with an interest in our profession) while visiting Boston. The BSLA has launched its latest endeavour, “The Landscape Architect’s Guide to Boston.” This fantastic collaboration of 28 nationally recognized landscape architects has resulted in a guide to users that offers web and mobile tours of 100 historic and contemporary landscapes across 26 neighborhoods throughout Boston. I recommend that you check it out online at http://www.asla.org/boston/. Having previously lived in Boston myself, I find it particularly helpful to see the “T” information of how to get to the various sites via public transportation.

In addition to the Guide, I’m excited to learn that there has been a strong interest to volunteer at this year’s annual meeting and expo by our in-state landscape architecture students from the University of Rhode Island and Rhode Island School of Design. More than 26 students will be participating this year. They will be spending time helping National with various tasks throughout the day including being room monitors inside general sessions and education sessions, as well as being volunteers on the EXPO show floor and the bookstore. They will then be given badges that will allow them into sessions and the EXPO for their earned hours. I hope that the students have a great time being involved and many thanks to the professors and President-Elect Kurt Van Dexter, who are helping make this available to them.

Speaking of volunteering, please keep an eye out for a survey that will be circulated soon asking you which issues matter most to you as landscape architect. Our hopes are that if the key topics and issues are identified, perhaps more members would be more actively involved. Involvement with the Chapter doesn’t necessarily mean filling an Executive Committee member’s position but perhaps being involved with volunteering in assisting with a National Parks project, an elementary school project, PARK(ing) Day, programs and events, student mentoring, etc. Please take the time to participate so that the Chapter can then serve and represent you better.

The Chapter recently collaborated with AIARi Chapter and Transport Providence, in what

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RIASLA Newsletter is published bi-monthly by
the Rhode Island Chapter – American Society of Landscape Architects
The newsletter will publish news of interest to Landscape Architects and allied professions, including upcoming meetings, awards, job opportunities and other information. RIASLA reserves the right to edit or reject any submissions.
**President’s Letter**

was the first official PARK(ing) Day Providence. It was a great turnout and was met with a lot of enthusiasm from local landscape architects, architects, residents and businesses.

SITES partners ASLA, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center at the University of Texas at Austin, and the U.S. Botanic Garden met with senior staff and marketing and communications staff of the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) and Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI) to discuss marketing and promotion plans for the SITES-GBCI partnership, the upcoming release of SITES v2, and the beginning of SITES open project certification. Discussions will continue among the communication staff of the SITES partner organizations and GBCI/USGBC.

The Sustainable Sites Initiative™ (SITES™) has announced eight new projects that have achieved certification under the nation’s most comprehensive rating system for the sustainable design, construction and maintenance of built landscapes. These projects, as part of a group of 150 projects participating in an extensive, two-year pilot program, have applied the 2009 SITES guidelines and met the requirements for pilot certification.

"The effort and time these projects have spent to field test SITES 2009 guidelines and ensure their site is sustainable is commendable and has been a tremendous resource for informing the development of the SITES v2 Rating System, which will be released later this fall," said SITES Director Danielle Pieranunzi, who is based at the Wildflower Center.

Since June 2010, pilot projects have been testing the 2009 rating system created by dozens of the country’s leading sustainability experts, scientists and design professionals. The diverse projects represent various types, sizes and locations as well as budgets. There are now a total of 23 certified pilot projects with more projects continuing to pursue pilot certification until the end of 2014.

A new rating system, SITES v2, will be published this fall, using information gained through the pilot project certification process. The projects certified up to that point will have qualified under the 2009 rating system. It includes 15 prerequisites and 51 additional, flexible credits that add up to 250 points. The credits address areas such as soil restoration, use of recycled materials and land maintenance approaches. Projects can achieve one through four stars by amassing 40, 50, 60 or 80 percent of the 250 points. The eight newly certified projects each incorporate sustainable features and practices and have received ratings listed below:

**One Star:**
- Blue Hole Regional Park, One Star, Wimberley, Texas.
- Harris County Water Conservation and Improvement District (WCID) 132’s Water Conservation and Demonstration Center, One Star, Houston, Texas.

**Two Stars:**
- American University School of International Service, Two Stars, Washington, D.C.
- Bat Cave Draw and Visitor’s Center, Two Stars, Carlsbad Caverns National Park, N.M.
- Mesa Verde Visitor and Research Center, Two Stars, Mesa Verde National Park, Co.

**Three Stars:**
- Scenic Hudson Long Dock Park, Three Stars, Beacon, N.Y.

Thanks again for this fantastic opportunity, and I look forward to Kurt announcing the Chapter’s President-Elect for this upcoming year. Hope to see you Boston!

Wishing you all the best,
Jenn

In memory of James van Sweden, who believed gardens lifted the spirit:

“Good planting design does not follow a formula. At best, it allows you to experiment with nature and through nature to make an original statement. As in all of the arts, the best garden designers take risks. Only by taking risks can you come up with something exciting and original.”

— James van Sweden

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**The Karen Ann Shopis-Fox Memorial Scholarship**

The Karen Ann Shopis-Fox Memorial Scholarship is provided for students who are pursuing an education in the field of Landscape Architecture. Scholarships are typically in the amount of $1,500 to $2,500 and are awarded for tuition, books, project supplies, etc. Scholarships may vary from year to year depending on the funds available. Applications must be postmarked between January 1 and March 15, 2014.

**Scholarship Criteria**

1. Applicants must be a legal resident of the State of Connecticut and be enrolled in an accredited landscape architecture or environmental education program (undergraduate or graduate) at the college/university level.

2. Through your college/university, you will provide CTASLA with verification of your status as a student. Payment will be made directly to the college/university that you select.

3. All decisions made by the Scholarship Committee (a committee of 3-5 individuals appointed by the CTASLA Executive Committee) are deemed final, including the option not to award a scholarship. Relatives of CT-licensed Landscape Architects, CTASLA members and qualifying other ASLA chapter members are encouraged to apply.
Trustee’s Report
Karen Beck, FASLA

Hello All!

Soon after having this newsletter delivered to your door, I’m hoping that I will see your smiling faces in Boston at the 2013 ASLA Annual Meeting.

I sent out an email in early August, trying to get a sense of how many of our members will be taking advantage of the meeting’s proximity. As of last count, I expect to see almost half our chapter membership there, and I hope that the October 18th deadline enticed a few more to register before the price went up. Those who did get back to me about attendance should expect to see some goodies arriving too but long (part of the reason for the email). Even if you didn’t get through to me, but plan on being in Boston, keep your eyes open. There are always opportunities for receiving cool stuff — especially at the Expo! For example, again this year a free luxury travel and wine drawing will occur during the Expo. The trip this year is to the Charleston, S.C., Festival of Houses and Gardens in the spring of 2014, or you could win one of four cases of rare wines.

Resume and portfolio review

Also during Expo hours, students can take advantage of having their resumes and portfolios reviewed by members of the ASLA Emerging Professionals Committee (note you do have to make an appointment for this, so don’t wait and miss out – it is free!). Landscape architectural firms that are looking to hire are also present within the Expo area. Take advantage of the opportunity to meet with firms from all over the country and GET A JOB!

Volunteers needed at national meeting

The Boston Chapter is also looking for volunteers to help staff the BSLA Host Chapter Hospitality Booth or at a satellite booth at one of the four host hotels as a BSLA Ambassador and get a chance to win an Apple iPad! Help ASLA Annual Meeting attendees know what places to visit, where to have a great meal, how to get around Boston and other local cities, and where to find those hidden jewels that only New Englanders know. For each completed shift at a host hotel or at the convention center, your name will be entered into a drawing to win one of the Apple iPad minis being used at the convention center!

Student events and exhibits

New this year at the College Alumni Tailgate event (free!) will be the awarding of prizes for “most school spirit” and “best decorations.” RISD and URI will both have tables, and since we are so close to Boston and therefore don’t have to fly our decorations to the meeting, I think we should step up our game and really wow the judges. A little friendly rivalry between RISD and URI doesn’t hurt, either! Students attending the meeting should definitely come to the tables and meet the local professionals attending the meeting. Opportunities for being introduced to professional colleagues who might be hiring, offering mentoring opportunities, or a chance to meet a landscape architect whose work you admire but were hesitant to talk to without an introduction are all possible. (Ask me about my Garrett Eckbo story!)

Licensing laws for LAs

In other national news, the ASLA has learned that the D.C. Board of Architecture and Interior Design may consider a bill to regulate the profession of landscape architecture at its October meeting. What does this mean? It means that all 50 states AND Washington, D.C. potentially will have licensing laws for landscape architects. If you think that getting licensed isn’t necessary, consider the fact that it may soon be impossible to work anywhere in the United States without one! Oddly enough, ASLA national has also heard about new Texas state requirements that require all licensees — including those from out-of-state — to submit to an FBI background check. Hello?!?

LAs and federal government

The biggest national news is, of course, the federal government shutdown. As I write this, the shutdown has lasted only a few days, and I hope by the time you read this that the shutdown will be over. But it does highlight an aspect of being a landscape architect that may not be so well-known: although many landscape architects are in private practice, a large percentage of landscape architects work in the public sector, including the federal government. The largest federal employer of landscape architects is the Department of the Interior (National Park Service, USGS, Fish & Wildlife are examples). Other big federal employers of LAs are the Department of Transportation, Department of Agriculture (US Forest Service) and the EPA. Even if you aren’t employed by the federal government, many landscape architecture projects are paid for by federal funds. Here’s hoping that this will soon just be a painful memory and landscape architects can go back work as one of the “7 Jobs that Make the World a Better Place”: http://jobs.aol.com/articles/2013/04/22/green-environmental-jobs/

See you in Boston!

Karen A. Beck, RLA, FASLA
Legacies

Continued from page 1

materials and is characterized by native grasses and perennial plantings in tapestry-like drifts. The style celebrates the seasonal splendor of the American meadow while promoting its inherent ecological and sustainable values.

Douglas Tallamy

Doug Tallamy, on the other hand, is not a landscape architect – he is a bug man; and when he looks at most American landscapes he sees some of the following statistics:

The population of the U.S., now more than 304 million people, has doubled since most of us were kids, and continues to grow by roughly 8,640 people per day. All of those additional souls – coupled with “cheap” gas, our love affair with the car, and our quest to own ever-larger homes – have fueled unprecedented development that continues to sprawl over 2 million additional acres per year (the size of Yellowstone National Park). We have connected all of our developments with four million miles of roads; their paved surface is five times the size of New Jersey.

Somewhere along the way we decided to convert the forests that used to cover our living and working spaces into huge expanses of lawn dotted with a few small, mostly non-native trees. So far we have planted more than 62,500 square miles – some 40 million acres – in lawn. Each weekend we mow an area eight times the size of New Jersey to within an inch of the soil and then congratulate ourselves on a job well done.

And it’s not as if those little woodlots and “open spaces” that we have not paved over are pristine. Nearly all are second-growth forests that have been thoroughly invaded by alien plants like autumn olive, multiflora rose, bush honeysuckle, privet, Oriental bittersweet, buckthorn, and Japanese honeysuckle. More than 3,400 species of alien plants have invaded more than 200 million acres of the U.S.

Tallamy does not quote these statistics and then leave us to mourn in private. His research into lepidopteran (butterflies and moths and their caterpillars) use of native and alien ornamental plants provides a view into wildlife use of the landscape into perfect sound bites (dare I use the word “tweets”, here?), even if most species names probably don’t fit into 140 characters or less. Tallamy and his research associates categorized native and alien plant genera in terms of their ability to support insect herbivores and, by inference, overall biodiversity. They did this by ranking all native plant genera (woody and herbaceous) in terms of the number of Lepidoptera species recorded using them as host plants. In doing this, they hoped that the ranking would be used as one of the criteria for plant selections in managed and unmanaged landscapes by restoration ecologists, landscape architects (firms such as OvS and others), land managers, municipalities and homeowners. The top five woody species are oak (534 species supported), black cherry (456 species supported), willow (455 species supported), birch (413 species supported) and poplar (368 species supported). The top five herbaceous species are goldenrod (115 species supported), asters (112 species supported), sunflower (73 species supported), Joe-pye weed/boneset (42 species supported) and morning glory (39 species supported).

Tallamy has a website “Bringing Nature Home” that provides plenty of usable information on the subject. Once the plant species and their benefits from Tallamy’s website are absorbed, their use in aesthetically pleasing landscape designs can be observed on the Oehme van Sweden website (including a Newport, R.I. residential example) and others. Of course. From my own experience, three additional volumes are a must for the libraries of those seeking to utilize native plant species in support of wildlife: “Vascular Flora of Rhode Island: A List of Native and Naturalized Plants” (Gould et al, RI Natural History Survey, 1998); “Landscaping for Wildlife” (Henderson, C., Minnesota DNR, 1987) and “American Wildlife & Plants: A Guide to Wildlife Food Habits” (Martin et al, Dover Publications, 1951). Another valuable resource for Rhode Island landscapes is located at the Rutgers University website: “Landscape Plants Rated by Deer Resistance.” http://njaes.rutgers.edu/deer resistance/ This question is the number one most asked question from attendees at my lectures and even from members of planning boards and conservation commissions for local projects.

The take-away from the legacies of van Sweden (in his designs, writings and continuing firm) and Tallamy (hopefully more to come) are that we can no longer plant landscapes where aesthetics are our only goal, but the use of native plants does not preclude landscapes from being aesthetically pleasing or award-winning. And who doesn’t want a butterfly or two in their landscape?

— Karen Beck, FASLA
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2013 ASLA Design Awards

Congratulations to RISD student Samantha Dabney, whose entry received an Honor Award in this year’s national design awards competition. Awards will be presented during the annual meeting in Boston. She is among 26 student award winners from 391 entries representing 91 schools. To view the awards, http://www.asla.org/2013studentawards/index.html
PARK(ing) Day

PARK(ing) Day, held Sept. 20th in various locations in Providence, is a national annual open-source global event where citizens, artists and activists collaborate to temporarily transform metered parking spaces into “PARK(ing)” spaces: temporary public places. The project began in 2005 when Rebar, a San Francisco art and design studio, converted a single metered parking space into a temporary public park in downtown San Francisco.

Since 2005, PARK(ing) Day has evolved into a global movement, with organizations and individuals (operating independently of Rebar but following an established set of guidelines) creating new forms of temporary public space in urban contexts around the world.

The mission of PARK(ing) Day is to call attention to the need for more urban open space, to generate critical debate around how public space is created and allocated, and to improve the quality of urban human habitat ... at least until the meter runs out!
PARK(ing) Day

Clockwise from top left, PARK(ing) Day installations by: Beta / GLA; Birchwood Design Group; Veri Waterman & Northeast Collaborative.

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— Upcoming Events of Interest —

**November 7 – 7 P.M.**
**URI / LAR Lecture Series**

**November 7 – 7 P.M.**
**Gardner Museum Lecture Series**
Speaker Landscape Architect Cornelia Hahn Oberlander, recipient of the 2012 ASLA Medal, “... in recognition of her unflinching leadership and award-winning work in postwar landscape architecture in Canada and the United States.” To be held in Calderwood Hall at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 280 The Fenway, Boston. gardnermuseum.org/landscape/lectures

**November 12 – 6 P.M.**
**RIASLA Excom Meeting**
To be held at Seven Moons Restaurant, 6900 Post Road, North Kingstown. All members welcome. For more information contact President Kurt Van Dexter at asclepiask@aol.com

**November 14 – 4:30 to 6 P.M.**
**Opening Reception**

**November 14 – 5:30 to 8 P.M.**
**2013 Providence Symposium**
“A Conversation with Adrian Benepe” former New York City Parks Commissioner. To be held at Industrial Trust Building, 111 Westminster St., Providence. For more information visit www.providencesymposium.com

**November 15 to 18**
**ASLA Annual Meeting & Expo**
“Gaining Ground” To be held at Boston Convention and Exhibition Center. Seminars, tours, investiture ceremonies. Participants can earn up to 21 professional development hours. For more information, visit asla.org

**November 15 to 18**
**Northeast Chapter International Erosion Control Association 2013 Annual Conference**
To be held at Crowne Plaza, 801 Greenwich Avenue, Warwick. For more information, visit www.ieca-nechapter.org/nec2013warwick.html

**December 5 – 7 P.M.**
**URI / LAR Lecture Series**

**December 17 – 6 P.M.**
**RIASLA Excom Meeting**
To be held at Stony Lane Studios, 1740 Stony Lane, North Kingstown.
**Events of Interest**

All members welcome. For more information see Nov. 12 listing.

**January 9 & 10**  
**25th annual Winter Landscape Design Conference**  

**January 21 – 6 P.M.**  
**RIASLA Excom Meeting**  
To be held at Red Fez Restaurant, 49 Peck St., Providence. All members welcome. See Nov. 12 listing.

**February 13 – 7 P.M.**  
**Gardner Museum Lecture Series**  
Speaker Landscape Architect Laurie Olin. To be held in Calderwood Hall at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. See Nov. 7 listing.

**February 20 – 7 P.M.**  
**URI / LAR Lecture Series**  