Designing:
“Intimate Gardens”
AKA, Making a Garden Comfortable for One or Twenty-one!
Come visit the Gardens!
Enjoy our Homesteaders
(Saw Whet Owl)
And walk, see, enjoy and become a Member!
“All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts”
Sometimes a vista can be found, but...
Usually, it is created.
Morton Arboretum
Must protect your back!
Elements of Design

- Line
- Form
- Mass
- Color
- Texture
Principles of Design

- Simplicity – typically, best to focus upon 2 elements. However, intimate spaces can be more complex.
- Scale
- Sequence – refers mostly to a sequence of spaces, but it can be color, form, texture, etc
- Balance
- Focalization
Visual has its flaws!
Intimate spaces can have more detail and complexity.
Hmm, let's think about this!
Toolbox to Start – Space!

No Stuff
- Space

Green Stuff
- Trees
- Shrubs

Hard Stuff
- Walkways and Drives
- Steps
- Patio
Space (the no stuff) has walls. Walkways generally pass through a space and do not define a space.
The No Stuff Toolbox!

• Space – has two basic forms:
  – Linear or corridor
  – Circular or rectangular where all the sides are equal.

It is formed by:

• Dirty Stuff - Land forms
• Soft Stuff - Trees and Shrubs
• Hard Stuff - Architecture, Walls and Steps
Linear spaces propel people through the space...
Circular spaces cause people to pause.
Space – the Final Frontier!
Also consider
Spatial Sequence:
circular spaces to linear spaces
Let's think on this a bit further
Atlanta Botanic Garden
Linear spaces with no views, and no people!
The narrow bricks and linear joint lines move you and your eye to the millstone and beyond.
Space is created by:

- Dirty Stuff - Land forms
Space is created by:

- Dirty Stuff - Land forms
- Soft Stuff - Trees and Shrubs
For residences, shrubs often create a space, trees provide the ceiling and depth!
Consider the Shape of the Tree
Edgar Rubin’s Vase (1886 - 1951)
Acer saccharum
‘Temple’s Upright’
Acer saccharum

‘Monumentale’
Zelkova serrata
All trees provide depth, as well as shade!
Even in a small space, tree trunks make it feel larger!
No trees
(Call me Dr. Obvious)
Trees
Trees & Biodiversity

• Before you even start, give thought to attracting a much broader array of pollinators as well as food (seeds and insects) for birds.

• The plants that create the spaces can also provide habitat and food for pollinators.

• The pollinators, in turn provide motion and a sense of animation for the Garden.

• Turf offers very little Biodiversity.
Biodiversity has a – “It’s not my job!” – connotation – the concept seems so big that it is beyond us.
Turf – Biodiversity?
Pyrus calleryana - Biodiversity?
Native Bees

Halictus species
(Sweat bees)

Melissodes species
(Long-horned bees)
Ilex opaca
Eupatorium dubium
Ilex verticillata ‘Winter Gold’
Space is created by:

- Dirty Stuff - Land forms
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Architecture
Often, the soft stuff forming space can ‘soften’ the hard stuff!
Taxodium distichum 'Cascade Falls'
Architecture
It helps to think with someone!
Intimate spaces need to look out onto a space to not feel claustrophobic.
With Plants!
Entryway

• The point of entry or separation between two spaces!
Gates and points of entrance
Curved Gates
Arrival Sequence
Walkways

• Layout of walkways is an important first step since they influence the sequence of how a person experiences a designed space.

• Obviously, the walk need not be too wide if it is to service an intimate space and it is not intended to host large crowds.
Stonecrop Gardens
Trees can provide a sense of reason for motion.
The location of the Persian Ironwood gives reason to the shape of the walk.
Backyard Walks

• Walkways can be more intimate, but should still not feel crowded.
• Ideal if the walkway turns a corner, so the destination is hidden.
Acorus gramineus
' Minimus Aureus '
The taller *Acorus gramineus* ‘Ogon’ is not comfortable for normal strides.
Arrival – The Intimate Space

• It should have that Ta-Da feeling.
• Patios should have a view.
The tree canopy and seat wall provide the sense of space.
Gazebos have a ‘Sense of Place’ that is greatly enhanced with Paving. (Coastal Maine BG)
Circular walk.
Great for Parties!
( Coastal Maine )
Decorating with Plants

The Stage Set!

_Aechmea chantinii 'Harvey's Pride'_
Think detail in intimate settings
Living Mulch

Carex pennsylvanica
Fragrance

• Fragrant flowers and foliage enhance a small gardens appeal.

• It is fun to rub your shoes, legs or hands against the allowing it to release its scent.
Geranium maccrorhizzum
Magnolia grandifolia 'Brackens Brown Beauty'
Size

- Large plants look great in small Gardens.
- They provide a sense of depth and make the garden appear larger
Arundo donax
Provides sound!
Size your stones accordingly!
Water: Creates Inviting Outdoor Garden Rooms
Water requires a nearby place to sit!
In the evening!
The Ultimate Goal of a Garden is to Bring People Together…
...to make us feel human and reconnected AGAIN!
It has been fun thinking together!
Remember...
...fun makes the Garden worth return visits, and...
...and helps to get millennials outside again!
Devonian 419-358 MYA (Average O$_2$ levels at 15% vs today’s 21%)
Cretaceous Period – 145-66 MYA

(O₂ at 16%)
Atlanta Botanic Garden