The Recent Work of
Stephen Stimson Associates
Stephen Stimson Associates was founded in 1992 by Stephen Stimson, FASLA, who was born and raised on a 10th generation dairy farm in central Massachusetts. The firm’s regional work is deeply rooted in an agrarian sensibility that is reflected through the use of local materials and simple patterns. Over the past decade SSA’s practice has grown increasingly diverse, expanding from intimate gardens to academic campuses and urban parks across the country.

Our team consists of registered landscape architects and an experienced group of designers, project managers, horticulturalists, planners and support staff. An open studio environment allows our projects to benefit from the broad range of expertise, diverse educational backgrounds, and creative input of our entire firm. Our team is enhanced by the duality of an urban and rural studio. Designers and projects benefit from the energy of the urban environment and proximity to many of our project sites, as well as unique plant and ecology knowledge gained from our rural farm and nursery.

We believe in creating enduring, innovative landscapes which express cultural values and a strong environmental ethic. Design expression is derived from an understanding of the regional landscape, specific conditions of the site and the needs of the program. Inspiration is taken equally from environmental factors such as geology, vegetation, history and culture. Through our experience, we have maintained a commitment to creating finely-crafted landscapes that are always culturally relevant and unique to the site’s context.

We acknowledge that landscapes are not static and will continue to evolve over time, long after a project’s opening day. A successful site will have a framework that is strong and flexible enough to adapt to any changes that arise based on user needs, environmental factors, or management strategies. We are committed to a culture of collaboration between design disciplines and our clients, and the long-term environmental stewardship of our landscapes.
Pine & Swallow Environmental provides science-based technical consulting expertise to public and private clients for the design and construction of landscape development projects. For over 30 years Pine and Swallow has demonstrated unmatched experience, expertise, and commitment to projects large and small, worldwide. Pine & Swallow’s skills lead to creative, technically solid solutions that can significantly reduce site development costs and result in landscapes that thrive, even in challenging site conditions.

Pine & Swallow’s principals have unique backgrounds in landscape science and engineering. Robert Pine is a Registered Professional Engineer with degrees in civil and geotechnical engineering. He also holds a Masters of Landscape Architecture and is a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architecture (ASLA). John Swallow is a Ph.D. chemist with extensive experience in soil science, environmental chemistry and 19 years experience as owner and operator of a landscape nursery. Mr. Pine and Dr. Swallow have been presenters for topics on soils in the built landscape at each ASLA Annual Conference since 2008. Pine & Swallow’s team is enhanced by individuals with deep knowledge and experience in soil design and testing, drainage design, and landscape construction administration.

Pine & Swallow’s knowledge of the use and maintenance of plant materials, including how environmental conditions affect plantings, allows a comprehensive review of issues such as plant selection, growing mediums, compaction, soil drainage, nutrient recycling, heat loading, and micro-climate conditions.

Pine & Swallow has extensive experience in the creation of ponds, wetlands and storm water bio-treatment installations. P&S couples this experience with soil design to optimize water harvesting, stormwater renovation and sustainability.

Meadow and turf areas are often important as high visibility landscape areas and for passive or active recreation use. Establishing and maintaining low maintenance, robust turf requires correct soil conditions and selection of grasses. P&S’s expertise in soil chemistry, horticulture, drainage and geotechnical engineering is the combination of skills required for successful design or rehabilitation of turf and meadow areas.
P&S > Mike Agonis

Mike has over eighteen years of experience in soils classification, infiltration testing, and field screening of soil samples in test pit and horticultural excavations. As a project manager for Pine & Swallow’s site investigations, Mike is often called upon to perform construction administration during placement of drainage and planting soil materials. Mike is familiar with state building codes and has significant experience in strength of materials and materials testing. Mike also has experience in waste regeneration and composting operations to improve soil texture, organic content, and moisture holding capabilities. His leadership, technical, and problem solving skills are an integral part of P&S’s site assessment services. Mike’s understanding of the environmental relationship of soil, drainage, groundwater and land use has contributed to the firm’s success on project after project.

SSA > Glen Valentine

Glen is a Senior Associate at Stephen Stimson Associates and a landscape architect with twenty years of experience working in public, residential and public landscapes throughout the country. He worked for thirteen years as a designer at Reed Hilderbrand before joining SSA five years ago. His recent work has focused on public and academic landscapes in the Boston area including work at Boston College, Harvard University and a park on the Rose Kennedy Greenway. His designs have won awards from the BSLA and ASLA in the areas of Planning, Residential and Institutional Design including the President’s Award of Design Excellence for the Leventritt Garden at Harvard’s Arnold Arboretum in 2007.

Your Guides
Learning Outcomes

1) Learn a variety of soil design approaches and soil placement strategies for working in different urban university contexts.
2) Examine techniques for protecting the lawn on the campus, preserving historic trees, and mixing and blending soils on site in the campus setting.
3) Develop an understanding of lawn as part of a comprehensive approach to sustainable landscapes in the contemporary university landscape.
4) Gain a knowledge of the distinctions between soil design for residences versus the institutional landscape project in New England.

Goals

Schedule

08:45 AM  1  Radcliffe Institute
10:10 AM  2  Chestnut Hill Residence
11:05 AM  3  Boston College
01:00 PM  4  Clyde Street Residence
02:15PM  5  Northeastern University
The Radcliffe Sunken Garden has always been identified as an oasis and long-standing resource for Harvard and the City of Cambridge. Located directly across from the Cambridge Common, it is the largest and most visible garden on campus and utilized by not only students, but also visitors, tourists and Cambridge residents. The original Garden was built over a number of years by the grounds staff following no single recorded plan, and by 2008, had reached an unfortunate state of disrepair. The main goal of the project was to preserve the character of the Garden while meeting the changing needs of the Radcliffe Institute. This included incorporating an accessible pathway system and seating, a carefully engineered lawn to handle numerous school events and a state of the art irrigation system and fountain. The expanded garden plantings now extend the blooming seasons from early spring until late October, and incorporate a large area of native shade perennials and groundcovers.
This property occupies a corner site in a historic neighborhood of Newton. As avid art collectors, the Owners envisioned a museum addition below the rear of the property that left a large part of the landscape on structure. This gallery space was designed to integrate fully into the site, with flush skylights that puncture a lawn panel for entertaining, and a glass head house as a focal point of the garden, that also allows significant pieces of sculpture to be brought into the gallery below. A series of outdoor spaces comprised of gravel, granite and lawn become a neutral framework for an expanding sculpture collection. Pleached lindens punctuate the installation at the glass head house, while espalier oak trees screen the street beyond, and form the backdrop for landscape sculpture. A long linear garden of hedges and witchhazel establish a repetitive rhythm that connects the rear gardens to the front of house, where the planting forms a pattern language. From the street side, the site design remains restrained and elegant, with weathered bluestone, minimal lawn and groundcover, responding to the historic context of the surrounding neighborhood.
Over the past five years SSA has worked closely with Boston College to redesign the major quad spaces of the Middle Campus. The result has been a transformation of the historic core of the University. Parking lots and vehicular drives have been replaced with tranquil greens, new quad spaces and tree lined walkways. SSA has worked with a number of architects on building renovations throughout the course of this work including the transformation of the original campus structure Gasson Hall, O’Neill Library, St. Mary’s Hall, Stokes North and Stokes South. The first project completed in this series of spaces was a plaza in front of O’Neill Library. This 2.2 acre space used to be an inhospitable and barren plaza of exposed aggregate concrete. The redesign of this space has completely altered the image and character of the central campus transforming the paved plaza into a new campus green. SSA worked hand in hand with Pine and Swallow soil engineers through the design process to create a durable turf space that could handle a wide variety of events including large graduation ceremonies and arts festivals.
This property was originally part of a larger adjacent homestead, separated by a shared pond, also designed by Stephen Stimson Associates. As a growing family, the Owners wanted a landscape that could handle a large play lawn for athletic use, a pool area, kitchen garden, and terraces for entertaining. The site is conceived as a series of landscape spaces that define connections between architecture and the spaces between them. A long allee of lindens defines the walk from the main house to the gymnasium, while the front of house is comprised of an unexpected threshold garden of bamboo and water. The high groundwater at the site was very challenging, but allowed the site runoff to be collected in a linear rainwater garden at the edge of the pool area, planted with a native palette of wetland plants. The site is wrapped by an existing canopy of evergreens and declining understory, and was restored with hemlock, pine, holly and spruce. A perimeter trail through woodland encircles the property, ending at the meadow. The single heritage apple tree that remained formed the basis for planting an orchard of mature fruit trees within the restored meadow.
At the southern edge of the Northeastern campus in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston, the International Village is a mixed use complex of dormitory, dining commons, retail and office space. The four buildings are organized around a new civic green that connects the station to the campus, acting as a campus gateway and connecting the main entrance to the MBTA Ruggles Station to the neighborhoods across Tremont Street. Pragmatic reasoning, simple detailing and spatial openness create an urban landscape that promotes community use. A bamboo rooftop garden provides open space for the residents of the buildings. The garden is located on the second floor above the dining commons and is designed to have compelling visual interest from the garden level and from the view above. A series of linear planting beds run with the long axis of the roof top creating a variety of spaces for flexible use.

Northeastern University
International Village
Boston, MA

BSLA Merit Award 2010

Kyu Sung Woo Architects
Designing horticultural soils for a given landscape must account for several factors. Primary in this consideration is the vision and intent of the landscape architect. It must be understood how the proposed landscape is intended to function and the aesthetic qualities that are important to the owner and design team.

Once the schematic design is understood, Pine & Swallow Environmental (P&S) will rely on sound science and our experience and expertise to design soil profiles and drainage strategies to transform the vision of the landscape architect into a functional and flourishing landscape.

To design the soil profiles, an assessment of the on site soil resources, drainage conditions and micro-climate conditions must be conducted. Drainage provisions must be incorporated into the design for both irrigated and non-irrigated conditions. Next, the horticultural soils must be designed to perform to their intended use. For example, athletic field soils must be well-drained and able to withstand high frequency and high intensity use levels, while structural planting soils must be able to be compacted to a high level and also provide horticultural support for tree plantings, and rain garden soils must be capable of supporting plantings in both drought and flood conditions.

The design of soil profiles is also dependent upon the locally available soil resources. As hauling represents one of the highest costs in construction, soil profiles must be designed using locally available resources. Primary to this is also the sustainable re-use of on-site soil resources. Soil profiles are ideally designed and manufactured utilizing the on-site soil resources available, or at a minimum, locally available resources.

By understanding the landscape architect’s vision, along with knowledge of the existing soil and drainage conditions, P&S can apply scientific principles to design soil profiles that are sustainable, and tailored to the uses intended. The soil environment is optimized for the site conditions and proposed uses, providing for lawn and landscape areas that flourish.