

MON-C05: Planting in a Post-Wild World: Designing Plant Communities for More Resilient Landscapes

More than half the world's population now lives in cities. Planting design needs to respond to a range of urban environmental challenges. Join some of the country's leading practitioners to explore strategies inspired by wild plant communities that result in more robust, diverse, and resilient plantings.

Thomas Rainer – Rhodeside & Harwell



Thomas Rainer is an Associate Principal with the firm Rhodeside & Harwell, a teacher of planting design at George Washington University, and writer living in Washington, D.C. Thomas is a passionate advocate for an ecologically expressive design aesthetic that does not imitate nature, but interprets it. His planting designs focus on creating a modern expression of the ground plane with a largely native palette of perennials and grasses. Thomas has designed landscapes for the U.S. Capitol grounds, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, and The New York Botanical Garden, as well as over 100 gardens from Maine to Florida.

Claudia West - North Creek Nurseries, Inc.



Claudia West is the ecological sales manager at North Creek Nurseries, a wholesale perennial grower in Landenberg, PA. Claudia holds a Master's Degree of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning from the Technical University of Munich, Germany. In her current role, Claudia works closely with ecological design and restoration professionals, offering consultation services from initial project planning stages to adaptive management strategies after project completion. Her work is centered on the development of stable, layered planting designs and the desire to bring American native plants back into our landscape by making them widely acceptable. Claudia is a sought-after speaker on topics such as plant community based design and the application of natural color theories to planting design. Together with co-author Thomas Rainer she will publish a new approach to ecological planting design in her first book 'Planting in a Post-Wild World' (Timber Press) next fall.

Scott Stewart - The Lurie Garden



Scott Stewart, Ph.D. is the Director & Head Horticulturalist of The Lurie Garden in Chicago's Millennium Park. The Lurie Garden was designed by Gustafson Guthrie Nichol Ltd. and Piet Oudolf, and is celebrating the beginning of its second decade of operation in 2015. As Director, Scott is responsible for overall management, educational programming, and planning for the Garden. Scott holds a Ph.D. in Environmental Horticulture from the University of Florida and has considerable experience in the application of ecological management techniques to both wild and designed landscapes. He has published over 30 scientific and popular articles, written three book chapters, and given dozens of presentations on topics such as rare plant conservation, plant propagation techniques, and the use of horticultural techniques in natural areas management.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Analyze differences between the way plants grow in the wild and the way they grow in designed landscape communities.
2. Explore the competitive strategies of plants in naturally occurring communities to understand how these can be used to inform plant selection and arrangement.
3. Learn how to use a plant's ecological niche to vertically layer plants in a composition.
4. Examine strategies for creating aesthetic frames around mixed planting to make them attractive and appealing to the public.
5. Understand how to creatively manage mixed plantings by looking at ten years of experience at the Lurie Garden in Chicago's Millennium Park.

SESSION OUTLINE

1. **Introduction:** Understanding the Context and Challenges of a Post-Wild World
 - a. Sites are increasingly located in urban and sub-urban contexts
 - b. We have the responsibility to create and manage planted spaces that benefit us and provide ecological services
 - c. It is our stormwater basins, streetscapes, roof gardens, and parking lots that will host the nature of the future

- d. Most current designs and plantings, however, do not meet these challenges and lack the quality, resiliency, and beauty of wild landscapes

2. **Inspiration of the Wild**

- a. In a world where wild places are increasingly rare, we crave for natural places more than ever before
- b. Interaction with the natural world is essential for our health and well being
- c. Certain archetypal wild landscapes inherently appeal to us because of deep evolutionary reasons
- d. Visual tour through inherently comfortable landscapes that inspire planting design
- e. Core principles of appealing wild plant communities

3. **Principles of Designed Plant Communities**

- a. Designed plant communities are a hybrid of wild plant communities and horticultural planting goals and strategies
- b. Visual comparison: planting plans and section cuts of traditional horticultural planting versus mixed plantings
- c. The design process: relating plants to place, people, and other plants
 - i. Understanding plants as related populations, not isolated individuals
 - ii. Stress factors of a site are assets
 - iii. Cover the ground densely by vertically layering compatible species, filling all niches with plants
 - iv. Make planting attractive and legible by creating a design framework
 - v. Applying creative and adaptive management, not traditional maintenance

4. **Creative Management: Lessons Learned from Ten Years of the Lurie Garden**

- a. Application of adaptive co-management practices at the Lurie Garden— lessons and practices learned from natural areas management.
- b. Pressures of various, simultaneous management levels to a small, isolated, ultra-urban site.
 - i. Maintenance of original site vision
 - ii. Managing for ecological and biodiversity factors

- iii. Role as a social-ecological benefit
- c. Managing an ultra-urban build environment as a resilient ecosystem.
 - i. Lurie Garden as an ecological system
 - ii. Examples of adapting natural areas management practices to Lurie Garden