



Midwest Chapter

APLD Midwest Region Chapter Event

Wednesday August 31, 2005
The Lurie Garden
Millennium Park
Chicago, Illinois

The APLD Midwest Chapter Event held in the Lurie Garden in Millennium Park provided a great way to end the summer season. Members from Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin and Illinois attended; approximately 25 APLD members participated overall. The out-of-towners took advantage of the event to enjoy the city of Chicago. Led by Julie Siegel, J. Siegel Designs, Inc., the group met on the steps at the southeast corner of the Lurie garden. After the event, members toured other significant attractions in Millennium Park including band shell, fountain and sculpture.



Alexia Paul Towering Above Participants in Front of Shoulder Hedge



Gehry Band Shell rising above Eryngium yuccifolium

The [Millennium Park website](#) describes the Lurie Garden as “Designed by Gustafson Guthrie Nichols Ltd., Piet Oudolf and Robert Israel, this 2.5-acre garden pays homage to the City's motto, ‘Urbs in Horto’ (City in a Garden), which refers to Chicago's transformation from its flat and marshy origins to a bold and powerful city. Highlights of the garden include the dramatically lit, 15-foot-high ‘shoulder’ hedge. This physical representation of Sandburg's famous description of the ‘City of Big Shoulders’ encloses the garden on two sides and protects the delicate perennial garden from the throngs of concertgoers to and from the band shell. This structure exemplifies the unusual strength and structure of this Chicago garden, where plants rise taller than people.”

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Alexia Paul, RLA, of Terry Guen Design Associates, led the first session. She worked on the construction of Millennium Park and worked with the park's chief architects, landscape architects, designers and contractors. She explained that the park is built above parking garages.



The planting beds are composed of six inches of sand and three to three and a half feet of soil medium. The area sheet drains in the sub-grade beneath the slab. There is some pipe drainage. Parts of Millennium Park gardens are planted in natural soil, but the newer parts are planted in manufactured soil. Alexia described how Piet Oudolf and Roy Diblik set out the plants. She detailed how a staff horticulturist, backed up by a group of



Shoulder Hedge Fronted by Panicum 'Shenandoah' and Schizachyrium 'The Blues'

volunteers, is doing maintenance.

The Lurie Garden design was chosen through a competition and the Lurie family funded the garden's development through installation and maintenance. The design is reminiscent of the old shoreline. Limestone, used for the raised beds and benches, represents bedrock being pushed up from under the ground. A dark glade and a light plate, sandwich a mixed prairie that is a mixture of native and non-native plants. Eighteen inches of soil over a rock base (road stone) support the perennial and grass plantings. The sound of the water feature under the boardwalk makes pedestrians aware of the original watery, swamp-like area.



Alexia Paul Conducting an Orchestra of Plants in the Lurie Garden



Marina & Jamie Berger demonstrating how you must not smile to be taken seriously in England

Marina and Jamie Berger of Pottering Around in Riverside, Illinois, spoke next. They have observed the garden for two seasons and showed us photographs illustrating the amount of growth between the two years. They helped us to identify many of the plants and understand the ornamental value of the late bloomers and the seed heads in fall and winter. Marina and Jamie distributed CDs of their photographs of many of the plant combinations that they had highlighted during their talk. Oudolf takes natural plant communities into account when formulating these combinations.

The final speaker, Sarah Westlund of Dig In! Chicago, and J. Siegel Designs, Inc., Evanston, Illinois, spoke about Piet Oudolf's design intent. She said that he informed our consciousness of the space. Sarah called it "an evolutionary space" and that Oudolf uses "an assertive subtlety" where we "are not assaulted by design." She called this "new wave garden design" that "combines natural elements with an artificial hand." In the introduction to Oudolf's book with Henk Gerritsen, "Dream Plants for the Natural Garden", they write, "Once you take on board that such a garden (park, border) needs to be well designed, you once again come up against the dilemma of



Lurie Garden Path Bisecting Chicago Skyline



Plenty-a Fun in Plensa Fountain

where nature ends and civilization begins." And later, "You can, however, suggest a natural environment by keeping the design loose and irregular." They add, "A truly natural look arises with the incredibly large number of butterflies and other insects that are attracted by such plantings." This result increases the value of these gardens for the people who visit as well as for the environment.





Sarah Westlund Defining Oudolf's 'Evolutionary Space'

Three more of Oudolf's available books are "Planting the Natural Garden", "Gardening with Grasses" and "Planting Design." Timber Press will publish "Gardens in Time and Space" in December 2005.

The group discussed the importance of public gardens in reclaimed areas and agreed that they add a refreshing development in large cities

such as Chicago, Toronto and London, all places where APLD has held its conferences. For landscape designers, examples of the use of large groups of native grasses and flowers are useful when introducing this style into our clients' landscapes. We also discussed how public landscape sites like Millennium Park could be important laboratories for gauging public response to different garden styles.



Alexia Points Out Construction Details

Thanks to the APLD regional Chapter committee for this event: Marina & Jamie Berger, Nancy Sauerberg, APLD, Julie Siegel, Sarah Westlund, Marty Wirtz and especially Marilyn Musgjerd, who lugged around a heavy cooler full of water on a very hot day!

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Judy Nauseef has been a member of APLD for more than eight years and currently serves the organization as National Certification Chair.