ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL LANDSCAPE DESIGNERS

# thedesigner

Spring 2017

# Problem Solving

INSPIRED BY INTERVENTION

DESIGN BY SUBTRACTION

PLANT APPS: STREET TREES

# There's a Design for That

All of design—in the landscape and in the broader world—is essentially problem solving. Making packages easier to open or more environmentally friendly. Creating book layouts that are easy to read and instructions that eliminate IWBD (Ikea Wrench & Bolt Disorder), caused by repeated head banging due to frustration while assembling modular furniture. Your problem solving creates spaces for families to enjoy get-togethers or lowers the heat index in a busy parking lot. You add beauty to boring suburban builder landscapes and screen noxious views for artist studios. You break up a behemoth of a lawn into manageable "rooms" for relaxing or specify the perfect piece of outdoor furniture to facilitate intimate conversations.

Does all of that problem solving exhaust you? In this issue you'll find tips to lighten the load. Vanessa Gardner Nagel, APLD, and Elizabeth Przygoda-Montgomery, APLD, offer concrete solutions for dealing with wind, elevation changes, and narrow spaces while working on client projects. Andrea Nilsen Morse tackles where to start with street trees when they're part of your project. Marti Neely, APLD, shares her "Design by Subtraction" technique, while Carolyn Mullet shares inspiration found while leading garden tours hither and yon. **(Check out her 2017 lineup here.)** Taking better photos is always a problem, for me anyway. I asked photographer Mark Turner for some hints on building a better portfolio, regardless of the type of camera you have.

Finally, if you need some fun after all of that learning, tag along with Jenny Peterson as she guides you on a designer's tour through Austin, Texas, in this Spring's Wander.Lust. feature. Not every problem can be solved by getting outside—of your routine, your house, or your city—but it's a good start.

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Andrea Nilsen Morse is the Owner and Principal Designer at **Nilsen Landscape Design, LLC,** based in Marblehead, MA. Andrea earned a Certificate in Landscape Design from the Boston Architectural College in 2010, and left a corporate career to launch her own design practice. As a LEED Green Associate, Andrea strives to incorporate sustainable ideas into her designs and offers her clients a thoughtful, creative and professional approach to their landscape projects.

Carolyn Mullet is an award-winning designer who received formal training in residential landscape design from George Washington University following her first career as a potter. Carolyn now provides design services through **Carex: Garden Design by Carolyn Mullet** and hosts European garden travel experiences through carexTours. She serves as the APLD DC/MD/VA chapter president and board member, a Garden Conservancy regional representative, and volunteers with the Takoma Park Open Space Committee. She has received five Grand Awards and two Awards of Distinction from the Landscape Contractors Association.

# Street Trees

At some point in their careers, most landscape designers will be confronted with street trees, or trees not under their exclusive design jurisdiction. Here's how to help your clients navigate the forest of street trees.

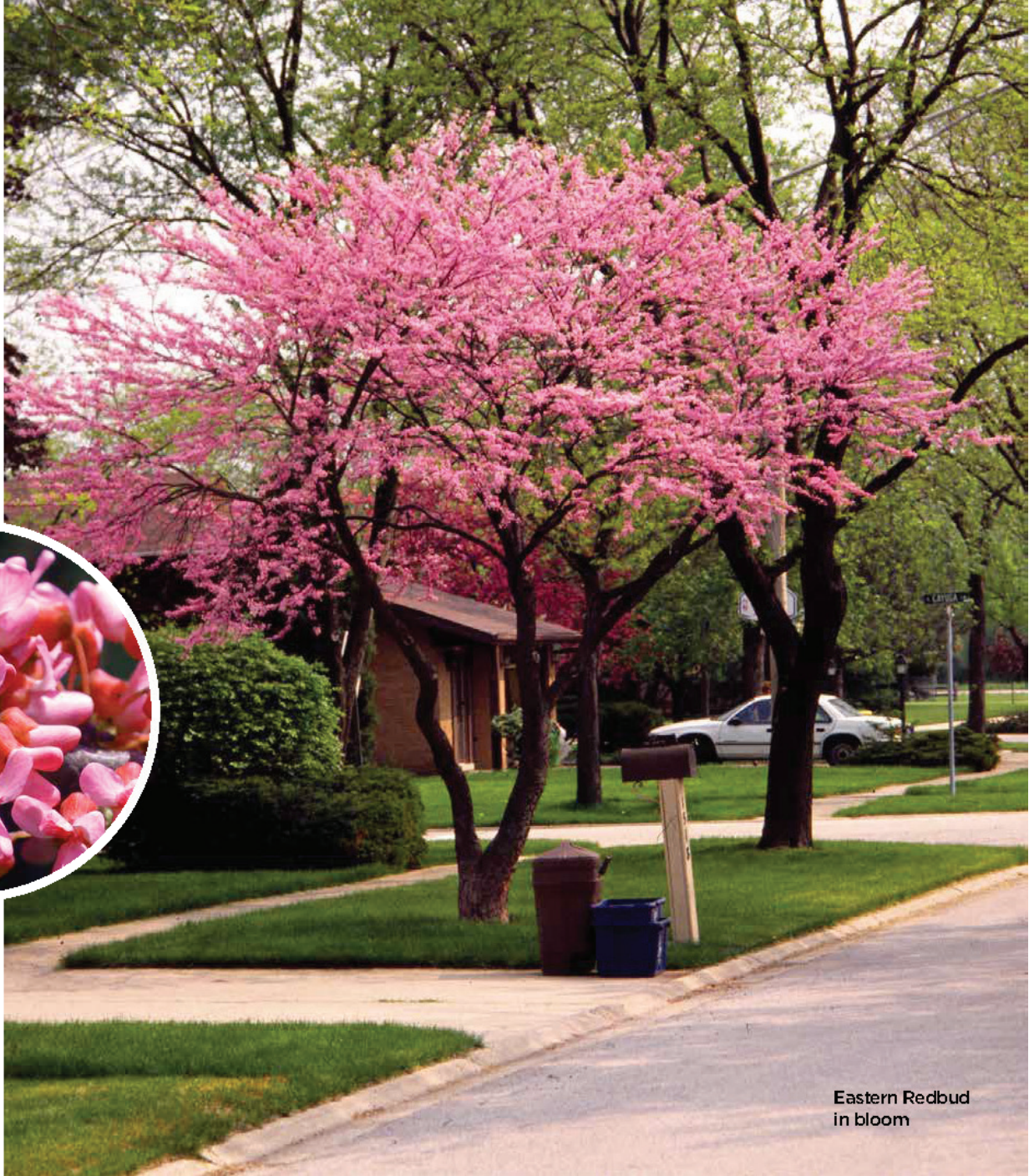
BY ANDREA NILSEN MORSE

The beauty and character of our cities and towns can be attributed in part to the trees that grace the landscape. The urban forest offers color, texture, and scale while reminding of us of the passing seasons. In addition to these aesthetic values, trees provide a host of ecological benefits: habitat for wildlife, improved air quality, stormwater management, decreased urban noise, lower temperatures, and much needed shade. With all of these benefits, trees are a resource worth understanding and protecting.

Street trees are a segment of the urban forest that most landscape designers will encounter. Defined as "any tree growing in the city right of way, or easement," street trees may grow from sidewalk cutouts, metal grates, in "hell strips," or simply in the space between the street and residential property line. When working with a client, it is important to identify which trees (if any) belong to the town, how they affect your design, and the process for proposing any changes.

Many states have urban forestry programs that help cities and towns protect and manage their trees. Each town may have further regulations and permitting processes. In fact, most towns have an approved list of trees that can be planted along the street. These are species that are known to perform well in difficult conditions and add diversity to the urban canopy. ➳

PHOTOS: DAVEY TREE



Eastern Redbud in bloom

This last point is important. The devastation caused by Dutch Elm Disease and, more recently, Asian Longhorn Beetle, demonstrates that the over-representation of one species of tree can put the entire urban canopy at risk when a particular pest or disease occurs. Diversity is so important that many approved tree lists exclude common species like maples.

As a landscape designer, your skill in research and site analysis will allow you to provide the best recommendation to your client and help them through any required permitting process.

Here's how to work with street trees during the design process.

## RESEARCH

A quick Internet search should help identify local regulations for street trees in your project city or town. You will want to determine:

- Is there a town specialist with whom you will work to evaluate or plant a street tree?
- Is a permit required to add, remove, or prune a street tree?
- Are there planting specifications and guidelines?
- Is there an approved street tree list?

## SITE ANALYSIS

During site analysis you will gather more information about existing street trees and features of the surrounding area.

- Locate the street/curb and the property line. If you do not have a survey, the town can provide information on the depth of easement at your project address.
- Note the location of any sidewalk, tree cutouts, or tree grates.
- Note the location of any utility poles, overhead power lines, fire hydrants, or sewer grates.
- Note any nearby street lights, intersections, neighboring driveways, or buildings.
- Note other street trees nearby, including their species and size.
- For any existing street tree, note the type, size (DBH and canopy height), and general health. Identify whether there are problems with the limbs, trunk, roots, leaves, adjacent sidewalk heaving, electrical wire entanglement, and so forth.

## DESIGN

First, determine if you recommend the treatment, removal, or addition of street trees. How will your changes affect views of the house or street, shade on your project property, or other design characteristics. Can you plant a new street tree to succeed a dead or dying one?

Next, identify where the new street tree should be located based on the town's specifications. Usually, this is a location away from overhead power lines, utilities, and where traffic sight lines are not blocked. ➳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Then you'll want to select a tree from the town's approved list appropriate for the site location. Here is a selection of commonly used street trees.

## SMALL (UNDER 30')

Best for narrow easements (under 4') or where overhead power lines are present

■ ***Cercis canadensis*** **(EASTERN REDBUD)**
Small, native tree with white or pink buds that appear in April on leafless branches. May require additional water to establish. **Zones 4–9**

■ ***Amelanchier arborea*** **(DOWNY SERVICEBERRY)**
Small, native tree with white flowers in April, fruit in June, and colorful fall foliage. **Zones 4–9**


Flowering Crabapple

■ ***Chionanthus virginicus*** **(WHITE FRINGETREE)**
Small, native tree with white flowers in May/June, bluish fruit in September, and muted yellow foliage in fall.
**Zones 4–9**

■ ***Malus spp.*** **(FLOWERING CRABAPPLE)**
White to pink flowers in spring, small typically red fruit in fall. Select a small cultivar where needed.
**Zones 4–8**

■ ***Maackia amurensis*** **(AMUR MAACKIA)**
Uniformly proportioned tree with slightly fragrant white pealike flowers in June or July Rich green foliage. **Zones 4–7**

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## MEDIUM (30–50')

Best for 4–7' easements with no overhead power lines

■ ***Nyssa sylvatica*** **(BLACK TUPELO)** Native tree with fiery red fall foliage and dark fruit that persists into winter. **Zones 4–9**

■ ***Gleditsia triacanthos*** **(COMMON HONEY LOCUST)** Finely textured green leaves turn yellow in fall. Excellent salt tolerance. Thornless varieties available. **Zones 4–9**

■ ***Cercidiphyllum japonicum*** **(KATSURA)** Heart-shaped leaves turn rich yellow to apricot color in fall with a spicy fragrance. May require additional water to establish. **Zones 4–8**

■ ***Tilia cordata*** **(LITTLE-LEAF LINDEN)** A cool-climate tree with green foliage and inconspicuous but fragrant flowers in June. **Zones 3–7**

■ ***Zelkova serrata*** **(JAPANESE ZELKOVA)** Vase-shaped tree with dark green leaves in summer and colorful fall foliage. **Zones 5–8**

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## LARGE (50'+)

Best for over 7' easements with no overhead power lines

■ ***Ulmus parvifolia*** **(LACEBARK ELM)**
Resistant to Dutch Elm Disease and Elm Leaf Beetle. A rounded tree with uniform branching and colorful exfoliating bark. Great winter interest. **Zones 5–9**

■ ***Platanus x acerifolia*** **(LONDON PLANETREE)**
Named because of its extensive use in the city of London. A large shade tree with colorful exfoliating bark. Great winter interest. **Zones 4–9**

■ ***Quercus palustris*** **(PIN OAK)**
Native tree, pyramidal in habit with dark green, deeply lobed leaves that turn red in fall. **Zones 4–7**

■ ***Liriodendron tulipifera*** **(TULIP TREE)**
Native tree with a unique, spatula-shaped leaf and showy tulip-shaped flowers borne high in the canopy in May/June. Foliage is a nice yellow in fall. **Zones 4–9**

■ ***Liquidambar styraciflua*** **(SWEETGUM)**
Native tree with star-shaped leaves that turn incredible shades of yellow, orange, red and purple in fall. Spiny fruit can be messy. **Zones 5–9**

Tulip tree blossoms

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A young Pin Oak tree