

LANDSCAPES FOR CELEBRATION  
An Investigation and Design of Wedding Gardens

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Through rites heaven and earth join in harmony, the sun and moon  
shine, the four seasons proceed in order, the stars and constellations  
march, the rivers flow, and all things flourish.

...Through them the root and the branch are put in proper order...

-HSUN TZU, ancient Confucian text

## **Landscapes for Celebration**

Ellie Carter

### **Abstract**

This thesis explores the design of landscapes for celebration. These celebrations include all types of events or rituals that mark special times in people's lives. The focus of this work is landscapes for weddings. The goal is to illuminate the importance of these spaces for celebration as well as reveal how landscape architectural design can have a profound influence on how these places are perceived by the user and their experience of their celebration. These events have characteristics that set them apart from everyday activities and these elements can be enhanced by design. There are shared qualities among landscapes for celebration that draw people and make the place meaningful, these are compiled into a sort of set of design principles for these spaces. The structure of the event, both physically and psychologically, can be enhanced by design to add more meaning to the experience of the participants. Through literature review on ritual, sacred spaces, and ritual spaces information is gathered to inform the design. Case studies of celebratory landscapes and powerful places are also performed to gather knowledge. Through this investigation a set of design principles is collected, and then applied to a wedding garden design. Thoughtful design, incorporating knowledge of ritual, ritual structure, and the event being designed for, will create places that support and enhance one in a lifetime events. Design of celebratory landscapes should strive to create spaces that are meaningful, rooted in the community, supportive of the structure of the event, and reflective of the participants.

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## **Chapter One - Introduction**

### **Definition**

There are various perceptions of what “celebratory landscapes” are, and this provides some ambiguity to the topic. Some think of public parades or festivals that mark certain holidays or times of year, while others may think of monuments or memorials commemorating times gone by. Others still may think of landscapes that are designed to celebrate their own inherent qualities and uniqueness. These are perfectly valid definitions, however, this project focuses on one that is more literal and direct, that being landscapes in which life’s celebrations take place. These could include such events as weddings, anniversaries, funerals, birthdays, reunions, and other life milestone types of celebrations. These events are part of what make life special and give us an opportunity to bring together the people we care about to celebrate an important time in our life. Many of these events take place indoors; however, outdoor spaces designed to accommodate these events, or celebratory landscapes, can make the event even more personal and meaningful. These events could also be described as rituals, events that are considered to be rites of passage that give us a feeling of connectedness with the community and provide an opportunity for us to gain insight into ourselves. These events are almost always powerful and meaningful experiences.

The word celebrate is defined by Webster as, “1. to perform (a ritual, ceremony, etc.) publicly and formally, 2. to commemorate (an anniversary, holiday, etc.) with ceremony or festivity, 3. to honor or praise publicly, 4. to mark (a happy occasion) by engaging in some pleasurable activity – to have a convivial good time” (Guralnik & Neufeldt, 225). Landscape is likewise defined as “an expanse of natural scenery seen by the eye” (Guralnik & Neufeldt, 758). The purpose of this project is to illuminate the importance of landscapes for celebration, and to investigate the

design characteristics and basic emotional reactions that give these “natural scenes” power and meaning.

What are the characteristics of these events that set them apart from everyday activities and how can these characteristics be enhanced by design? What are the shared qualities among the various landscapes for celebration that can be compiled into a sort of set of design principles for these spaces? How can the structure of the event, both physically and psychologically, be enhanced by design to add more meaning to the experience of the participants? These questions are the focus of this project, they are explored through review of relevant literature, case studies of landscapes commonly used for celebration, case studies of landscapes that have inherent power and meaning, and finally through the design of a celebratory landscape whose main purpose is to accommodate weddings, but also be adaptable to other special events.

### **Why Study This – The Importance of Landscapes for Celebration**

The profession of landscape architecture encompasses many disciplines and landscape architects put their knowledge, expertise, and respect for the land to work in a multitude of different ways. Landscape architecture projects range from sustainable design, to shopping mall development, to crime prevention through the landscape. Landscape architects must be well versed in a whole host of different fields in order to be successful. Many areas of the profession are well researched and one can gain great knowledge from reading the work of others that have focused on these topics. However, one area that seems in need of increased attention is the study of landscapes for celebration, or “celebratory landscapes”. Celebrations are an integral part of all of our lives and, therefore, broadening the knowledge base of this topic could prove beneficial to all landscape architects. There seem to be two important aspects of design in landscape architecture; one being the more practical and scientific aspect and the other being the poetics of the space, both are equally

important. This topic certainly focuses more on the poetic elements, and what is discovered here can be applied to projects of all kinds and give landscape architects one more tool with which to enhance the landscape and, in turn, peoples lives and experiences.

As each one of us moves through life, there are events that mark the passage of time or signify special occasions. These events are not only important to the person or persons for which the event is happening, but they also serve to bring together communities and families. In *The Transformation of Virginia*, Rhys Isaac writes “In the county communities that made up Virginia, the formal occasions, reinforced by the accompanying informal activities, served to establish and maintain crucial identities and relationships” (Isaac, 113). Each year we look forward to our birthday, anniversary or special holiday, and throughout life there are milestones such as weddings, christenings, and funerals. These events, especially weddings, help shape our identity, both in how we view ourselves and in the community. These occasions hold a strong significance in our hearts and provide a vehicle for us to show love to the people in our lives, or for them to demonstrate that feeling to us. A wedding is the one milestone event in life where the participants choose to make this life change, plan the event, invite the people they most care about and demonstrate to their friends and family that they are making this choice to be together throughout life. It should be a once in a lifetime occurrence and most people strive to make this day as special and as demonstrative of who they are and how they view themselves as possible. The most important things in life are family and friends and these special events give everyone the opportunity to express their love and appreciation for one another. It should be that these feelings are expressed everyday, and this does happen in small ways. However, it seems evident that these special occasions are when people really take the time and make the effort to show how they feel. Sometimes these events are the only times that family, friends and community get together, thus

making them even more significant in people's lives. With these events playing such an essential role in people's lives, it seems obvious that landscape architects should find a way to enhance them; thus creating a whole new way for landscape architecture to enrich people's lives.

This could be creating a place that stands on its own, or an additional element for churches and other organizations to incorporate on their grounds in order to meet the varying needs of their congregation or population. If it isn't creating these places, it could be incorporating some of the design ideas that will be discovered into everyday landscapes so that they may serve dual purposes. Place is vitally important for all human beings. Philip Sheldrake is vice-principal and academic director of Sarum College, visiting professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame, and author of several books on spirituality and sacred space. In *Spaces for the Sacred; Place, Memory, and Identity*, he writes there is a "vital connection between three things: place, memory, and human identity. The concept of place refers not simply to geographical location but to a dialectical relationship between environment and human narrative. Place is space that has the capacity to be remembered and to evoke what is most precious" (Sheldrake, 1). It is important that there are not only indoor places for celebrations, but also outdoor places. As society changes some participants are breaking away from the traditional church wedding, this may be because each person comes from a different religious background or because they want to make their wedding more personal, and often times people really desire a beautiful outdoor place for their wedding. Prior to the middle ages weddings were almost always held outdoors, they were community affairs where the bride and groom made their commitment public to the people they lived near and around. Weddings in that time were secular events; they did not become affiliated with the church until later in history. Many cultures around the world today hold their weddings outdoors, even though our society has focused mainly on the church being the site for weddings and

other ritualistic events. Many people in our society now want to hold their special events in outdoor venues as well; therefore, it is important that there are outdoor spaces that support the dialogue between environment and human narrative. This seems the perfect opportunity for landscape architects to broaden their field of expertise, to determine how to create these places that “evoke what is most precious” and enhance these life-changing events.

In this research process, case studies were developed on celebratory landscapes to get an idea of what outdoor places were available to hold celebrations, why people desired an outdoor setting, and what drew them to the particular place they chose (these are discussed in Chapter 3). Questionnaires were given to the people who do the event planning for these facilities as well as some of the participants who have held their event at these locations. Questions were developed based upon information discussed in the literature and were reviewed by faculty members. The format took its lead from *Qualitative Research and Case Study Application in Education*, written by Sharan Merriam. The event planners and users of the sites were contacted by either telephone or e-mail, the purpose of the project and the questions were explained to them, and then they were asked if they would take the questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed to them once they agreed to participate. A separate questionnaire was developed for both facility coordinators and customers. (See Appendix for copies of both questionnaires). From the results of the questionnaires, it became apparent that a significant number of people are interested in holding celebrations outdoors and think that the availability and character of these facilities is very important. People desire outdoor settings for their celebrations for a variety of reasons. The questionnaires mentioned above revealed some of these motivations. Most of all, people love the beauty and peacefulness provided by an outdoor setting. Many want to feel closer to nature and think that holding their special occasions outdoors establishes a bond with nature they would not have otherwise.

People want to feel a connection to something larger and nothing is larger than the great outdoors. Others still feel that it is common ground between all people and thus provides a setting in which all attending the event will feel comfortable and safe, free to enjoy the festivities and space. In the case of weddings and other ceremonies that are typically held in churches, a large number of people today do not have a particular religious affiliation and are seeking a non-traditional, yet beautiful and meaningful place to hold their once in a lifetime celebration. Even those that do have strong religious ties feel that nature is the true house of god and what better place to show their reverence. Some participants feel that it gives them more freedom to personalize their event, having their celebration reflect their personality is important to them. Lots of people simply love the outdoors and want it to be a part of their special occasions. Given these reasons, it is not difficult to understand the attraction that people feel towards holding their special events outdoors.

However, most of the outdoor facilities that people use for their events are designed and built for another purpose but can be rented for events. This leads to the events being secondary and having to work around the other features of the facility. This causes the celebration to become less than what it could have been. If the facility offered a place with meaning, designed for the purpose of life's celebrations, the experience of the user could be much enhanced. This is where landscape architecture comes into play – we create experience through design.

The very nature of landscape architecture is to create place and experience. When one thinks of creating a place for celebrations, the following quote seems to articulate some ideas well. In *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, Walter Brueggemann discussed 'the land' as a central theme of biblical faith which "underscores the important distinction between space and place and argues that it is within the spatial connections of human life that we most deeply encounter the meaning of existence: Place is a space which has historical meanings, where

some things have happened which are now remembered and which provide continuity and identity across generations. Place is space in which important words have been spoken which have established identity, defined vocation and envisioned destiny. Place is space in which vows have been exchanged, promises have been made, and demands have been issued” (Sheldrake, 7). This says that to create a place one cannot simply make a space; there are elements that make it “place” and give it meaning. So how does landscape architecture play a role? Landscape architects create place through their work and this skill can be applied, with the knowledge gained through this research, to create meaningful landscapes for celebration. “Place involves ‘a specific landscape, a set of social activities, and webs of meaning and rituals, all inseparably intertwined’. Places are inherently associated with the events that happen in landscapes. Human memories, whether individual or collective, are so often localized in landscapes even when people cannot precisely remember when they happened in time or how long they lasted. Landscape, then, is the first partner in the dialectical nature of place. Yet the very word ‘landscape’ implies an active human shaping rather than a pure habitat” (Sheldrake, 13-14). Landscape architects can design places in which these social activities and celebrations can occur and provide a setting for making memories and establishing identities.

Most people want a “place”, not just a “space” for their celebration. How can we create an experience through landscape design that will not only accommodate but add meaning to and enhance life’s important events? We can use what is gained through this project concerning ritual and the structure of ritual space to tie together all of the various elements into a cohesive place. This will be used in concert with knowledge of land issues such as drainage and soil characteristics, plant know-how and awareness of what will work well and what will produce the desired results, materials usage, and most importantly the effect of the landscape on people to bring all of the parts together to establish a wonderful and meaningful landscape for

celebration. The objective of this project is to explore general characteristics of rituals and events, and establish design principles of ritual spaces that can be applied to any landscape architectural project to add power and meaning. The focus of this design exercise will be to determine what elements are specific to accommodating the structure and meanings associated with weddings, through literature review and case studies, and then to incorporate the findings into a design for a meaningful wedding garden. Many of these ideas can be synthesized into design for other special events, but the focus of the project is design for weddings. These design principles are also an important consideration for any landscape architect to add meaning and power to projects. Thus far it does not seem that much focus has been put on this type of design, but with the growing affection for nature and the significance that special events hold in the lives of people, this is an important area for growth within our profession.

## **Chapter Two – Major Research Findings/ Literature Review**

The literature associated with landscapes for celebration falls into several different categories. There is little literature specifically about design characteristics for celebratory landscapes; therefore literature on related topics was reviewed to pull out ideas that could be applied to this type of design. There are a multitude of books on ritual, its evolution throughout the ages and the purposes it serves in society and to the individual. There are also many sources for information on types of rituals in different cultures and how these ritualistic activities serve to perpetuate certain cultural identities through time. There are a number of places to look for information on sacred spaces or landscapes, places that have served as sacred centers and draw people from around the world. Finally, there is a fair amount written about spiritual journeys or pilgrimages and the corresponding inner journey that participants experience, these sources discuss the connection between physical landscape and the cognitive reactions of the people involved, how the outer journey and inner journey affect one another.

### **Ritual Characteristics**

It is imperative to understand what ritual is and how it relates to celebrations in general and weddings in particular. Catherine Bell, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Santa Clara University and the author of several books on ritual and religion, interprets ritual “as the expression of paradigmatic values of death and rebirth; ritual as a mechanism for bringing the individual into the community and establishing a social entity; or ritual as a process for social transformation, for catharsis, for embodying symbolic values, for defining the nature of the real” (Bell, 89). She defines ritual as codified behavior, rules of conduct, and stylized activities (Bell, 91). Throughout the years views on ritual have changed dramatically, Bell explains that theorists in the early twentieth century, such as Emile Durkheim, saw ritual as

more formal and sanctified activities, specifically community religious ceremonies. They emphasized ritual as a community activity and saw its function as supporting community ideals and ethics, participants perform by a set of unvarying rules and have little personal impact on the ritual. Around the 1970s performance theory began to come into play. Theorists such as Victor Turner included cultural performances as rituals, he described rituals as “social drama”, including events such as “theater, sports, play, public spectacles” as belonging to the category of ritual (Bell, 73). Performance theory, according to Bell, recognized that ritual does support community values and bonds, but it placed more emphasis on the individual in the act of the ritual. Supporters of performance theory saw that not only did the ritual affect the individual but also the individual affected the ritual.

“In particular, performance models suggest active rather than passive roles for ritual participants who reinterpret value-laden symbols as they communicate them. Cultural life has come to be seen as this dynamic generation and modification of symbolic systems, as something constantly being created by the community... the active imagery of performance has also brought the possibility of a fuller analytical vocabulary with which to talk about the nonintellectual dimensions of what ritual does, that is, the emotive, physical, and even sensual aspects of ritual participation. Hence, ritual as a performative medium for social change emphasizes human creativity and physicality: ritual does not mold people; people fashion rituals that mold their world” (Bell, 73).

In other words, performance theory recognized that people often modify rituals to suit their needs and beliefs or interpret different meanings from the existing ritual activity. This modification of ritual is important in the considerations of design for wedding gardens; it must allow for the personalization of the event. In the 1970s there was also the rise of a practice theory. This theory basically assumed that ritual could be found in anything. Bell wrote, “practice theory claims to take seriously the ways in which human activities, as formal as a religious ritual, or as casual as a midday stroll, are creative strategies by which human beings continually reproduce

and reshape their social and cultural environments” (Bell, 76). In practice theory, if a person places meaning on an activity, then it is ritual. Practice theory supports performance theory by emphasizing the role of the individual and the ability of the participant to modify the ritual and its meanings. This understanding of the individual in the ceremony helps to clarify the ability of ritual activities to be meaningful and enduring. This emphasis on human scale also signals that designers can affect this modification of the experience both emotionally and physically.

Victor Turner, an anthropologist, supports many of Bell’s thoughts on ritual in his book *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. In his book he presents the ideas of Arnold Van Gennep, who did much work on the emotional and psychological structure of the rituals occurring at major life events. “Van Gennep himself defined rites of passage as ‘rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age’ ... Gennep has shown that all rites of passage or “transition” are marked by three phases: separation, margin (or limen, signifying “threshold” in Latin), and aggregation” (Turner, 94). Turner goes on to explain these various phases, which he researched through tribal rituals. The first phase is made up of symbolic behavior demonstrating the separation of the individual from their former station in life. The “liminal” period is ambiguous and symbolizes the period of time where the individual learns the responsibilities of the new station they are about to enter, and the third phase is when the passage is complete, the individual is “expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standard binding on incumbents of social position in a system of such positions” (Turner, 95). These concepts can be illustrated in the example of a wedding: the bride and groom both have festivities and events with their friends and family before the ceremony signifying their separation from this group in the position that they currently hold, the ceremony itself is the margin, where each participant is learning the new responsibilities that they will have and what is expected of them in their new positions,

and after the ceremony they enter their community in new roles and carry out their responsibilities. Turner was a supporter of performance theory, and like Bell, believed that ritual symbols and meanings are dynamic and can be modified by the participants thus allowing for cultural continuity as well as change.

*Liberating Rites: Understanding the Transformative Power of Ritual*, by Tom Driver, Paul Tillich Professor of Theology and Culture at Union Theological Seminary, supports many of the ideas discussed by Bell and Turner and offers some new thoughts on ritual. He states, “the purposes of this book are several: to reflect upon the deep human longing for ritual; to interpret it in the light of our physical, social, political, sexual, moral, aesthetic, and religious existence; and to urge reform of our ritual life, especially in religion, so that our longing for ritual and our longing for freedom may come together” (Driver, 4). As this book was reviewed, the realization came that part of the goal of this project was to create an element of freedom in marriage rituals so that it is reflective of the participants, and thus, more meaningful. Driver supports Turner in his idea of ritual being the “liminal” phase of rites of passage. “Different from ordinary life, they (ritual, religion, and liberative action) move in a kind of liminal space, at the edge of, or in the cracks between, the mapped regions of what we like to call ‘the real world’” (Driver, 80). This liminality can also be reflected in the landscapes for celebrations; they should be separate from or existing around what we see as everyday life. Driver also supported both Bell and Turner in their belief in performance theory, that the ritual or ceremonies are often much like performances, that ritual can be found in many different types of activities by different people, and that the participants themselves can modify the event for personal meaning, thus ritual and culture change over time. Driver claims that rituals provide three great gifts to social life – “the establishment of order, the deepening of communal life, and the assistance of the dynamic of social change through ritual processes of transformation” (Driver, 166). This thought seems to be in

coherence with much of what was presented by Bell and Turner and concisely states why ritual and ritual-like activities are so important in our lives.

Seeing as the theories on ritual are wide and varied and that even an everyday activity could be considered a ritual, Bell introduces some characteristics common to most rituals in order to differentiate them from other activities. Some of these terms are similar to those that landscape architects use in reference to their work, however these terms are defined below in terms of Bell's understanding of how they relate to ritual. Rituals will exhibit these characteristics to varying degrees and certain aspects may not be included in every one, but they do serve as a basic code of what makes a ritual.

Formalism – We all associate ritual with formality. In general the more formal an occasion seems to be, the more ritualistic it feels to us. “When analyzed, formality appears to be, at least in part, the use of a more limited and rigidly organized set of expressions and gestures, a “restricted code” of communication or behavior in contrast to a more open or “elaborated code” (Bell, 139). This strict code of words and actions tends to reinforce community values, however participants do have the opportunity to modify this code to serve their own needs while still remaining formal.

Traditionalism - “The attempt to make a set of activities appear to be identical to or thoroughly consistent with older cultural precedents can be called ‘traditionalization’” (Bell, 145). This is a powerful tool for legitimizing the event; it can be an exact copy of the activity from an earlier time, an adaptation to the new age, or even just creation of elements within the event that bring to mind the activity of the past. Traditionalism is a vital part of the wedding ceremony; many people take their vows and the structure of the day directly from what their families have done for generations. “A ritual that evokes no connection with any tradition is apt to be found anomalous, inauthentic, or unsatisfying by most people” (Bell, 145). Most people today, even if they desire and plan a non-traditional wedding, still include traditional

elements to authenticate their ceremony.

Invariance – Invariance is one of the most common characteristics associated with ritual-like activities, “usually seen in a disciplined set of actions marked by precise repetition and physical control” (Bell, 150). This takes the emphasis off of the individual and places it on the authority of the community and the standards that have stood the test of time. As stated earlier, many wedding ceremonies are identical, using the same procedures, the same words and the same actions. This gives the participants and the guests the feeling that they are now part of something bigger, that they have performed the same actions as those before them. This is an important part of ritual, however, it seems that in recent times there are a greater number of people pulling away from the strict codes and personalizing their ceremony.

Rule Governance – All ritual-like activity is guided by a set of rules that are generally followed very closely. Many other activities such as sporting events, games, and war are also subject to rule-governance. These rules serve to hold chaos in check (Bell, 153). In terms of a wedding ceremony, it seems that this is related to invariance and a code of conduct deemed appropriate for such an important event.

Sacral Symbolism – Activities that explicitly appeal to supernatural beings or a higher power are readily considered to be examples of ritual (Bell, 155). The use of the bible, the cross, the American flag, and sacred places are examples of appealing to a higher power. Weddings are generally full of expressions both physical and spoken that draw god into the event. Places can also be considered strong sacral symbols, and this is linked to the focus of this design. “As symbols, geographic places are thought to be more than mere arbitrary sites where something important happens or happened in the past. Somehow the distinctive landscape, interiors, or the events that transpired there serve to imbue the site with a significance that can evoke emotional associations for those who visit there” (Bell, 157). This is the goal of this project, to create a place that evokes significance and emotional connection.

All of these characteristics of ritual are useful in understanding the mental or psychological aspects of the event. This inner landscape must be understood before the outer can be designed to correspond. Understanding the physical structure and meaning of the place is also essential.

### **Understanding Sacred Space**

With the knowledge of ritual, with its mental and social aspects, it is now important to explore the ideas associated with sacred space, its implications for landscape and design for rituals and celebrations. Philip Sheldrake discusses the importance of place in his book *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory and Identity*. He presents ideas about the definition of place as a human construct, how Christianity at a point in history changed its view from geography towards people being the focus of the sacred, how sacrament and ethics have been tied together throughout the ages, how imaginary and possibly even utopian type places are significant in religion, and how Christian mysticism involves themes of journey and inner exploration. This book reinforces the idea that spaces for celebrations, rituals, or sacred events are essential in human life. It even supports the idea of natural, outdoor areas being vitally important, he says, “we need a place where we can belong to the community ... we need a place that offers a fruitful relationship with the natural elements, with plants and animals and with the rhythms of the seasons ... we need a place that offers access to the sacred (however we understand that term)” (Sheldrake, 10).

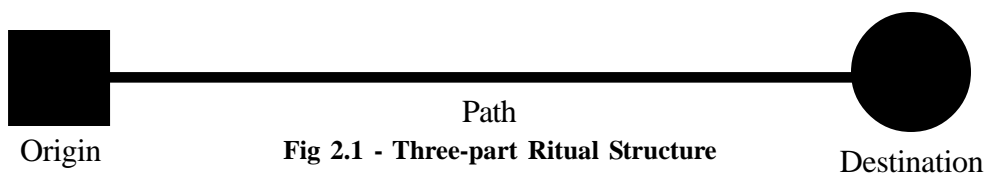
*Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality* by Belden Lane, Hotfelder Distinguished Professor in the Humanities in the Department of Theological Studies at Saint Louis University, covers similar material to *Spaces for the Sacred*. Much of the thrust of this work is understanding the character of sacred space. Belden suggests four rules or “axioms” for understanding, he presents them as being self-evident principles and phenomenological

categories (Lane, 19). The first axiom is ‘sacred place is not chosen, it chooses’. “Sacred place, therefore, is a construction of the imagination that affirms the independence of the holy” (Lane, 19). The next axiom, ‘sacred place is ordinary place, ritually made extraordinary’, explains that a sacred place becomes sacred because there are ritual acts performed there. ‘Sacred place can be tread upon without being entered’ is the third axiom. It is related to the state of consciousness of the individual, a holy place might only be able to be recognized as such from a distance and with a certain perspective. The fourth axiom is ‘the impulse of sacred place is both centripetal and centrifugal, local and universal’ (Lane, 19). “One is recurrently driven to a quest for centeredness – a focus on the particular place of divine encounter – and then at other times driven out from that center with an awareness that God is never confined to a single locale” (Lane, 19). From these axioms it is understood that a place does not have to be inherently sacred, that is can become sacred through the performance of ritual and through the various perceptions of individuals that experience it. Another interesting concept presented in this book is the idea that through the transformation of consciousness an ordinary place can become one of significance. Lane explores this with the question, “What allows a site initially known as a *topos* – a mere location, a measurable, quantifiable point, neutral and indifferent – to become a place available to us as *chora* – an energizing force, suggestive to the imagination, drawing intimate connections to everything else in our lives?” (Lane, 39). These term *topos* and *chora* are Greek words for place and were emphasized by Aristotle and Plato. Aristotle understood place (as *topos*) to be a point no different than any other, while Plato saw place (as *chora*) as able to resonate to the immediacies of human experience (Lane, 39). The question Lane poses seems akin to the focus of this project with the addition of deriving how to create *chora* through design. Lane says, “Participation in deliberate ritual activity is what invariably occasions the transition from experiencing the place as *topos* to

encountering the same place as *chora* (Lane, 39). This may very well be true to a certain extent, however, it seems evident that there are certain physical structures of a place that would enhance its ability to accommodate the ritual and connect the outer with the inner experience of the place.

### Structure of Ritual or Ceremonial Space

After reviewing and understanding the theories on ritual and sacred space in general, now is the opportunity to get more specific and investigate ritual and ceremonial space. Thomas Barrie, practicing architect and a professor of Architecture at Lawrence Technological University, authored *Spiritual Path, ... Sacred Place*, in which he discusses an array of topics about ritual space or celebratory landscapes. One of the most important things to understand is that the physical journey made by the individual symbolically represents their mental journey through the act of the ceremony. Barrie states this by saying “the sacred place ... is the symbolic narrative facilitated by the architectural setting of path and place” (Barrie, 73). There should be a parallel between the psychological experience of the place and the actual physical setting, thus a designer has the occasion to make a setting for these events that will develop this connection between the inner and outer journey. Barrie goes on to identify a basic three-part structure to ritual spaces: a marked origin, a path, and a sacred center (or destination) at the end of the path (see figure 2.1). Michael Jackson expresses the importance of origin well in *At Home in the World* when he said; “Every rest is also a transition. A track erased by wind or rain. A crossroads where we pass imperceptibly from what has already taken place to that which is about to occur” (Jackson, 157). Barrie stresses the importance of path throughout his book



and emphasizes the sacred center; how it needs to be markedly different from other areas within the site, obvious to anyone as a place with significance. This structure seems to support the procession of the wedding ceremony; the origin tells the participant the event is beginning and they are entering a new space where this important event will take place, the path is the journey, both physically and mentally, to the site of the ceremony, and the destination is the sacred place where all of the preparation comes to fruition and a new stage in life begins.

In her thesis, “Rethinking the Role of the Landscape in Historic Interpretation”, Christine Calorusso presents a set of characteristics common to ritual spaces. She synthesized these terms from Barrie adding her own interpretation. She says, “these characteristics use physical design elements to create or reinforce psychological states of mind” (Calorusso, 18). These terms proved to be very helpful in understanding the physical design of spaces for celebration. The characteristics are described as follows:

*Identity* – Users should intuitively view a celebratory landscape as one entity, no matter the size. This is achieved through a consistent vocabulary in materials and architectural techniques in the design. Adequately defining the edge is another way to realize this goal, this can be accomplished by a change in material along and path edge or enclosing the area in some way. The function of differentiating the identity of the space is to indicate to the user that they are now in a different space, that the area they have entered is special and meant for a specified use (Calorusso, 18). Barrie quotes Kevin Lynch on this topic, “a legible environment establishes a sense of place and emotional security and can furnish the raw material for the symbols and collective memories of group communication ... [and] and heightens the potential depth and intensity of human experience” (Barrie, 38).

*Continuity* – Continuity goes hand in hand with identity. Identity is the unity of the physical space, while continuity is the capability of the space to create a consistent emotional experience for the user (Calorusso, 18). For instance, many landscapes have a theme; examples of this might be English, Rustic, Colonial, or Historic. Staying with the same theme when choosing materials, plants, spatial design, and artistic touches will provide an overall experience that is much greater than each part alone. Barrie says, “architecture is experienced as a synthesis of many stimuli and is only fully understood in its totality” (Barrie, 47). This seems to speak to this idea of continuity and describes how all of the elements in concert provide the psychological experience.

*Origin* – A successful celebratory landscape will create a defined origin or entryway to signal to the users that a different experience is about to begin. Entries are often designed to slow the user’s pace and indicate the beginning of a unique kind of space. Entryways are also an opportunity to introduce whatever theme has been chosen for the landscape and create a special experience right from the first moment the user enters the garden (Calorusso, 18). Barrie discussed this principle of origin and explains its importance by saying, “the threshold acts as a transitional zone between the outside and the inside; it both separates and joins these two opposing zones... it symbolizes passage from one mode of existence to another (Barrie, 58).

*Destination* – This is the sacred center, the site of the ritual itself, the end of the journey. In the case of celebratory landscapes that will accommodate such events as weddings, award ceremonies, or any event where there is a sort of processional, it is vital to provide a destination point and distinguish this destination from the rest of the site. It needs to be physically differentiated from the rest of the site by its size, character, or being set higher or lower in topography to signify the special nature of this particular part (Calorusso, 18).

The materials should be consistent with those used elsewhere in the garden, but are often more elaborate. This same principle can be extended to landscapes for other events in the form of a focal point. This might be a breathtaking view or a unique focal point within the landscape – something that draws the eye and further enhances the theme and experience of the space.

*Directionality/Path* – The path is one of the three basic structures of ritual space. Barrie says, “a path is characterized as a linear progression but is also experienced as having “a character of its own” ... paths represent the willful leaving of one place and a journey to another” (Barrie, 39). Directionality refers to a quality of that path that pulls the user into the space. Some examples of how this might be accomplished are through a series of increasingly meaningful rooms that encourage the user to move forward or by a winding path that hides upcoming views and pulls the users on to see what’s behind the bend adding a sense of mystery. A path can provide much of the experience that a user has of the space (Calorusso, 18).

Path, one of the three basic structural elements, is a vitally important component of the design. “The ease or difficulty of walking along the path and its surface and texture, the scale and distance of the entrance, the shifting views as we move along the route, inclines and steps, all form part of the experience of approaching and passing through architecture. Additionally, our peripheral field of vision is an important component of judging how fast we are moving through a space...narrow corridors make us feel like we are traveling faster” (Barrie, 47). Barrie describes in detail a number of different path types that could inspire the design. These path types provide a psychological impression that should be in keeping with the theme and purpose of the garden. The path types are as follows:

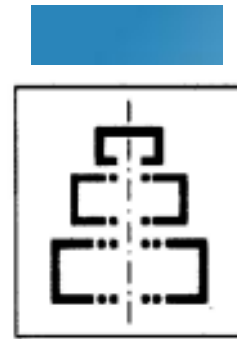
Axial - a series of increasingly private rooms that culminate in the chosen destination. The path is clearly marked (Barrie 79).

Split - a path with several origins, but all leading to the same destination. It suggests the formation of unity from diversity (Barrie 103).

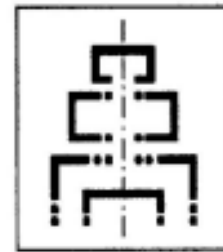
Radial - many paths leading to the destination. This spatial design magnifies the power of the center (Barrie 111).

Circumambulating - a path that takes the user around the destination, but not to it. This sets the destination apart by making it inaccessible (Barrie 118).

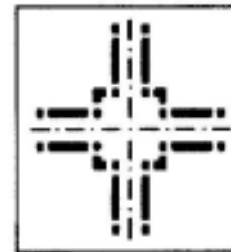
The design of the path is vitally important to enhancing the connection between the physical and emotional experience at the site, so the path must be carefully designed to ensure the desired characteristics are provided. These above mentioned path types are, of course, not the only ones from which to choose, but they provide some ideas to begin the thought process. The path could be very straight and formal, leading directly to the destination. This type of path would be advantageous for a procession in a marriage because the bride should be able to see her groom (the destination she has chosen) throughout her journey. The groom likewise should be able to see his bride and know that she is making this trip to be with him. This straight and formal path is also traditional, reminiscent of the straight aisle down the center of the church. On the



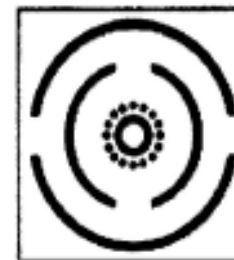
Axial



Split



Radial



Circumambulating

**\*Diagrams from Calorusso, (adapted from Barrie, 1996)**

other hand, a path could be winding and mysterious and leave the user anticipating what is to come. This type of path could be one designated for guests coming to this place providing its own unique experience. The path type should be chosen according what types of celebrations the designer plans to accommodate at the celebratory landscape and what works best with the structure of the event. Many of these life celebrations have different movements and structure, and the design of the facility could have a profound impact on this facet of the event. As we all know, in a marriage ceremony often the groom comes from one place and the bride another. This is to signify the coming together of two separate beings into one. A wedding garden needs to provide this opportunity to its users. After the ceremony, guests generally use a path of movement other than the “aisle” to proceed to the reception. This path of movement would also need careful consideration and planning. The guests are having their own experience of the place and this path provides an opportunity for them to reflect on what they just witnessed. Perhaps this should be the winding mysterious path with opportunities for rests and inner thoughts. The designer should consider what events are going to be accommodated and allow the path to be adaptable for all of them. Barrie presents many interesting ideas and principles that are important considerations for design of celebratory landscapes and in particular a wedding garden.

The literature reviewed gives much insight into the importance of ritual and ceremonies, both to the individual and the community, what characteristics are attributed with ritual, the nature of sacred places or settings for ritual, and the basic physical and structural components they have in common. The information gathered from this review, and the knowledge gained from conducting case studies, interviews, and questionnaires were compiled into a number of design principles and ideas for successful celebratory landscapes to be employed while designing a wedding garden for completion of this project, as well as for application on other projects where the designer wants to add power and meaning.

## **Chapter Three - Case Studies**

In the search for design principles that govern celebratory landscapes, case studies of landscapes where weddings are often held were conducted to gather information and ideas. Whenever possible, interviews were conducted with the individuals in charge of event planning at each of the facilities in an effort to gather as much information as possible. Case studies of celebratory landscapes that were thought of as “places with power”, that meaning places that have a significant draw and seem to represent something of power to a lot of people were also investigated. These additional places demonstrate a broader base of ideas and designs to enlighten the design as to what landscape elements provide power and meaning. There is not a large wealth of literature on the design for celebrations, therefore, the goal of the case studies was to analyze these locations and draw out the important and successful elements. This was done to both understand the nature of these rituals and events, physically and psychologically, to a deeper extent, and to inform the design of a wedding garden for this project.

### **Study Set One – Local Landscapes Used for Celebration**

#### *Nesselrod on the New*

Nesselrod, located on the cliffs above the New River in Radford, Va, is a unique and beautiful setting based on an English theme and with a formal ambiance. A plan view of the facility is shown in Figure 3.1. This facility offers an outdoor “chapel”, which appeals to many. It has a 200 foot aisle that is formed by boxwood hedges and seating areas that are marked by boxwoods. Ten to fifteen foot high hemlock hedges enclose the “chapel” and create an intimate space. The destination is a stuccoed gazebo, which is at the end of the aisle. An enlarged plan view of the chapel space is shown in Figure 3.2. The planted flowers are all white, but Nesselrod

also provides plant containers for personalizing the color scheme. Mostly weddings take place at Nesselrod, and the spatial design is well suited for this purpose. There is a straight and formal “aisle” that leads from the front door of the house, through a small geometric garden, past a large hedge that signifies another stage in the journey, and through two large columns that flank the back of the seating areas down to the gazebo. The nature of this path is perfectly suited for weddings and the intimate space created by the hedges enhances the feeling of being somewhere special. There is a break in the hedges near the gazebo for the groom to enter through, thus symbolizing the participants coming from separate places to join as one. Nesselrod also has an area specified for the bride and groom to receive their guests after the ceremony. Guests naturally proceed through this area on their way to the reception space. The receiving area is a unique and wonderful element at Nesselrod. The reception area is behind the house and is also formal in its theme. The guests get to this area by walking down the drive and then through a covered threshold. One cannot see this area until they are in it; this provides a sense of mystery and then excitement once you are there. The area is partially covered with a pergola type structure and has a stone patio that is reminiscent of an English estate. These elements give a formal appearance through their materials and ornamentation. The spatial design specific to the structure of a wedding and the consistency of theme with material and plant choices are wonderful attributes of Nesselrod.



The Chapel



The Inn

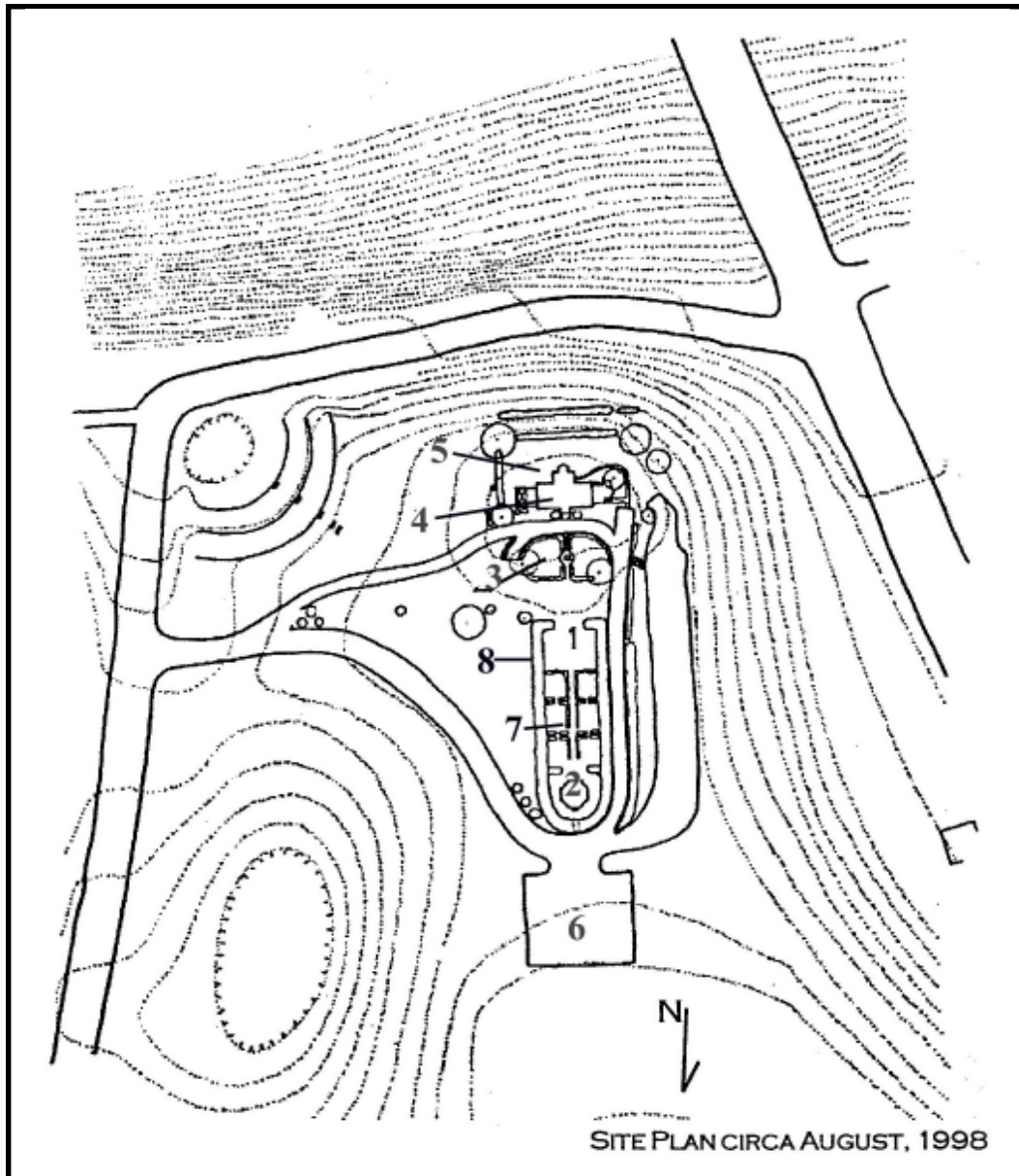


The Reception Area



Pathway

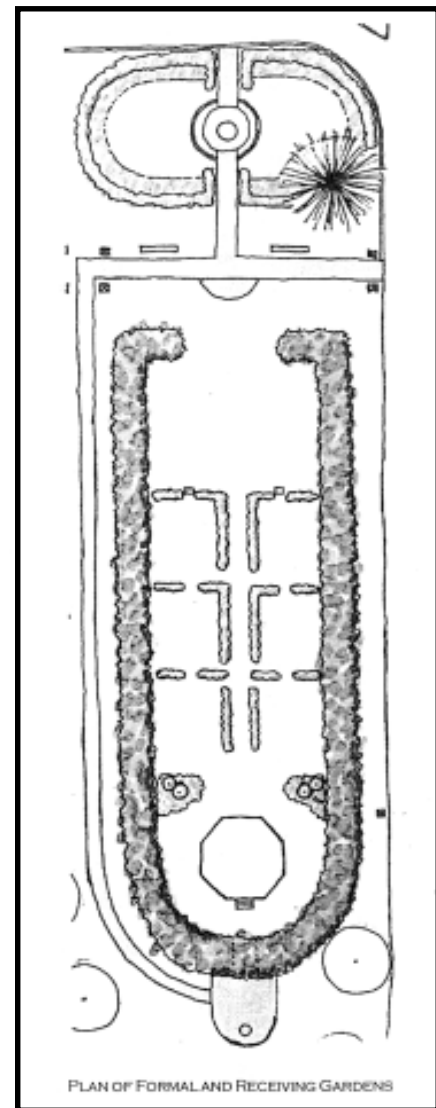
Nesselrod can accommodate up to 200 people for an outdoor wedding or up to 40 indoors. Nesselrod is unique in that it includes a separate area designed for the reception on site. This facility also serves as an Inn and can therefore offer lodging to their users when needed. Inside the guesthouse there are separate rooms for both the bride and groom to get ready before the ceremony. Numerous small tents are



**Figure 3.1 - Nesselrod site plan showing important elements:**

- 1) the Chapel, 2) the gazebo, 3) the receiving area, 4) the house, 5) the reception area,
- 6) the parking area, 7) the boxwood bordered seating areas,
- 8) the hemlock hedges enclosing the chapel

erected over the ceremony space when poor weather affects the events. The reception area is both indoors and outdoors, the outdoor area is partially covered and has retractable awnings to increase the covered space. Access to the site is convenient, yet also begins to create the experience provided at the site. The driveway is right off of a main road in Radford, but you immediately start to rise in elevation and are surrounded by vegetation, beginning the transformation to a different place. There is ample parking at the top of the hill where the site is located. However, the parking area is not consistent in theme with the rest of the site, and breaks up the experience that was started with the drive up. Since the site is located on top of cliffs overlooking the New River, it is pleasantly secluded and free from distracting noises. Nesselrod offers many special features such as an outdoor dance floor, stage, bar, and ceiling fans in the reception area. Outdoor bathrooms are also provided in this area. Other features include special effect lighting for use in evening weddings, a sound system concealed in the vegetation around the “chapel”, and heirloom bulbs planted throughout the property. These elements enhance the event both psychologically and functionally. Overall, Nesselrod is a very successful celebratory landscape that draws many people. The experience created there makes you feel as if you are at a historic English Inn and it includes many desired design elements.



**Figure 3.2 - Plan view of the chapel and receiving areas**

## *Virginia Tech Horticulture Garden*

Located on the campus of Virginia Tech, the horticulture garden is a popular place for students and others affiliated with the University to hold their celebrations. The garden is designed for displaying plants and, therefore, does not include many of the design elements or principles discussed later in this project. The garden, of course, has wonderful planting beds that make a magnificent backdrop for any event. There is no “aisle” in existence, so users have to create their own. There is a spectacular allée of trident maples that could make an “aisle” to be envied by most, but it does not currently lead to any area that could accommodate a wedding or celebration. There are several structures throughout the garden that serve as focal points and destinations. There is not a true definitive destination, however, and this is both good and bad. It does provide the opportunity to hold events in several different areas, but none of the areas really stand out from all of the rest. Some of these spots could be used to catch a private moment during the festivities. The presence of small intimate spaces with privacy is a great part of this garden. Paths of movement through the garden are well defined, but there are no distinguished areas for separate functions. The garden does have two beautiful water features, which add a sense of power and connection with nature. One of these water features serves as the setting for some of the small weddings that take place in the garden. The second water feature is located at the back of the property, serving as a transition into an additional three



Trident Maple Allée



Destination



Destination



Water Feature

acres, onto which the garden will eventually expand. There is no lighting in the garden and therefore, events cannot take place after dark unless the lighting is supplied by the user.

The horticulture garden can accommodate events of various sizes depending on which location within the garden is chosen. There is a sizable open field that can hold a large wedding, or smaller areas for more intimate gatherings. There are bathrooms in one of the greenhouse facilities that can be used briefly before the ceremony, but otherwise there are no accommodations for bride and groom before the event. A reception can be held in the garden, but there is no design for this. They currently take place in the large field and the users must provide a dance floor, tent, tables, chairs, sound, lighting, and any other such elements that are needed. Tents are used during poor weather, but the participants must provide these themselves. The horticulture garden is located right on the tech campus, and therefore, has easy access and ample parking. The experience created by these features is the opportunity to see the garden in its context and to understand the place it holds on the campus. The sight is not secluded, so regular campus noise and activities affect the events that go on there. The special features offered by the horticulture garden are the extensive, lush plantings and the tie to the history and culture of the university.

The head horticulturist indicated they have plans to add an event garden to the horticulture garden that will take care of some of the problems that exist now. Despite these drawbacks, the horticulture garden is a beautiful and memorable place for events that is very popular with the citizens of Blacksburg.



Panoramic view of the open field currently used for events

### *Explore Park*

Explore Park is a living history museum located off of the Blue Ridge Parkway north of Roanoke, Virginia. The main objective of the park is to educate about the history of the region, but many people hold their special events there as well. It is an 1100-acre park that contains a lot of undeveloped natural beauty. This natural setting is what draws most people to the facility. The park has a quaint church, Mountain Union Church, built in the 1880's, disassembled and reassembled on their property. This church is the site for most of the events that take place there, its historic value and rustic charm appeal to users. The church is set amongst a large stand of trees, making it shady and secluded from the rest of the park. There is a winding road that leads to the church that creates mystery and anticipation of the site. The park also has a beautiful welcome center that has both indoor and outdoor facilities that are used in conjunction with many of the events. The park also has Brugh Tavern, which allows users to have supporting events such as a rehearsal dinner or catering just about anywhere in the park. The park also offers a wealth of amenities such as parking, electricity and bathrooms. Not often do you find these things when you feel like you are in the middle of the forest.

Explore Park can accommodate events of any size depending on the location within the park. As mentioned before, with the variety of facilities at the park, it provides the full package of before and after ceremony events. Bride and



River flowing through the park



Natural beauty throughout the park



Mountain Union Church



Road leading into church

groom can use rooms in the welcome center or in Mountain Union church to prepare before the ceremony. Every outdoor location for events in the park has an indoor counterpart, so in the case of bad weather, participants can move indoors or erect tents. There are many areas throughout the park for both wedding and reception giving a wealth of options to consider. Access to the site is by the Blue Ridge Parkway; this journey begins to create the experience that the participants and guest will have at the park. There is ample parking in various areas throughout the park, so that is not a concern. The park is immense and very secluded; there is no outside noise, leaving the feeling of being in the wilderness. The special features of Explore Park include the connection with historical elements, the ability to have electricity almost anywhere on the site, catering provided at many areas, a large variety of facilities, and horse carriage service is offered. The natural beauty, wealth of amenities, and secluded setting make it a popular choice for many people.



The Welcome Center



The Welcome Center



The Brugh Tavern

### *Smithfield Plantation*

Located adjacent to the Virginia Tech campus, Smithfield Plantation is the historic home of the Preston family. The plantation has been restored to its original state and is maintained in this condition. It is owned by the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, and serves as the setting for many types of events. Smithfield plantation does not exhibit many of the design principles gathered from the literature because it is being preserved in its original state, but does employ some of the ideas in the setup of events. Events sometimes take place on the side hill, which creates a sort of bowl, this location of being lower in topography sets the site apart as “different” from the rest and allows the guests to view the event unencumbered while also realizing that area is the most significant. More frequently events occur in the front of the house. The front yard has numerous trees that create an “aisle” and provide shade when the leaves are out. The main appeal of this site is that it is a historic spot and everything there adheres to that theme. It is also quite secluded even though it is right in town, provided by many large trees and surrounding fields. The house itself adds a beautiful and unique component as well.

Smithfield accommodates events of up to 300 people. There is a small kitchen available for caterers and a room for people to change their clothes, but no other indoor facilities are available. Tents are used in the case of bad weather. Smithfield is used for receptions; however, there are no hard



The Preston House



Historic Building



Side Hill



Front Yard

outdoor surfaces for setting up tables or a dance floor. The front yard is basically level and usually accommodates these uses. Access to Smithfield is close to campus, yet you must drive down a somewhat secluded road to get there. This sets the site apart from the rest of campus. Ample parking is provided at Smithfield. The site is fairly secluded, lessening the noise from campus. Special features offered include a connection with history (you can even have costumed interpreters direct guests to the wedding from the parking area), lovely views from the site, a beautiful house, and several large, old trees that create the “aisle” in the front lawn. Smithfield Plantation is a unique and charming setting for events that is currently growing in popularity.



View of the house from the drive

### *Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden*

Located in Richmond, Virginia, Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden consists of over 25 acres of spectacular gardens with year round beauty (see Figure 3.3 for plan of the property). Major Lewis Ginter purchased the land, once owned by Patrick Henry, in 1884. Ginter, a self-made millionaire, built the Lakeside Wheel Club, a resort and destination for bicyclists, on the property. He died in 1897 leaving the property to his niece, Grace Arents. She created a convalescent home for sick children, which she called Bloemendaal (“valley of the flowers”). After traveling in Europe, she was inspired to develop gardens on the property. Upon her passing in 1926, she left the land to the City of Richmond to be used as a botanical garden in perpetual memory of her uncle. The garden is now a non-profit organization that strives to: educate children and adults about their interdependence with the plant world; utilize and promote the best in landscape design, seasonal display and horticultural techniques; and be a field leader in applied botanical research. The garden also is the setting for many special events.

The moment you turn into the property, you know Lewis Ginter is a unique and beautiful place. The Visitors Center is prominent and surrounded by luxurious landscaping. Lewis Ginter has a series of interconnected paths throughout the property with a series of different gardens and facilities. The gardens include an entrance meadow, four seasons garden, sunken garden, Asian valley, garden walk, rose garden, bog



Bloemendaal House



Bloemendaal House



Conservatory



Flagler Pavilion

garden, perennial garden, woodland walk, annual display garden, wildside walk, herb garden, children's garden, pine glen, and conifer garden. Each garden has a different theme and they are differentiated by use of materials and plants. Many facilities are also located throughout the property including the Visitors Center with Garden Café, exhibition gallery, and Robins Room, the Robins Tea House, Flagler Pavilion, historic Bloemendaal House, Carriage House, Children's Tropical Greenhouse, Education Classroom, Conservatory, and Education Building. Most of



Figure 3.3 - Plan of Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden

the events at Lewis Ginter take place in and around these facilities. There are also several gazebos and small covered structures along the paths, serving to provide intimate, private areas for visitors. Participants in special events may also use these areas to have a private moment. The gardens are spectacular, secluded and full of interesting textures and colors. A large water feature also adds interest and drama to many of the gardens within the property. Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden is a unique and wonderfully interesting setting for special events.

Lewis Ginter hosts around 1500 events each year, with at least a third of those being weddings. There are several areas within the property that can accommodate weddings of various sizes, up to 400 guests, depending on the facility. The most popular location is the Bloemendaal House, which has indoor facilities, a permanent outdoor tent, verandas, an outdoor patio, and beautiful gardens surrounding the house. Bloemendaal House also offers rooms for bride and groom before the ceremony. The Visitors Center is also very popular, offering several different options for number of rooms and outdoor areas rented. It also offers a lounge for the bride. Receptions take place at the same location as the wedding, and each area has indoor and outdoor spaces to accommodate times of bad weather. The garden handles the catering for events through their food and beverage licensee. Access to the garden is convenient and easy to find off of a main road in Richmond, but the entrance is designed to begin the experience



Robins Tea House



Sunken Garden



Belvedere & Rose Garden



Private area in Pine Glen

as soon as you enter the site. It is fenced with wrought iron and beautifully planted from the first moment. The property is also large enough and planted densely enough that you feel secluded and free from outside distractions, even though you are right in town. Lewis Ginter offers many special features including opportunities for photo shoots in the gardens, unique art throughout the property, special lighting, planting design to fit any taste, and the availability of combined indoor and outdoor facilities that strive to provide a consistent and enchanting experience. These elements, combined with the secluded feel of the gardens make Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden a wonderful landscape that draws hundreds for their special events.



Water feature



Water feature



Unique art in the garden



Art in the garden



Material change showing different areas



Panorama of the Bloemendaal House with tent and gardens

## Study Set Two – Places with Power

### *Vietnam Veterans Memorial*

Jan Scruggs, who served in Vietnam as an infantry corporal, founded the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. He wanted a memorial that would honor those who had served and the sacrifice they had made for their country, and for Vietnam veterans to have a tangible symbol of recognition from American society. It was not meant to be a memorial honoring the war itself, but instead honoring the many people who had lost their lives in that conflict. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF), established by a group of Vietnam veterans, lobbied congress for a two-acre plot of land in the Constitution Gardens, set up the design criteria for the memorial and raised \$9,000,000 entirely through private contributions to construct the memorial. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter signed legislation to provide a site in Constitution Gardens near the Lincoln Memorial. It was then a three and a half year task to build the memorial and plan a celebration to honor those who served in Vietnam.

The VVMF decided to hold a national design competition through which the memorial's design would be chosen. They had four basic criteria: 1) that it be reflective and contemplative in character; 2) that it harmonize with its surroundings; 3) that it contain the names of those who had died in the conflict or who were still missing; and 4) that it make no political statement about the war. A total of 1,421 design entries were submitted into the competition. A jury of eight internationally recognized artists and designers, selected by the VVMF, judged the entries. The judges included two landscape architects, two structural architects, an expert on urban development and landscape, and three sculptors. They eventually chose a design submitted by Maya Ying Lin, an undergraduate at Yale University, because they felt it achieved the spirit they were aiming for. Her goal was to “create a park within a park – a quiet protected place into itself, yet harmonious with the overall

plan of Constitution Gardens” (The National Park Service). The walls are made of black granite, which reflects the images of the surrounding trees, lawns, monuments, and visitors. Construction was completed and a dedication took place in late 1982. There are a total of 58,229 names, compiled by the Department of Defense, etched into the stonewalls. There is also a sculpture depicting three servicemen combined with a flagpole that serves as an entrance into the memorial. The Vietnam Women’s Memorial, honoring the women who took part in the war, was dedicated in 1993. It is a statue of three women aiding a wounded soldier, surrounded by eight yellowwood trees, which signify the eight servicewomen who were killed in Vietnam. It is considered to be another important part of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Many people regard the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to be a place with considerable power. It draws its power from many different elements. First, its site, or the context in which it’s sited, provides a strong aspect of power. Located in the Constitution Gardens, it is close to other significant memorials, the White House, the Washington Monument, and the National Mall (see Figure 3.4). Other memorials include the Lincoln memorial, the Korean War Veterans Memorial, the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. This entire area in D.C. draws visitors from around the world because it honors many vital people and events in the history



**Figure 3.4 - Area map showing Vietnam Veterans Memorial in relation to other memorials and monuments**



The Washington Monument and reflecting pool



The Korean War Veterans Memorial

of this nation. This part of D.C. includes three national park reservations: the National Mall, the Washington Monument Grounds, and West Potomac Park. They are considered to be symbolic of our nation as a free and dynamic people. These areas also serve as settings in which citizens exercise their constitutional right of “freedom of expression” by holding demonstrations, marches, rallies, and vigils. Not only does this area memorialize many significant historical events, but has been the setting for many. These include Martin Luther King’s “I have a dream” speech, many anti-war marches against the Vietnam War, the first major Earth Day celebration, and the Million Man March. From these above-mentioned factors, it is easy to understand that this entire area is rich with history and the fundamental principles that make our form of government so wonderful. This provides a powerful contextual setting for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

The memorial itself also creates an atmosphere in which visitors sense the power of place and the people it honors. The walls seem to stretch into the distance with the east end pointing toward the Washington Monument, and the west toward the Lincoln Memorial. This brings the memorial into a historical context at the site itself. As visitors move through the memorial they descend deeper into the earth until they reach the apex of the walls, and then they gradually rise again until they are back at ground level (see photo on next page). This design aspect is powerful in a number of ways. The wall begins in a narrow point, gets gradually taller (containing more names on each panel as you go) into the apex, and then the process is reversed coming up the other side. Visitors feel as if they are descending into the experience, becoming a part of it, realizing the enormity of lives affected, and then rising out of it again. The element of creating depth, and intimacy with the wall and the names on it, connects visitors with the walls and the names that are on them. It also blocks out surrounding noise and distractions, allowing visitors to focus entirely on the memorial. The path that leads through the memorial abuts the walls, allowing visitors close

contact with them. This is powerful because it does not seek to be seen from a distance but invites people to feel the names or leave mementos behind. The personal contact in this design allows people to feel close to the experience or to even take away a name rubbing to keep for themselves, this is a very powerful part of the experience. Many visitors want or need and are affected by this personal contact with the past or the people they have lost. The walls themselves are highly polished black granite, which reflects the people visiting and the surroundings. This seems to insinuate that even though the dead are listed there, that life goes on and this is part of what visitors experience. The manner in which names are arranged on the wall is also a powerful statement. They are listed chronologically according to the date of casualty, beginning with the date 1959 at the apex of the walls. The quote “In honor of the men and women of the Armed Forces of the United States who served in the Vietnam War. The names of those who gave their lives and of those who remain missing are inscribed in the order they were taken from us” begins the listing of names. The names then continue in order out to the end of the east wall, appearing to disappear into the earth. The names then resume at the end of the west wall, coming out from the earth, and continue back to the apex with the date 1975. The listing of the names brings the war’s beginning and end together at the apex, representing a full circle, though it is broken by the earth on the open angle of the wall. The design of the memorial is simple, yet it is this simplicity that evokes



Vietnam Veterans Memorial , showing the design element of the memorial being within the earth, one descends to the apex and then rises out again as they pass through the memorial



Vietnam Veterans Memorial, showing the design element of the path coming right up the the walls allowing close and personal contact

a sense of power. It is not elaborate or decorated, it only seeks to list and honor those who lost their lives. The quote “Our nation honors the courage, sacrifice, and devotion to duty and country of its Vietnam veterans. This memorial was built with private contributions from the American people, November 11, 1982” follows the last name listed on the wall. The setting in which the monument exists and the unpretentious way of acknowledging those who served make the Vietnam Veterans Memorial a powerful place for understanding the immensity of our loss and the lives of people affected.

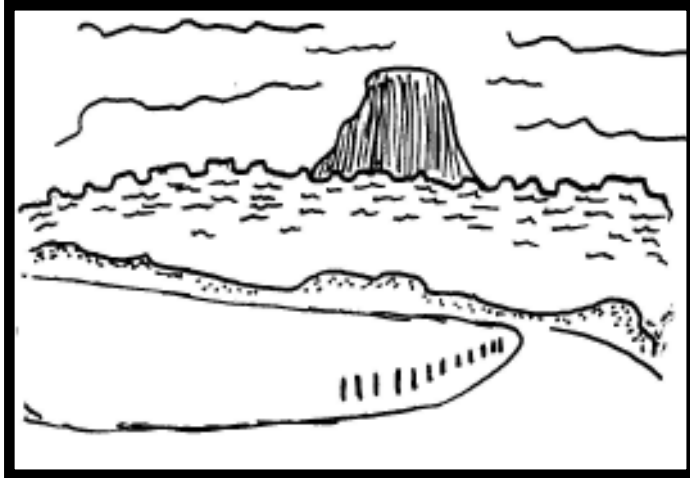
\*all historical and factual information gathered from the National Park Service at —  
[www.thewall-usa.com](http://www.thewall-usa.com)\*

## *Devils Tower*

President Teddy Roosevelt designated Devils Tower and the surrounding 1,347 acres as our nation's first National Monument in 1906. It is located in northeastern Wyoming, near the Black Hills, rising some 1,267 feet above the Belle Fourche River (see Figure 3.5). Rising high above the surrounding grassland and pine forests, the tower is a prominent natural feature that can be seen from quite a distance. Scientists believe it is the core of a volcano exposed after millions of years of erosion by weather and the river at its base. Rocks and sediment that were deposited over hundreds of millions of years have been exposed, revealing rings of various colors and consistencies. Vertical cliffs surrounding the tower were composed of materials resistant to this weathering, thus leaving them to create a unique "scratched" look around the face of the tower. With its striking form and interesting geology, Devils Tower is an awesome natural phenomenon that attracts half a million people a year.



**Figure 3.5 - Devils Tower and Surrounding Area**



While the form of this amazing rock tower creates a feeling of power and awe, the history of the site also contributes much to the reason so many are drawn there. While Devils Tower was established as a National Monument nearly a hundred years ago, its influence on the people of this land dates back much further. It has been an important fixture in the legends of many Native American tribes and many of these tribes consider Devils Tower, or “Bear Lodge”, the common Native American name used for the Tower today, to be a sacred place. Native American legends from many tribes contain stories of the Tower, which reflect the power and place it has in their culture. The National Park Service identified over twenty tribes that have potential cultural affiliation with this monument; they include the Arapaho, Crow, Lakota, Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Shoshone Indians among others (San Miguel, 2). These tribes hold many traditional ceremonial activities there, which demonstrate the sacred nature of the Tower. These activities range from personal rituals, including prayer offerings, sweatlodge ceremonies, vision quests, and funerals to group rituals such as the Sun Dance. There are also many sacred narratives of origin, and cultural heroes affiliated with Devils Tower that tie the Indian culture close to it. One such legend reads, “The Kiowa tribe once camped on a stream where there were many bears. One day seven little girls were playing at a distance from the village and were chased by some

bears. The girls ran toward the village and when the bears were about to catch them, they jumped to a low rock about three feet in height. One of them prayed to the rock, ‘Rock, take pity on us—Rock, save us’, the rock heard them and began to elongate itself upwards, pushing the children higher and higher out of reach of the bears, when the bears jumped at them they scratched the rock, broke their claws and fell back upon the ground. The rock continued to push the children upward into the sky while the bears jumped at them, the children are still in the sky, seven little stars in a group (the Pleiades). According to the legend the marks of the bears’ claws may be seen on the side of the rock (Mattison, 1). There are many similar Indian legends that speak of the formation of this natural feature.

Devils Tower is located in what were once Indian grounds, unexplored by whites and is prominent in Indian culture. Over time, however, it became an object of curiosity and awe of the white explorers as well. Though previous explorers had likely observed this formation, the U.S. Geological Survey Party, who made a reconnaissance of the Black Hills in 1875, was the first to draw attention to the uniqueness of the Tower. Colonel Richard Dodge, commander of the military escort, described it as “one of the most remarkable peaks in this or any country” (Mattison, 3). Henry Newt, geological assistant to the expedition, likewise proclaimed “its remarkable structure, its symmetry, and its prominence made it an unfailing object of wonder...it is a great remarkable obelisk of trachyte, with a columnar structure, giving it a vertically striated appearance, and it rises 625 feet almost perpendicular, from its base” (Mattison, 3). Colonel Dodge is generally credited with giving the formation its present day name; in his book he called it “Devils Tower” explaining this was a modification from the Indian name “Bad God’s Tower” (Mattison, 3). The Treaty of 1868 had guaranteed the Black Hills region to the Indians; however, General George Custer violated this treaty and led an expedition into the area in 1874, reporting discovery of gold in paying quantities throughout the Hills. This discovery prompted

miners to invade the region. The Government attempted to negotiate with the Indians to purchase the Hills meanwhile using troops to keep out the invading miners. Negotiations broke down in 1875 and miners and settlers alike poured in the area. As a result, many Indians became convinced they were going to lose their reservations in the Dakotas, Wyoming and Montana. By early 1876 there was a full scale Indian war in progress. However, after the Battle of the Little Bighorn in June, the Indians were convinced to cede the Black Hills to the whites. Devils Tower is still important in Indian culture and legends, but also draws campers, picnickers and climbers in abundance.

Devils Tower Monument includes a visitor's center, campground, picnic areas, prairie dog town, and many hiking trails (see Figure 3.6). Rock climbing at Devils Tower is also very popular. There is a Cultural Program Series with activities including Indian Storytelling, presentations on the magic of rivers and astronomy, cowboy storytelling, and Native American dancing among others. These programs are representative of the cultures and communities that are near the area. The facilities provided at Devils Tower, combined with the events, set in the midst of an awe-inspiring natural wonder draw people to this monument from around the world.

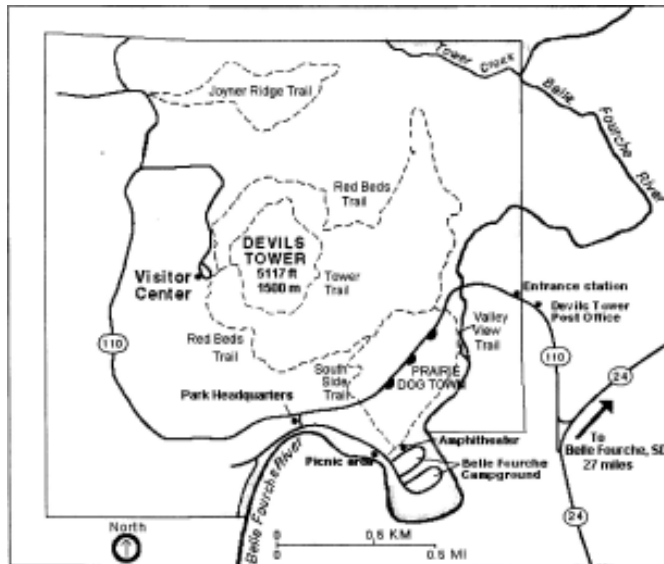


Figure 3.6 - Devils Tower National Monument Map

The power of Devils Tower comes from several different aspects of the place. The formation itself is so awesome and unique, that it cannot help but exude a sense of power and prominence. The Indian legends from generations past also contribute to the importance and reverence felt by many there. Continued Indian ritual and ceremony at the site into the present day perpetuate the sacred nature of the Tower. The challenge it presents to climbers and outdoor enthusiasts likewise draws another population there. Devils Tower is a unique and wonderful natural phenomenon that holds much power in the eyes of all the different people that visit, and certainly deserves the title of our nations first official monument.

\*All historical and factual information gathered from the National Park Service at [www.nps.gov/deto](http://www.nps.gov/deto)\*

## **Chapter Four – Design Principles, Ideas, and Position**

### **Design Principles and Ideas**

As the design process for a celebratory landscape begins, there are many essential elements that need to be contemplated. These elements, if considered and designed properly, will tie together the design to create that unique, powerful, and meaningful experience that is the goal of this project. “Physical places are vital sources of metaphors for our social constructions of reality” (Sheldrake, 4). As discussed earlier, the physical structure and character of the site should unite the psychological aspects of the ceremony with the physical experience. The design ideas and principles for this project are drawn from the literature review and ideas and information gathered from case studies.

The marriage ritual begins with bride and groom arriving with their respective wedding parties, they generally wait separately somewhere on the site while guests arrive, they spend this time getting ready and giving support. Then guests arrive, often congregating and socializing briefly before being seated. The ceremony begins with the groom and his party entering the site and taking their positions, the bride then enters, generally through a separate entrance than the groom, and proceeds down the path that leads to the destination. Then the ceremony is performed, vows exchanged, and proclamations made. Once the ceremony is over, the bride and groom exit the site together using the bride’s path or aisle. Then there is usually a receiving line or area, where guests can speak to the bride and groom granting their support and congratulations. After this, participants and guests alike proceed to the reception. Considering this structure of the marriage ritual, it is essential that all elements of the day be accounted for in the design to create a cohesive and meaningful experience.

Barrie discussed the three basic physical structures of ritual space being origin, path, and sacred center. As was discussed in that section, this basic structure is well suited for a wedding garden and, therefore, serves as the very basic and fundamental beginning of the design principles for this project. The origin or entryway into the site is of crucial importance. This area announces to the user that they are entering a different and special place, that this area is set apart for a unique purpose. The visitor should be transformed, knowing that they are crossing from the everyday into something unique and meaningful. This transformation is a large part of the experience of the site, by separating the participants from their day-to-day existence. The entry can also introduce the identity and reinforce the continuity of the site. Barrie stresses the importance these characteristics, they should be consistent throughout the design to create a comprehensive experience of place. The entryway can be used to slow the users pace, create a sense of mystery, and add a sense of anticipation for the user. This area should be welcoming and draw the user into the space. It should be easy to locate and not create confusion. An example might be a stone wall with an opening for users to pass through. The same effect could be accomplished with a tall hedge. The entry could also be a unique gate or doorway. The entryway is the first chance the designer has to begin crafting the experience they want the user to have. For this project, the most appropriate entryway should be straightforward, leading the bride directly into the site and should also in some way frame the origin. This will provide that traditional “bride standing in the doors at the back of the church” feeling. The groom and his party should be provided a separate, more private entrance. This symbolizes the coming together of two into one. This entrance should not be noticeable and is not the “origin” of the site. The entryway is just one of many important spatial considerations in the design of a wedding garden.

Well-designed spatial orientation is imperative to the overall experience the garden will provide. It can reinforce the structure of the ceremony, thus connecting

the inner and outer journeys. “Kevin Lynch... established the terms path, edge, district, node, and landmark as principal components of the urban landscape and important characteristics in analyzing movement and orientation within the city.” He states that, “structuring and identifying the environment is an essential activity and need for all mobile animals” (Barrie 37). This premise holds true for celebratory landscapes. One central consideration is how is movement going to be conducted through the site.

Path is the second element in the three-part structure and, as discussed earlier, is vitally important to connecting the psychological understanding of the event with the physical one. For this project, a straight and formal path is most appropriate. It will create an “aisle”, bringing in that tradition. The importance of traditionalism throughout the design was gathered from Bell’s common characteristics of ritual. The aisle will lead directly from the origin to the destination; bride and groom will both be able to see each for the entire journey. Guests will also have full view of the bride as she travels this path, thus allowing them to participate in the passage and support the change in life that is occurring.

Other movement within the site will also have to be accommodated, therefore, the idea of path must be considered more than once. Guests must be provided a way to proceed from parking areas to the site. To create a comprehensive experience for all participants, the path that brings them to the site should be in keeping with the identity and continuity of the site through consistency in materials and theme. A receiving area needs to be incorporated as well as a method for guests to get there. If a reception area is incorporated on site, the designer must provide a mode for movement from the ceremonial space to that area that is in keeping with the consistent vocabulary of the site. This path should be distinguished from the main path by its size or material and should clearly lead the guests to the next area. Conducting movement through the site in an efficient yet meaningful way will enrich the experience of the user even further.

The most key element in the three-part structure of ritual space is the destination. This area needs to be markedly different from the rest of the site. This can be accomplished by situating it differently in topography than the rest of the site features. This change in elevation signals to the participants and the guests that this area is the focus of attention, it sets it apart from the rest. The change in elevation also makes viewing the area easier for guests of the event. Distinguishing it as the sacred center can also be accomplished through use of materials and the elaborateness of the design. The choice of what constitutes the destination is also vital. There are innumerable options to for this particular feature. The choice could be a structure that is in keeping with identity of the site and should be determined by what types of events the facility plans to accommodate. This destination does not have to include an actual structure, but it does need to be obviously delineated as the sacred center. The structure can be simple or elaborate, made from any material or even plants, but should always be in strict keeping with the vocabulary of materials chosen for the site. This feature could range from a simple trellis covered with vines, to an extensive pergola or gazebo with all of the trimmings. The destination can also be a temporary structure, something that can be moved in or taken away according to what type of event is happening. This could allow the designer to have several different structures that the user could chose from, allowing them to further personalize their event. Sometimes the destination will even be a semi-indoor area. The selected destination, and where it is placed, will have an intense impact on the experience provided by the site, not only emotionally, but also psychologically and physically as well. The destination should evoke a sense of power and call back to traditional elements of ritual. This choice is vitally important to the comprehensive experience of the site.

Other spatial considerations are just as vital. Areas for caterers, dancing, and the set up of tables and chairs should also be planned into the design. One will need to consider where on the site and where in relation to each other these elements

should be located. They need to be distinguished one from the other by establishing boundaries between them. The design of this part is not nearly as crucial as the ceremonial space, however it does affect the overall experience of the site. If designed properly, this area can continue to reinforce the connection of the psychological with the physical experience. Introducing the bride and groom back into the community in their new position in life is part of what gives meaning and power to rituals; therefore, this part of the site should attempt to support these emotions.

Yet another spatial consideration that will enhance the experience of the site and further reinforce the tie between inner and outer journey is providing private areas for participants in the event. One comment noted from the surveys suggested that the bride and groom would have loved a private place to hide from their guests for a few moments, to reflect on what is happening and what it means in their lives. These private areas could also serve as additional opportunities for photos. This may not be as important if weddings are not planned for the site, but a private place is always a nice touch.

While designing a celebratory landscape for a specific event, other uses for the site should also be considered. Some landscapes will have one use only, while others may serve to host an extensive array of uses with no focus on a particular event. Most celebratory landscapes should be designed with a particular special event in mind, but that can accommodate other uses as well. This can be accomplished by considering these additional uses from the beginning of the design work and incorporating them into the design.

Last but certainly not least; one should design some type of enclosure for the landscape. The surveys revealed that one element of the appeal of an outdoor setting is the feeling of being in nature, separated and secluded from the rest of the world. The enclosure also helps to mark the identity of the space. Nesselrod is a wonderful example of enclosure with vegetation providing an intimate and private setting. Thomas

Barrie writes in *Spiritual Path, Sacred Place* “The physical enclosure creates the context for the experience, and the meanings communicated by the elements that form the space help us to identify with the place” (Barrie 52). Enclosure can be accomplished by selection of a natural setting, such as a ridge or valley that sets it apart from its surroundings, or through the use of materials or plants. The designer can choose to fully enclose the site or leave a section open. The enclosure can be used to block or enhance views. Enclosure is an important element in the success of the landscape and the experience of the user; it reinforces the identity of the place and helps to distinguish this site from its surroundings.

The materials chosen for the celebratory landscape serve several purposes. They are a large part of the continuity of the site and, as Barrie suggested, achieving continuity will provide a consistent emotional or psychological experience for the user. Materials also reinforce identity, distinguishing the area as different from all the rest. The materials chosen can also reflect a certain poetic characteristic of the site, demonstrating its permanence and the transformation from everyday life to this event. There are also practical matters concerning materials, they must be durable and appropriate for the events that will take place there. For example, weather resistant materials would be necessary for any area that will be exposed to the elements. A dance or seating area would require materials that provide a smooth and consistent surface. The materials form the physical reality of design choices and will need to be appropriate for the ideas. Practical considerations are also important; create paths of movement from materials that provide easy maneuverability, build patio areas from materials that are smooth and not susceptible to frost heave. Materials will compose the design elements previously discussed such as entryway, enclosure, movement, and functional areas. The materials chosen will have an acute effect on the overall experience of the site and need to remain true to a consistent vocabulary throughout all of the various design elements.

The plants incorporated in the wedding garden also serve a variety of functions. The plants, as mentioned with regard to materials, reinforce identity and continuity. Additionally, they must be suitable to the climate of the region, and more specifically, grow well in the conditions of the particular site. The designer should ensure that the plants would do well on the site to provide the growth habit that is expected. One must also be familiar with the growth habits such as height, width, texture, etc. and choose plants that will give the look they are trying to achieve. The designer must also plan for continual bloom times, incorporating a series of different plants to ensure that something beautiful is always in bloom. The surveys of celebratory landscapes demonstrated that one of the most popular questions that facilities get is “what’s going to be in bloom?”. Part of the draw of holding an event outdoors is the beauty of nature and blooming flowers are an important part of that. Seasonal interest must also be designed. Many events will be held in early spring or late fall and there are many plants that can provide beauty and interest at these times. There must be a well planned planting strategy in order to ensure success, the plan will vary according to what events will be accommodated and the theme of the site. The plants chosen will serve several important functions and are another essential element that adds to creating a comprehensive experience.

Another method by which plants can add to the experience of the user is through their name meanings and uses. Many plants have a meaning associated with their name, some by the actual derivation of the words used, some by the traditional uses of the plants, and some through plant lore. These meanings, if explained to the user, might be able to intensify the meaning of the experience that they will have at the site. For instance, if the site is designed to accommodate mostly weddings, plants that are associated with love, prosperity, passion and friendship could be incorporated. When a potential user is touring the site, these meanings could be described to them, and perhaps this could enhance their experience. These meanings are generally

unscientific, but nonetheless could provide that additional special element that someone is looking for. Many celebratory landscapes are associated with Botanical Gardens and Universities, incorporating plant meanings and culture into the design also provides an element of education that is fitting to this type of setting. Some examples of plant names and their meaning are as follows: Chrysanthemum - I love, Azalea - love and romance, Beech tree - prosperity, Morning Glory - affection, Sweet Alyssum - worth beyond beauty, Mossy Saxifrage - affection, and Cherry Blossom - spiritual beauty. These are just a few examples, a more extensive list is provided in the appendix.

Plants can also be used to create structure within the landscape. This is a unique way of delineating the spatial qualities and can be done in a variety of ways. The importance of enclosure was discussed earlier and plants are a wonderful means by which to enclose a site. This is a distinctive alternative to using nonliving materials for enclosure. Plants can be used to mark entryways, create boundaries, direct movement, enhance functional areas, block unwanted views, separate areas within the garden, announce the arrival at the destination point, embrace and comfort the participants and guests, and complete the setting for the event. As stated previously, these spatial design elements are vital to the experience created and, therefore, the success of celebratory landscapes and can be incorporated wonderfully with the selection of the proper plants. Plants can be the heart of the celebratory landscape and, like the other features discussed, it is crucial that the plants reinforce the identity of the landscape. This consistency throughout all of the design factors further encourages the emotional experience provided to the user. There are multitudes of plant choices and ways to design these plants into the site. Therefore, these choices should be painstakingly thought out with careful selections made.

There are many other elements that could be included in the design that will

further enhance the experience of the user. This could include such elements as lighting to create effects in the plants, lighting for movement, and lighting throughout the landscape. A sound system might also be important for some users; one case study facility incorporated their sound system into the planting surrounding the destination point. Most users of the site utilized the sound system and enjoyed the fact that it was hidden and not a part of what their guests would see. Fragrances could also be incorporated into the landscape. Who doesn't love the smell of jasmine or lilacs? Many plants offer wonderful scents and the designer may want to plan some of their aromas into the garden. Containers for plants that can be adapted to the color scheme of the user would allow them to personalize their experience. The addition of art pieces could also enhance the site. These pieces could provide focal points or reinforce the theme. They might also provide more photo opportunities and areas of interest with the landscape. Many of these elements could be temporary; they could be added or taken away and adapted to each individual event. This allows each celebration to be a one of a kind experience, and gives the user the opportunity to make some design choices of their own, encouraging the creation of a bond between physical and psychological experience. These additional amenities could provide that special something to users and make the sight both special and meaningful.

Contextual and site considerations will also affect the experience created by the site. Before the actual design for the site can begin one must consider the contextual and site issues that will affect its success. The contextual issues that need consideration are direct and easily understood, but will have a profound impact on the end product of the project. There are also several important characteristics of the site itself that can have a profound impact on design choices later in the process. Topography is vitally important, it can impart the site with many opportunities for unique design or can be painfully limiting. There are good and bad aspects to all kinds of topographic qualities; too steep is difficult to design around and usually leads to extravagant land

moving, too flat is uninteresting and sometimes makes drainage cumbersome. Vegetation is another crucial consideration. What is the nature of the existing vegetation? One should choose a site whose existing vegetation will work well with what is planned for the end product. For example, a wooded site should be chosen if the design strives to create a secluded, shady, cool environment. A wooded site would not be a good choice for a design that calls for open fields, long views, or an element such as a wildflower meadow. Choosing a site that will accommodate the scheme that is desired for the end product will make the implementation of the design easier and incorporate the design in a more natural manner.

Another characteristic to consider is the presence of existing water features or landscape opportunities for creating one. These could be anything from a creek to a river, or a small pond to a large lake. Water draws people and always adds a unique element to the landscape. It can serve as a beautiful backdrop for the celebration or be an integral part of it. A celebratory landscape does not require a water feature, but it is something to consider from the beginning to ensure that it fits into the identity of the site and blends naturally into its surroundings. Case studies offered that water features are another element that can provide the site with a sense of power and beauty. Water is powerful because it is a symbol of life and renewal. Without water there is no life, therefore, many people feel a strong connection to water and draw a feeling of power from it. The designer needs to decide the desired character of the water feature, in keeping with the identity of the site, and whether it's intended as an integral part of the garden or to be viewed from a distance. These decisions will be chief in determining the spatial layout of the design. One should ensure that the water features will not interfere with paths of movement and that they are located for maximum effect.

Another contextual consideration is the setting of the site. Are there any beautiful views from the site? Is it secluded or out in the open? Is it on a ridge or in

a valley? These elements can be exploited through the design to create a unique landscape that is specific to the site. Another consideration that will affect the experience of the user is the history of the site or the region. Many celebratory landscapes are located in historical areas or on historical sites. It is the appeal of the history, with its tradition and tie to the past that brings people to the facility. Many of these landscapes have historical buildings or are decorated in the style of the time period; numerous people surveyed liked this connection with the past to be a part of their celebrations. Contemplating these various contextual characteristics will prove invaluable to the creation of a powerful and meaningful landscape that can tie together the physical structure of the day with the inner journey the participants are experiencing.

Results from the surveys taken by celebratory landscape personnel and customers revealed that people generally do not want to travel any further than about 30 minutes to get to their destination. At an extreme, people were willing to drive up to an hour, but when this was the case the facility had to offer other services such as a location for the rehearsal dinner or overnight accommodations. People were also willing to drive a little further if the place held certain significance such as the facility is located on the college campus they went to, or their parents had gotten married there. In other words, the site must have a tie to people's lives and communities in order to hold meaning for them and bring them there in the first place. Another location consideration is the nature of the access to the site. Can it be found easily? What is the nature of the roads and scenery that lead to it? These types of attributes can begin to create the experience of the site before the participants even get there. For example, Explore Park is located off of the Blue Ridge Parkway, which is full of beautiful and powerful vistas. This drive down the parkway begins to establish the identity of the site and the experience that will be had there before you even arrive. This is an important part of why some people choose this site for their weddings; this feeling that the entire event, arrival and departure included, are consistently unique

and different from everyday life. The character of the access into the site is also important. The user should be provided a unique experience from the moment they enter the facility. Therefore, how they enter can bear strongly on how they view their experience. The access should be somewhat secluded or winding to provide a sense of mystery about what lies ahead. It should also be beautiful and peaceful and allow the user to relax and think about the event they are about to attend. The character of the access into the site will provide the possibility to enhance the experience of the user.

Another attribute to consider is the proximity of support facilities. These resources could include hotels in which the guests can stay, caterers that can access the site easily, rental stores for that last minute detail or for a tent in the case of bad weather, a florist for the decorations, and restaurants for supporting events in the case of an event like a wedding. The presence of these types of facilities will ease the minds of the people holding the event. They will know their guests will be able to find lodging that is convenient and that the other details of their event will be handled efficiently. Another way to provide a consistent and comprehensive experience to the user would be to include some of these services on site. Some celebratory landscapes also function as a bed & breakfast, this not only provides a method for increasing the profits of the site, but it creates on-site lodging for members of the event that will further enhance their experience. Providing additional elements such as chairs, tables, and especially tents for rent, or included in your rental contract, will make the users experience with the facility that much more uncomplicated. These elements could also reinforce the identity of the site and further tie together everything associated with the event into one cohesive experience. The availability of these types of support facilities could sway users when they are trying to select a location for their event. It will add that little something extra if these accommodations have

been considered and incorporated into the design.

All of the contextual and site considerations discussed in this section seem relatively basic, but they are vitally important to think about at the very beginning of the design process. Taking all of these things into consideration will assist in making better design decisions and will provide a more successful end design. Designing a celebratory landscape is all about providing a distinctive experience for the user that will make their special event memorable and meaningful. These contextual and site issues are incredibly important in the creation of that experience.

### **Design Position**

Thoughtful review of relevant literature, case studies of existing celebratory landscapes, interviews and questionnaires has been the basis of this research. Celebratory landscapes are a unique area of focus that landscape architects should be including as part of their knowledge base for the profession. The existence of outdoor spaces for weddings and other significant life events will become increasingly important as more and more development occurs and there are less natural places. There are many societal changes that also bring about this increased awareness of outdoor spaces for weddings and other celebrations. Knowing these design principles and elements that are essential for a successful and meaningful event garden can provide a unique and personal experience for the user, and tie together their inner and outer journeys. Many of the events that people hold in celebratory landscapes will be once in a lifetime occasions and the experience provided them will make it even more memorable. The questions guiding this research are; What are the characteristics of these events that set them apart from everyday activities and how can they be enhanced by design?, What are there shared qualities among the various landscapes for celebration that can be compiled into a sort of set of design guidelines for these spaces?, and How can the structure of the event, both physically and psychologically,

be enhanced by design to add more meaning to the experience of the participants? It is the position of this project that design specifically for celebrations with awareness of ritual characteristics, knowledge of sacred space, and through the ideas and design principles discussed in this chapter, will profoundly impact the experience that users will have by accommodating the movements, structure, and psychological aspects of these events. The goal of this exploration was to determine what characteristics of these events make them unique, how to reinforce these characteristics through design, and to understand and tie together the physical and psychological experience and structure of such an event.

From this point, this project will further explore celebratory landscapes, and test the information gathered, through the design of a wedding garden using these design principles and ideas as a guide. The site is the Horticulture Gardens located on the Virginia Tech Campus. The goal is to illuminate the importance of these spaces for celebration as well as reveal how landscape architectural design can have a profound influence on how these places are perceived by the user and the experience that they have at their celebration. This is achieved both through this research and through the design presented in the following chapter.

## **Chapter Five – Design Process and Project**

### **The Site**

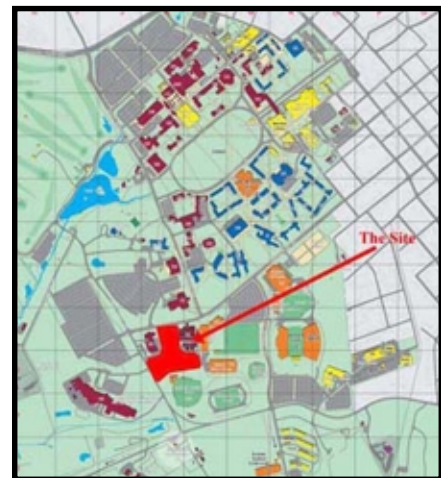
The site chosen for this design is the Horticulture Gardens located on the Virginia Tech Campus, in Blacksburg, VA. Figure 5.1 shows the location of the Virginia Tech campus within the town of Blacksburg, while figure 5.2 illustrates the location of the Virginia Tech Horticulture Gardens (VTHG) within the campus. Since 1983, the Virginia Tech Department of Horticulture has developed and maintained these gardens, and they have become an important part of life for students, faculty and residents of Blacksburg. Currently the gardens occupy approximately one acre of land along the south side of Washington Street, west of the University’s greenhouses. The department has been granted another plot of land, approximately three acres in size, along the southern border of the current gardens in which to expand. Figure 5.3 shows the site split into the existing gardens and the undeveloped additional acreage with the main roads highlighted. This design will be for the undeveloped three acres, but will tie into and utilize the existing garden as well.

### **Existing Plans and Conditions**

The existing gardens include many interesting elements, most of which have been designed and installed by students as projects in their classes. These include a water garden with surrounding deck, several arbors, a gazebo, an allee of trident maples, and numerous beds throughout the garden filled with



**Figure 5.1 - Blacksburg map showing campus location**



**Figure 5.2 - Campus map showing site location**



**Figure 5.3 - Split site**

plants of all types. These areas are used for a variety of purposes including education, afternoon strolls, reading, relaxing, and organized events. There are no mulched or paved paths for people to use in the garden, instead they use grassed pathways that wind around the beds to get to the various elements. In 1999, Virginia Tech hired Rodney Robinson Landscape Architects to assess the design of the current gardens and to design a plan for the additional three acres. At that time, two workshops were held with Virginia Tech faculty and staff, students, members of the Blacksburg community, and professionals in the landscape industry to gather ideas and identify the needs and desires for the future of the garden. From these workshops, three goals were established for the expansion and renovation: 1) to increase visibility of the gardens and create a “front door” effect; 2) to enhance the image of the gardens as a place of beauty and tranquility; and 3) to increase visitor amenities, including restrooms, gathering spaces and classroom spaces. Rodney Robinson Landscape Architects took the information from these workshops and provided the university with a Master Plan for the gardens, shown in figure 5.4. The only element of that plan implemented at this time is a large stream garden that runs along the southern border of the existing garden in a natural swale that separates the two areas. The stream garden starts at the top of the hill, near the eastern edge of the southern border of the existing garden, flows down the swale in a stream, over a waterfall, under a bridge that allows pedestrians to cross into the new



Flower Beds



Flower Beds



Pond and Deck



Waterfall



Figure 5.4 - Master Plan for Horticulture Gardens, designed by Rodney Robinson Landscape Architects

site, and then into a pond at the low point of the swale overlooked by a viewing deck. This feature serves as a visual and physical separation of the two parts of the garden; however, the plan for the stream garden strives to make use of this natural swale while also providing connection between the two parts of the site. This element is a striking new feature within the garden and has attracted many visitors. Many people on campus and throughout the community frequent the Virginia Tech Horticulture Gardens and anticipate the expansion into the additional space.

### **Inventory and Analysis**

The additional acreage granted for expansion is undeveloped, basically a blank slate. Duck Pond Drive on the western border, the campus baseball field on the southern border, recreation facilities to the east, and academic buildings, the existing gardens and the greenhouse complex to the North bound this area. These surrounding features are shown in figure 5.5. The topography ranges from relatively flat to extremely steep. The ranges of topography, shown in figure 5.6, are split into three categories: relatively flat, somewhat steep, and very steep. These conditions present both an opportunity and a challenge. The steep terrain will make it difficult to offer handicap access throughout the site, but the changes in elevation provide areas for terraces, retaining walls and access to views. The existing vegetation, shown in figure 5.7, is minimal; mostly grass with a few trees along the southern and western borders. This leaves an open array of possibilities for planting schemes and enhancing features. As a result of the limited vegetation and the center of the site sitting high in elevation, there are distant views to the south and west. Surrounding buildings and parking lots block most of the other views from the site. The various views are analyzed in figure 5.8. The high portion of the site is the ideal area for the main feature or ceremonial space because of its access to vistas and its prominence in the landscape. See page 67 for pictures of the undeveloped three acres of the site.

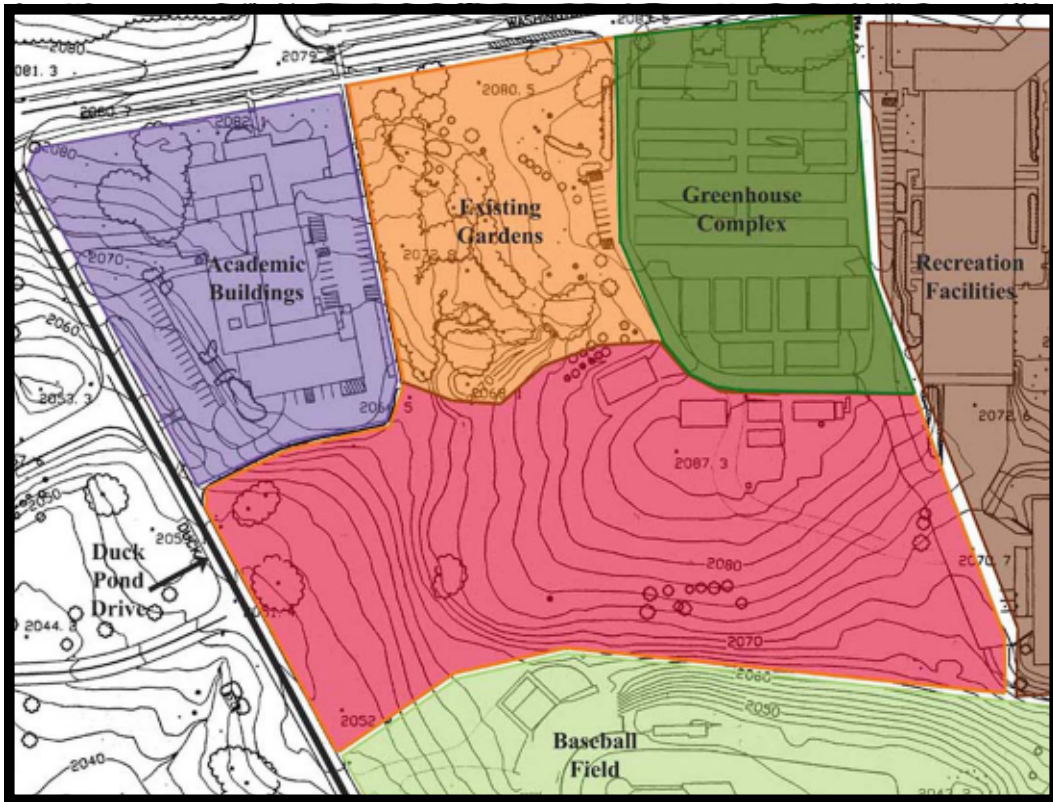


Figure 5.5 - Surrounding Features

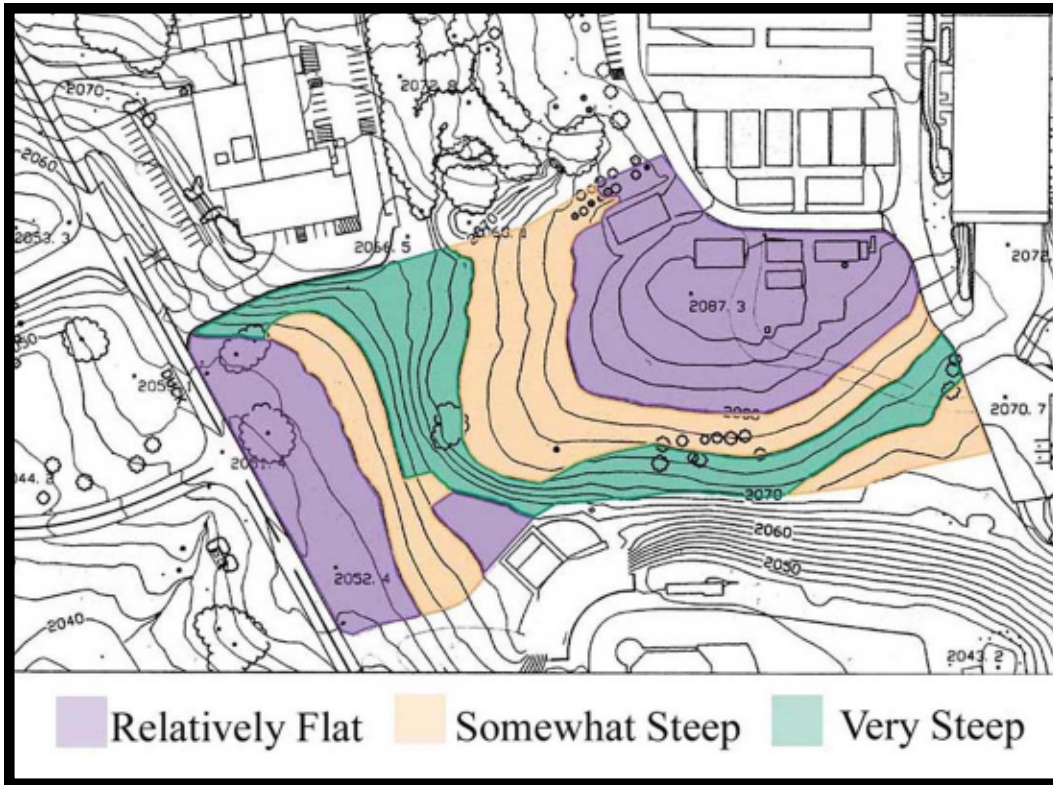


Figure 5.6 - Site Topography

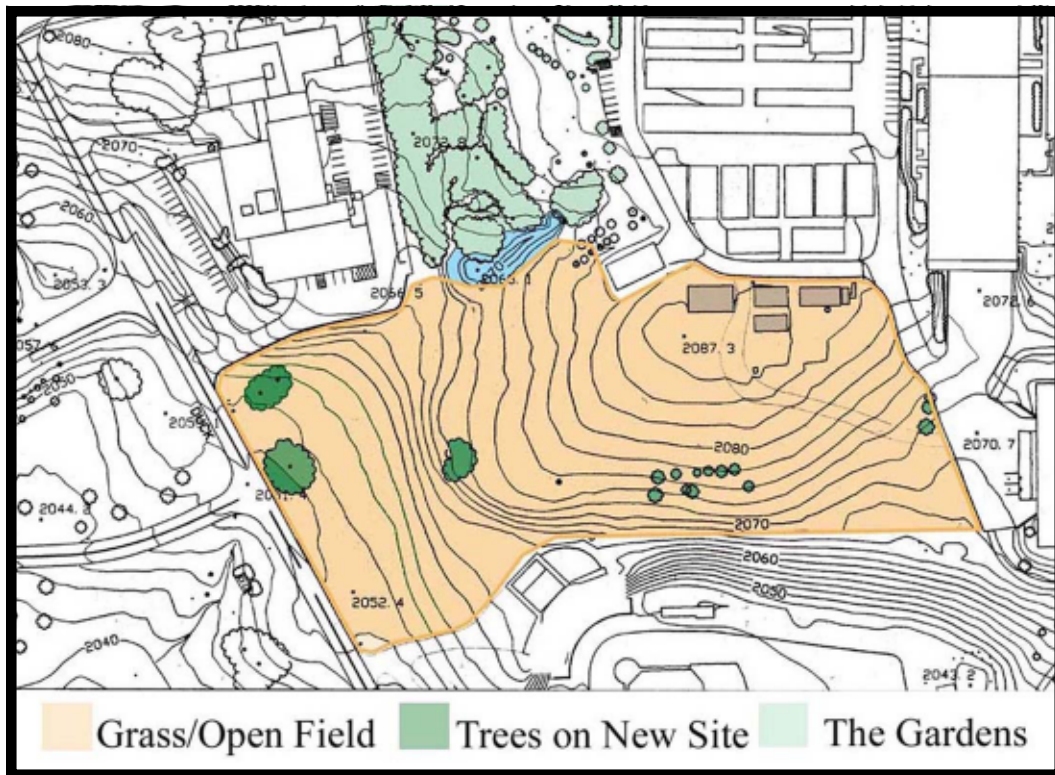


Figure 5.7 - Site Vegetation

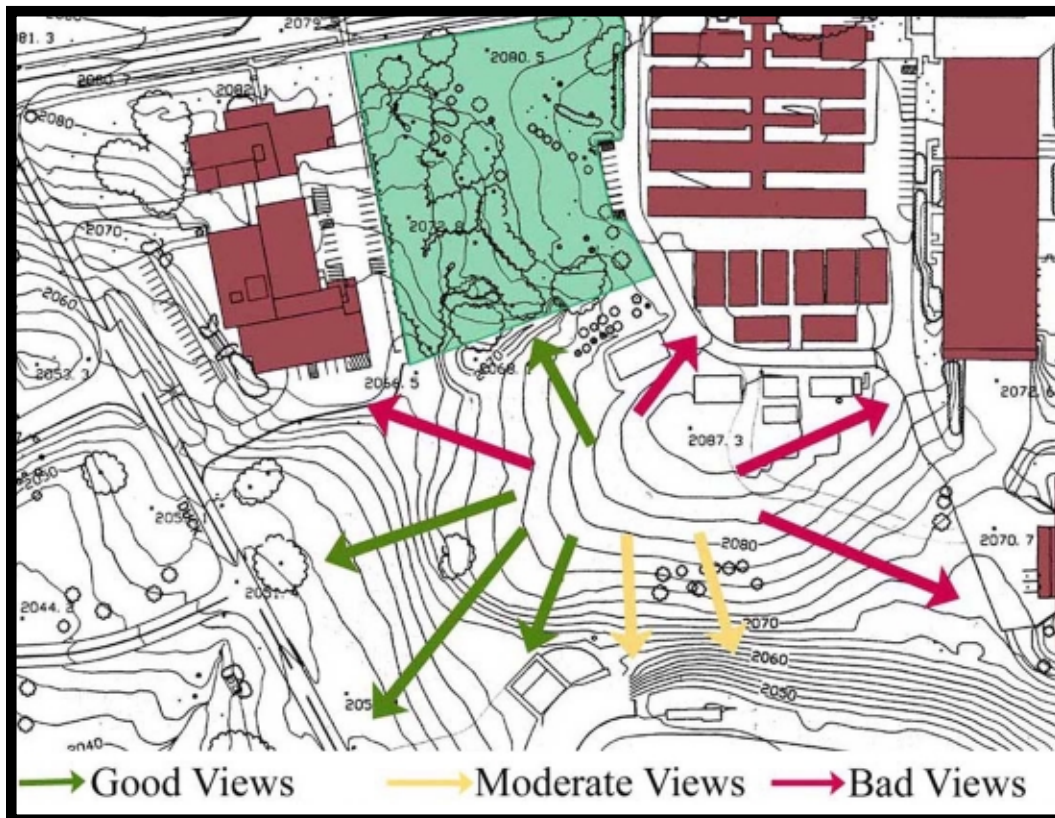


Figure 5.8 - Site View Analysis



Mountain View



View Down Lawn and Border Axis



Mountain View



View Across Baseball Field



View Across Bridge into Developed Gardens



View to Lane Stadium



View Up Western Slope



View into Developed Gardens

## Goals and Objectives

As the design process for this project was begun, the literature review, case studies and site analysis were analyzed to compile a set of goals and objectives. The following goals and objectives are for wedding gardens in general and also specific to this particular site:

1. To design with an understanding of, and reinforce as many ritual characteristics as possible, these include: formalism, traditionalism, a connection with the community, allowance of personalization, creating liminality, and demonstrating sacral symbolism.
2. To utilize the characteristics of ritual spaces discussed by Catherine Bell and Thomas Barrie. These characteristics include: supporting the connection between the psychological and physical experiences of the participants; using the basic three part structure of origin – path – destination; creating a consistent identity of the site; providing continuity of experience; thoughtful design of the origin, path, and destination according to desired effect; and using physical elements to reinforce the structure of a wedding.
3. To incorporate successful elements noted in case studies. These elements include the following: providing a tie to history; descent into the space to create a feeling of being “in” the experience; enclosure for intimacy and seclusion; providing all elements at one site – wedding, receiving, and reception spaces; planning for poor weather; providing private areas; providing a tie to the community; creating distinct functional areas; planning for the movements associated with a wedding; accentuating the natural beauty of the site; using appropriate materials and plants; creating access that is convenient but also begins the experience of the site; and providing extra amenities such as lighting and sound.

4. To create a successful design using the above-mentioned elements while also tying it into the site and enhancing what it already offers.

The design strives to achieve these goals and objectives through a variety of design characteristics. The master plan provided by Rodney Robinson Landscape Architects was used as a basis from which to start. Because their design was so successful in meeting many of the needs discussed in the workshops, many elements of that plan are included either directly as designed or slightly modified to fit the new design.

### **The Design**

The first step was to choose which location within the site was best suited for the celebratory space. Using lines of site from the two roads that front the property and the topography, the general area was selected. The highest area within the site was chosen to hold the wedding garden because of its prominence in the landscape, its access to distant views, its relatively flat topography, and its aspect from both Washington Street and Duck Pond Drive (see Figure 5.9). The next step was determining how the new area of design would fit into the existing gardens and the proposed plan for the undeveloped three acres. The wedding garden or celebratory area needs to be connected to some elements, yet separated from others in order to achieve a consistent experience for those attending events at the site (see Figure 5.10). It was determined that access to the event area should be provided in a number of ways, emphasizing pedestrian movement through the gardens so that visitors can have a comprehensive experience of the place and begin their experience of the event as soon as they enter the gardens. The existing garden, the open space with tumble mound, and the ceremonial area all needed to be connected in some way, while keeping the home demonstration area and the vegetable garden separate. From these basic ideas, the design was begun, followed by a long series of revisions and modifications. The resulting Master Plan is shown in Figure 5.11 on page 71. The



Figure 5.9 - Site Location for Ceremonial Area/Wedding Garden

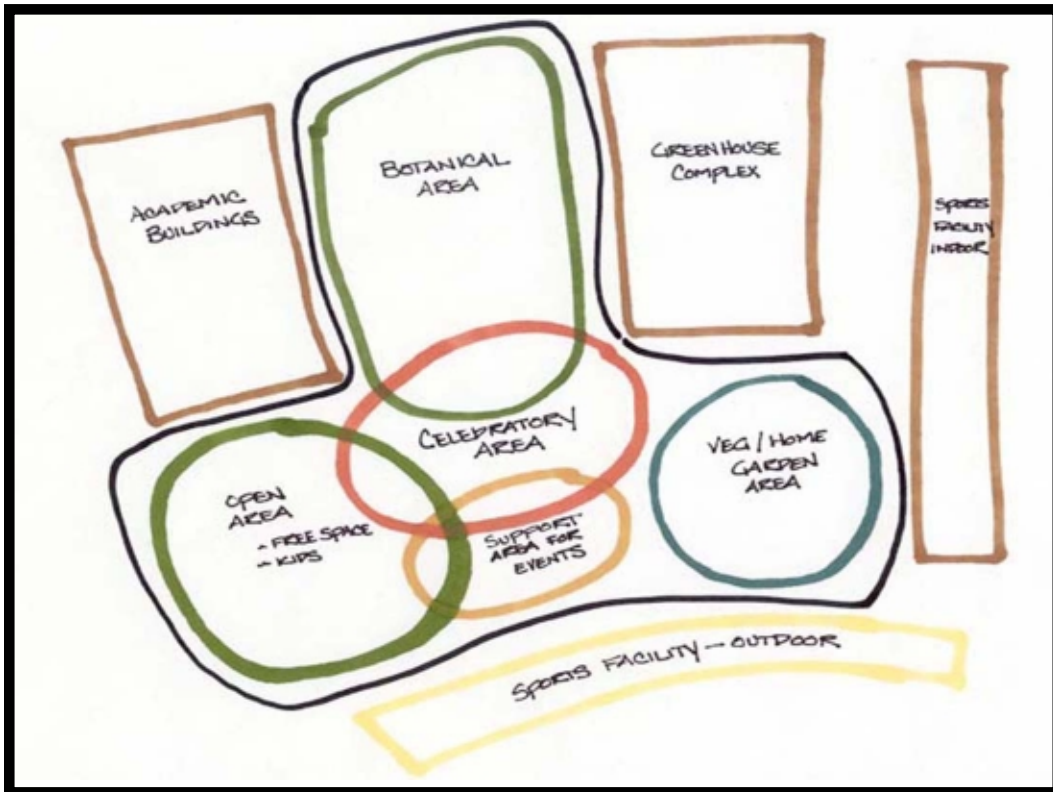


Figure 5.10 - Site Elements - what is connected and what is separate



Figure 5.11 - Master Plan

plan includes a large redesigned Visitor's Center, ceremonial space, and reception area. It also incorporates many elements taken from the plan provided by Rodney Robinson Landscape Architects including the lawn and border garden, open field with tumble mound, home demonstration area, vegetable garden, and orchard.

Numerous winding paths leading from various entry points of the site to the ceremonial area itself provide pedestrian access. This path system follows the basic three-part structure of ritual space with defined origin, path and destination. The path type chosen for these areas is winding, sometimes secluded, mysterious, and provide an element of transformation to the visitor in preparation for the event they are attending. One of the main paths crosses the bridge that spans the stream garden designed by Rodney Robinson Landscape Architects. There are also a series of interconnected paths that meander through the property that connect to the main path system. The path systems will be made of crushed, compacted stone that can be easily negotiated. This allows visitors to experience all the various elements in the gardens if they choose. The existing road running next to the greenhouses allows for vehicular access so that the wedding party, caterers, and supplies can be brought to the site efficiently. A turn-around and small parking area has been added at the end of the road. Figure 5.12 illustrates the path systems and the service road.

The ceremonial area includes many design elements gathered from literature review and case studies (see Figure 5.13 for enlarged view of the ceremonial area). The Visitor's Center and the ceremonial area are placed on the axis created by the lawn and border garden. Anyone walking through this garden can look down and see the Visitor's Center, or someone looking out the front of the Visitor's Center can experience the long view down the center of the garden. The Visitor's Center serves as an area for the wedding party to prepare, organizers and guests to meet, and as the command center for all event related activities. It includes rooms for the bride and groom, bathrooms, and storage on the main level. The remainder of this floor is open

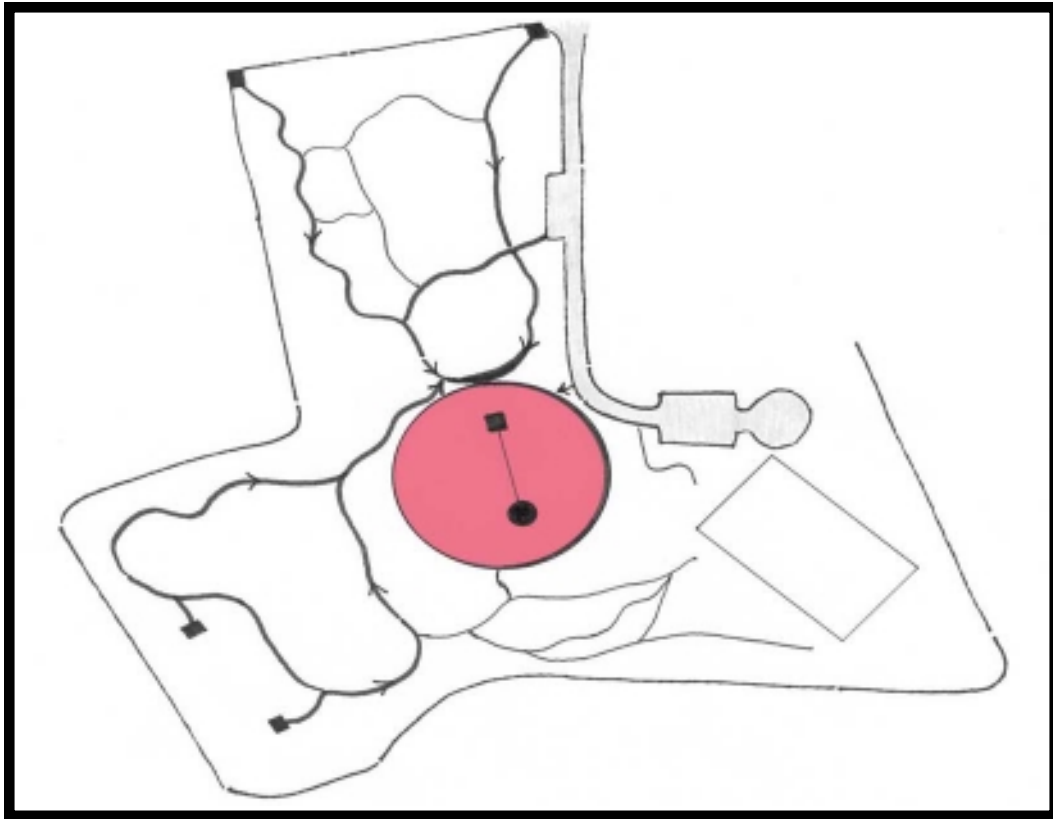


Figure 5.12 - Path System

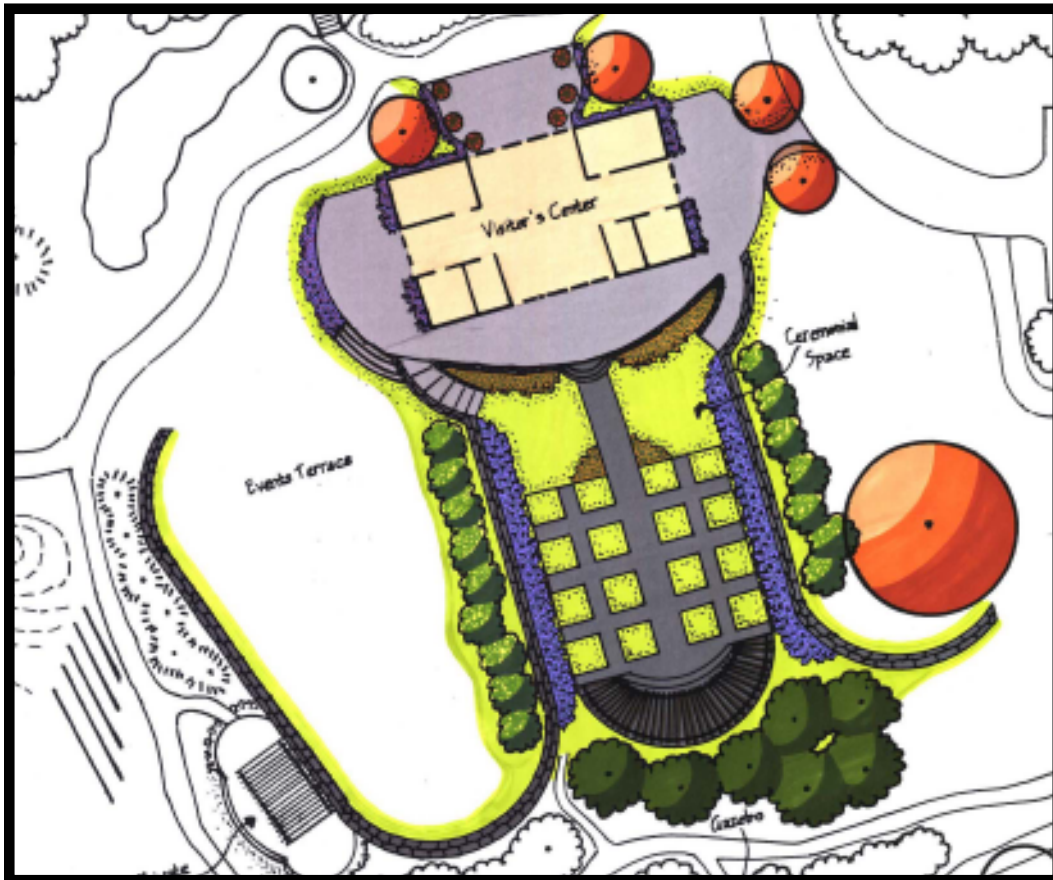


Figure 5.13 - Ceremonial Space or Wedding Garden

to the outside allowing for a view through the building and the ability to serve many functions. The upstairs is one large room that can accommodate classes, conferences, or presentations. The majority of the buildings on the VT campus are constructed of Hokie stone, so the Visitor's Center will be made of Hokie stone as well, thus tying it into all of the other buildings on campus. The Visitor's Center will also serve the needs of the Horticulture Garden staff by providing bathrooms, storage, areas that can double as educational space, and a covered yet outdoor space where people can meet. From case studies it was noted that it is crucial to include rooms for people to change, and bathrooms. Guests can get to the Visitor's Center by parking in one of the campus lots, and walking through one of the several paths provided in the gardens. If need be, they can also drive into the parking lot provided near the center. The Visitor's Center is surrounded by semi-circular patios, constructed of concrete with random decorative inlay of smooth hokie stone, that allow people to congregate before the event (see Figure 5.14). The circle is considered a symbol of power throughout many cultures and is also used in the wedding ceremony with rings and other elements. Therefore, the semi-circle was chosen as the shape for the patios as well as the alter area or destination. The patios provide distant vistas of the mountains surrounding Blacksburg; taking advantage of the natural beauty provided by the site. The stream garden can also be appreciated from the front and left side patios. Both a set of stairs and a ramp both are provided as access from the patios into the ceremonial space.

The ceremonial space is based on the three-part structure for ritual space of origin, path, and destination. This area is a destination within the entire garden, but also repeats the three-part structure inside the space itself. The origin is the Visitor's Center with the back patio area and stairs that lead down to the aisle. The aisle then leads directly down the center of the seating area to the destination. The aisle and the paths through the seating area are made of smooth cut Hokie stone, thus repeating this material and reinforcing the identity and continuity of the site (see Figure 5.15). The

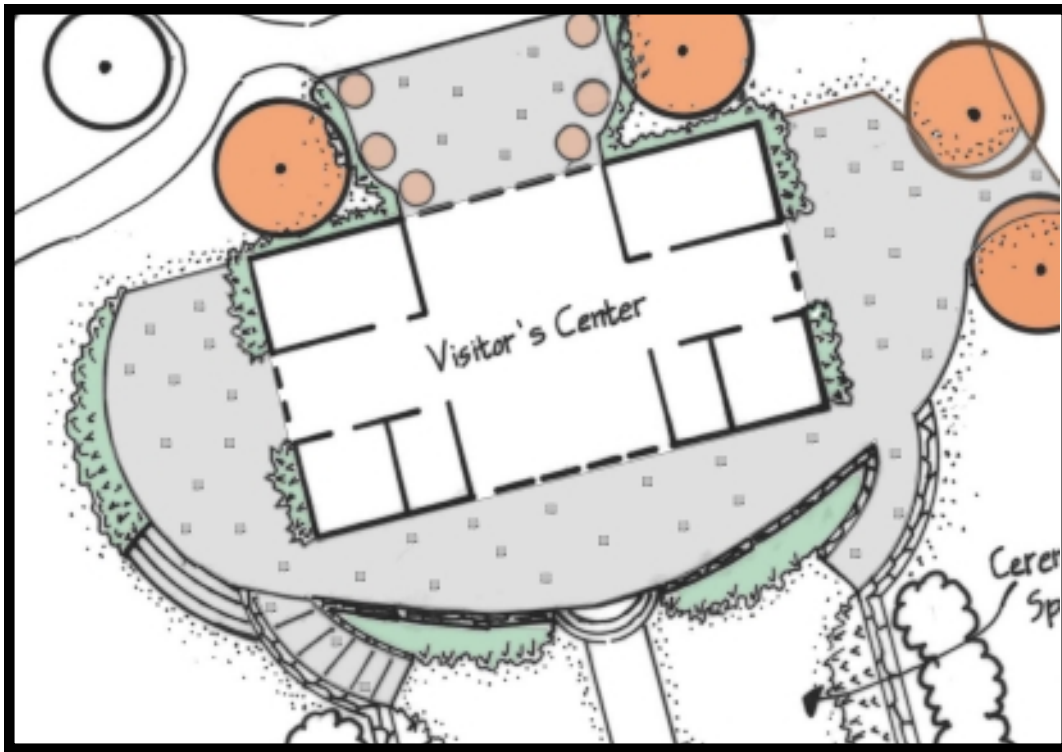


Figure 5.14 - Patio Paving Pattern

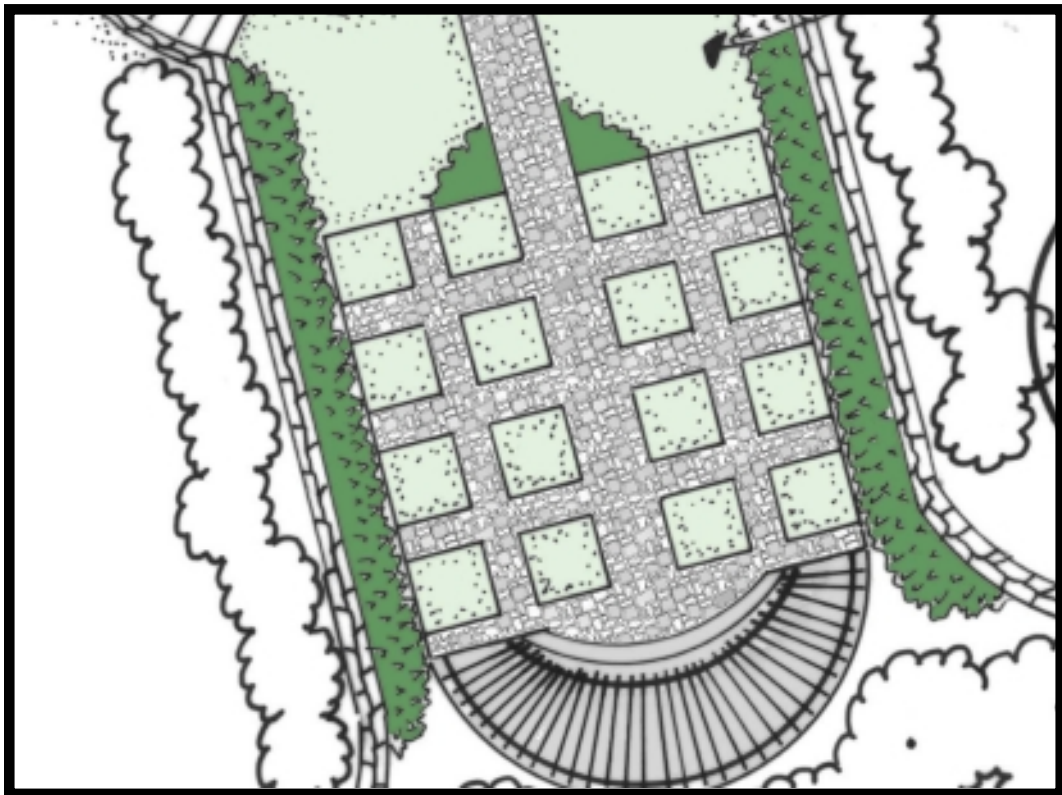


Figure 5.15 - Aisle and Path Paving Pattern

destination is a raised semi-circular patio covered by a wooden pergola. The pergola provides an outdoor yet semi-covered space for the bride and groom to exchange their vows.

The design for the seating area was chosen from an element of town history. When the Town of Blacksburg was first planned, it was based on a sixteen-block grid around downtown, and this design mimics that idea in the seating area. There are sixteen grass squares where chairs will be located. For a larger event, chairs can be put on the Hokie stone paths, but for most ceremonies the sixteen squares should provide ample seating. This sixteen-block image is used for the Blacksburg signs, Town letters, and many other functions; therefore, it is familiar among Blacksburg residents and Virginia Tech students. This inclusion of an historical element was found to be important in many of the case studies. A connection with the community is also achieved with this design by emulating a feature of the community that is common in everyone's lives. The long, straight aisle and spatial set up reminiscent of a typical church give the design a formal and traditional feel.

As one walks down the aisle they gradually descend into the space. The entire ceremonial space gradually drops in elevation starting from the steps down to the destination. There is then another set of steps up to the destination, which is set higher in elevation. The entire ceremonial space is enclosed with retaining walls that get gradually taller as you proceed through the site. These walls will be constructed of Hokie stone; both the material and the enclosure further reinforce the ideas of identity and continuity. This descent supports the structure of the wedding ceremony; one gets deeper in the experience as they go. The retaining walls serve to provide the experience of being "in" the event and also create an enclosed, intimate space within the gardens. Both the element of descending into a space and the importance of enclosure and intimacy were gathered from case studies. Figures 5.16 and 5.17 are sections of the site illustrating the drop in topography and relative placement of features, Figure 5.18 shows where the sections were drawn. The drop in elevation

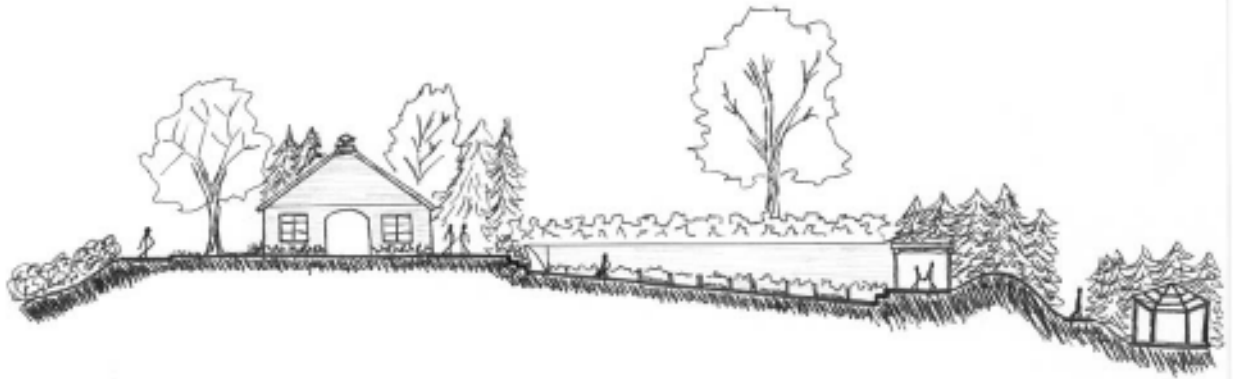


Figure 5.16 - Section A, from Visitor's Center through Ceremonial Area

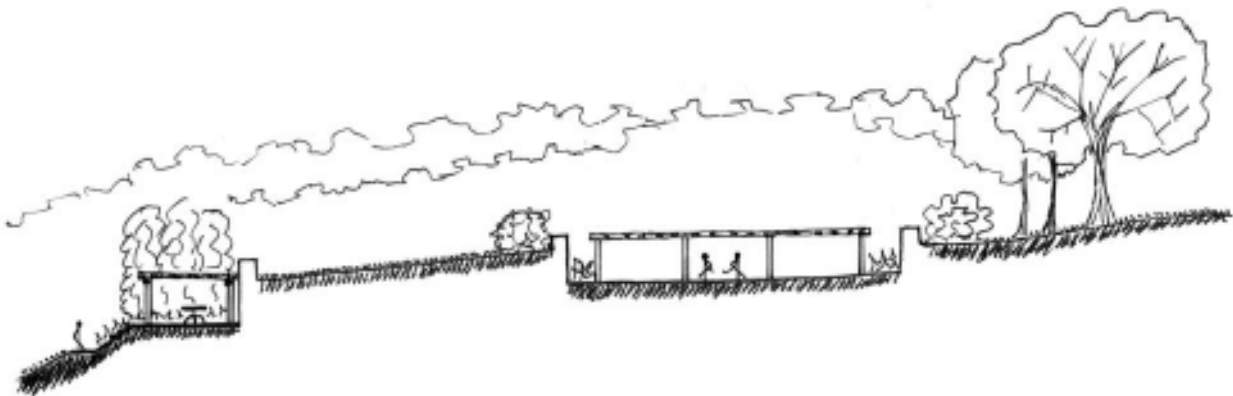


Figure 5.17 - Section B, from right side of Ceremonial Area, through Reception Area and Private Terrace

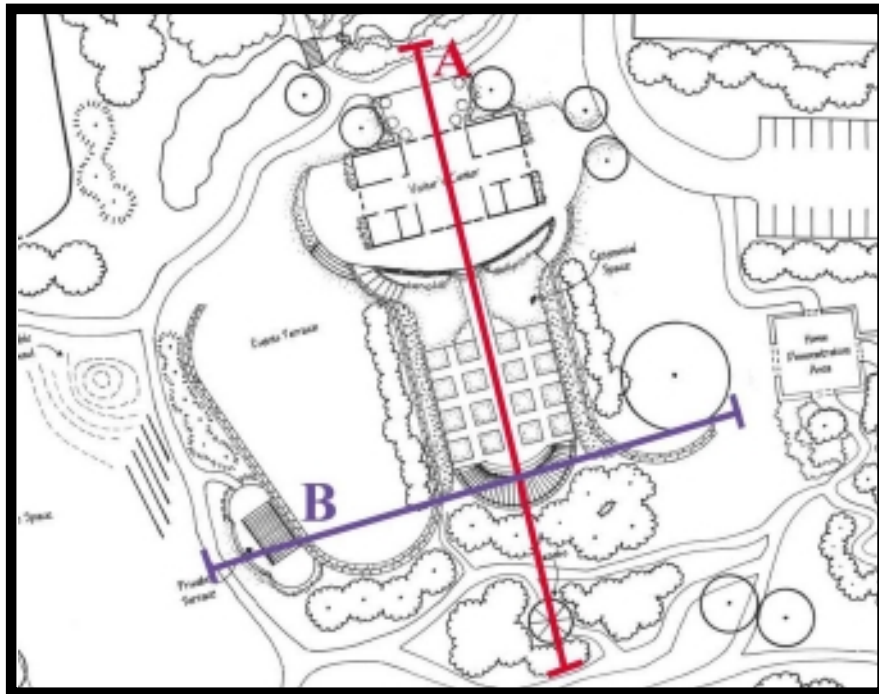


Figure 5.18 - Design with Section Lines

and the retaining walls also set this area apart from all of the rest as being special and for a specific purpose. There are several levels within the site, each with their own distinct purpose. Figure 5.19 demonstrates the different levels for clarification.

The planting around the ceremonial space is very subtle yet beautiful and functional. Since this wedding garden is located in a horticulture garden, whenever possible plants with meanings associated with love and other similar emotions should be used. Plants with other meanings can be used in the areas outside the ceremonial space within the gardens. These meanings will enhance the experience at special events, and will also provide an additional educational element that is appropriate for this setting. A small flowering tree such as dogwood, cherry, or plum will flank each entry to the patios surrounding the Visitor's Center, thus marking the entry. Plum tree is associated with keeping promises and cherry blossoms are associated with spiritual beauty. On top of the retaining walls there will be a line of evergreen holly, this will provide more enclosure of the space below and also prevent outsiders from looking in on the ceremony. Foresight is the meaning associated with hollies. The patios and ceremonial space will be lined with a mix of bulbs and perennials in very

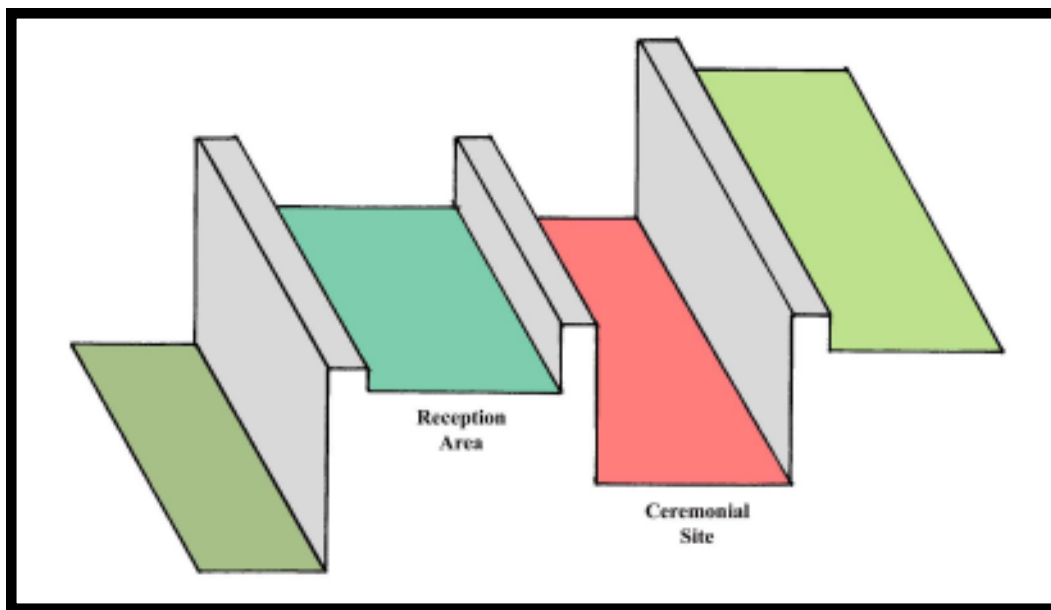


Figure 5.19 - Levels within the Site

-muted shades that will provide bloom throughout the season yet not interfere with colors chosen by the wedding party. There are numerous bulbs and perennials with appropriate meanings that could be used in these areas. For example, Snowdrop, a white flowering bulb, means hope. There are pots on the front patio and a series of removable columns topped with urns lining the aisle that allow the participants to personalize the event with their own flowers and colors. Behind the ceremonial space there is a wall of Leyland Cypress that will finish the enclosure of the space. This will provide an intimate, yet natural feel within the site. The plantings are meant to support yet not interfere with the events of the day.

As the event begins, the bride and groom will both be able to get prepared for the ceremony in the Visitor's Center. Then, if he chooses, the groom can use the gazebo located behind the ceremonial space or the private terrace below it to have some private time, and then enter the space through the small path provided at the edge of the pergola. The bride will begin her journey at the Visitor's Center and then proceed down the aisle to the destination. The bride and groom entering through different areas is symbolic of two lives coming together as one. The ceremony will now take place. Afterwards, the bride and groom will proceed back up the aisle and can receive guests either on the back patio or in the open space in the Visitor's Center. Guests and participants can now proceed into the reception area, which is located to the left of the Visitor's Center. There are stairs leading from the side patio down to this area. The reception area is a large grass area surrounded by a two and a half foot sitting wall, it is also high enough in elevation to experience the distant views. This area is kept as a blank slate in order to allow all the different set ups that may be desired for the reception. This design also allows the space to be used for a variety of other events. It is large enough to accommodate at least a 40' x 80' tent with other small tents for caterers and food. Bad weather in outdoor ceremonies is generally dealt with by erecting tents over the space. They come in various shapes

and sizes, some even with walls and heat, thus providing comfort in varying weather conditions. If chosen correctly, they can even be a beautiful accent to the space. In this design it is recommended that a tent be designed to cover the ceremonial space that can anchor into the retaining walls and that the garden provide another large tent for the reception area. Figures 5.20, 5.21, and 5.22 illustrate various placements of tents in these spaces to accommodate events of different sizes. The ceremonial and reception areas can serve a variety of functions and accommodate any type and size of event a person may want.

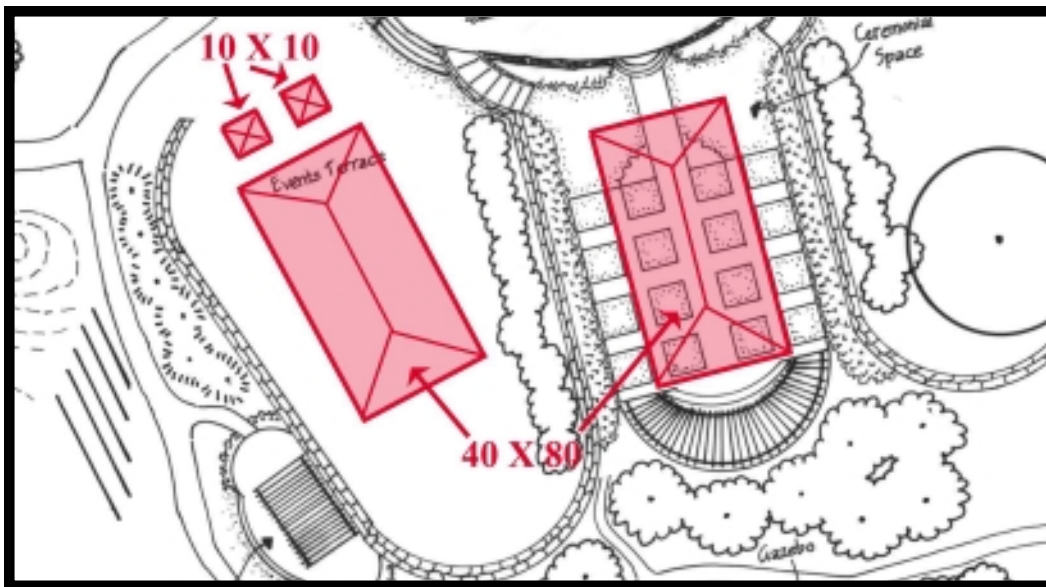


Figure 5.20 - Tent Locations for a Large Event

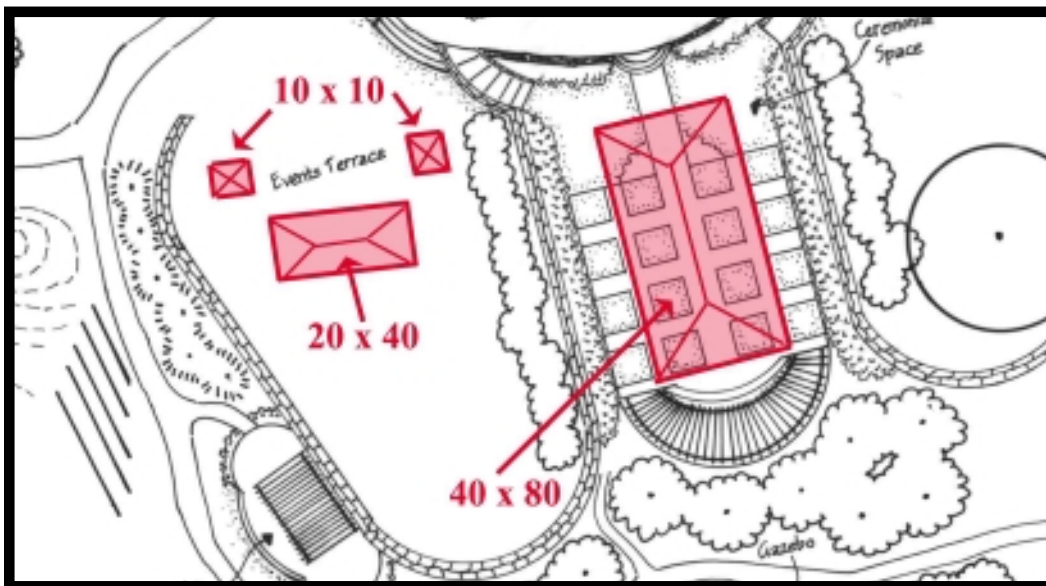


Figure 5.21 - Tent Locations for a Medium Sized Event

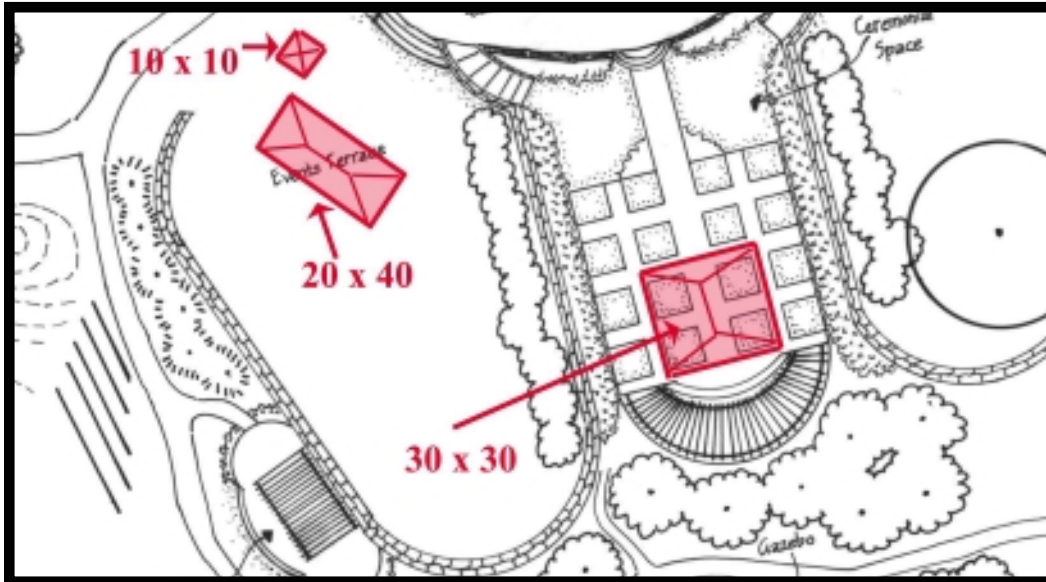


Figure 5.22 - Tent Locations for a Small Event



Figure 5.23 - Various Ceremonial Spaces

This setting within the Horticulture Garden is not only beautiful but also provides some added bonuses. The design provides many areas within the gardens that can be used for picture settings as well as private areas for the participants or guests to have a private moment. Even though the celebratory area is specifically designed to accommodate weddings and other special events, there are several other areas within the site that could be used for small events. Figure 5.23 on the previous page shows various areas within the gardens that could be used for events ranked by color according to the size event it can hold. The ceremonial space and the reception area could also accommodate other events such as parties, graduations, awards ceremonies, plays, and concerts. The experience of the site could be further enhanced by planning for lighting and sound built into the retaining walls, adding some art pieces, and providing the chairs and other extras needed for the event.

This design strives to create a meaningful and special wedding garden that ties into the other areas of the garden. The space is designed to connect the psychological and physical journeys that the participants will be experiencing; while also creating a comprehensive identity of the space for all to experience. This design brings together many ideas gathered from literature review, case studies, and questionnaires into one inclusive design that aims to meet the needs of people who are getting married, the VT Horticulture Department, people who visit the garden, and people who want to hold any other type of outdoor event at the site.

## **Chapter Six – Conclusions**

### **Evaluation of the Project and Design**

As this project proceeded - more research completed, more case studies conducted, more questionnaires filled out, more literature reviewed - it became increasingly apparent that outdoor places specifically designed to not only accommodate, but to support and enhance special events, are important in people's lives. The purpose of this project was to illuminate the importance of landscapes for celebration, and to investigate the design characteristics and basic emotional reactions that give these places power and meaning. There were several questions that guided this project, which included the following: What are the characteristics of these events that set them apart from everyday activities and how can these characteristics be enhanced by design? What are the shared qualities among the various landscapes for celebration that can be compiled into a set of design principles for these spaces? How can the structure of the event, both physically and psychologically, be enhanced by design to add more meaning to the experience of the participants? Special events that mark milestones in our lives or give us reason to gather with our friends and family are vitally important in human culture. These events and rituals have been a consistent part of the human experience throughout time. Societal changes concerning religion and nature have brought about a need and desire for places beyond the church or the banquet hall to host these events. Providing meaningful outdoor settings to enhance these events is the goal of this project. These ideas were investigated through the design of a wedding garden or ceremonial space at the Virginia Tech Horticulture Gardens.

Understanding and incorporating ritual characteristics is the first step toward a successful celebratory landscape. These ideas can be interpreted numerous ways, but can be summed up by saying that the site needs to evoke some tradition, formalism,

and connect strongly with the community in which it's located. This design includes these ideas in a number of ways. It is located on the Virginia Tech Campus, which creates a strong tie to the community. It provides tradition and formalism through the materials and plants selected, the spatial design including the traditional aisle, and the overall design of the site. Characteristics of ritual space are also important elements in a wedding garden design. The site should allow for personalization, create an intimate space, provide a consistent physical and emotional experience for the participants and the guests, support the structure of the event, and follow the basic three-part structure of ritual spaces presented by Thomas Barrie. These factors are also included in this design: the three part structure is repeated throughout the design; containers and additional elements are included so that participants can add their own personal touch; the site for the ceremony is intimate and secluded; the materials, plants, and forms are consistent throughout the site; and the structure of a wedding day was considered and planned for through the entire design process.

The case studies and questionnaires also provided many design ideas and elements that needed to be included. These elements included the following: providing a tie to history; descent into the space to create a feeling of being “in” the experience; enclosure for intimacy and seclusion; providing all elements at one site – wedding, receiving, and reception spaces; planning for poor weather; providing private areas; providing a tie to the community; creating distinct functional areas; planning for the movements associated with a wedding; accentuating the natural beauty of the site; using appropriate materials and plants; creating access that is convenient but also begins the experience of the site; and providing extra amenities such as lighting and sound. This design included as many of these ideas as were suited to the site. A design for a celebratory landscape, while targeting a specific event, also needs to be adaptive to other uses. This design is focused on weddings, but can accommodate a range of activities including graduations, award ceremonies, plant shows, educational

presentations, as well as parties of all kinds.

This project aimed to investigate celebratory landscapes, reveal their importance, and create a compilation of ideas and design principles that would lead to the creation of meaningful and powerful places for life's important celebrations. The research showed that these spaces do hold a special place in people's lives and that there are ways to create landscapes for celebration that will make once in a lifetime events even more special to the people who experience the place. The design demonstrates that by following these design principles and carefully considering site selection and the event it will accommodate, a wonderful wedding garden could be created. The ideas presented in this project are essential for the design of celebratory or ritual spaces, but they might also prove to be beneficial in the design for many other outdoor spaces.

## **Appendix**

- I. Questionnaire for Event Planners, with selected responses
  
- II. Questionnaire for Users of Celebratory Lndscapes, with selected responses
  
- III. List of plant names and meanings

## I. Questionnaire for Event Planners

### Purpose:

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather input from professionals and practitioners who work in the fields of celebratory landscapes and special events planning. The questionnaire will be distributed to anyone who works in this field to get their thoughts on design for events gardens as well as specific information on their particular venue. The most important information will be to understand what people who are in the business of running or designing these spaces think is important for the success of event landscapes. Outdoor settings add a whole new choice for anyone looking for a space for their special events, and because they draw people closer to their environment should be studied for their importance in people's lives and how they can be improved.

### Introduction:

Hello. My name is Ellie Carter and I am a graduate student in Landscape Architecture at Virginia Tech. I am interested in gathering as much information as possible on events gardens, how they are used and what they mean to people. I plan to incorporate the information from these surveys in my thesis, which will be on researching and designing a special event garden, and more specifically a place that can accommodate celebrations such as weddings. Any information you can provide will be much appreciated. This questionnaire is designed to gather information from a variety of different professionals who work for an assortment of settings. Therefore, if you feel a particular question is not applicable to your situation, feel free to leave it blank. If you are interested in a compilation of the results please include your name and address at the bottom of the questionnaire.

#### 1. What is the name of your special events facility?

Explore Park – a living history museum  
Mountain Lake Hotel  
Nesselrod on the New  
Smithfield Plantation  
Virginia Tech Horticulture Gardens

#### 2. Where is your space for events located? (What town and where in the town)

Roanoke, VA off of the Blue Ridge Parkway

Our outdoor venue is an open gazebo by the lake shore. Lake has receded in recent years. Consequently, the gazebo is on the edge of a grassy field which borders the lake.

Radford, VA

It is a 12.5-acre site adjacent to the VT campus in Blacksburg. Owned by the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities

VT campus, Blacksburg, VA

**3. What types of events do you hold?**

Weddings, receptions, dedications, plays, festivals, small music events

Primarily wedding ceremonies. Occasionally memorial services

Weddings, receptions, company dinners, lectures, concerts, garden tours, Christmas parties, birthday parties, anniversaries, some winter weddings (indoors), New Year's parties

Weddings, receptions, dinner parties, company picnics, reunions, and other types of parties

Weddings, luncheons, meetings

**4. Do you hold weddings? Receptions?**

Yes to both

We hold about 25 –30 wedding ceremonies a summer at the gazebo. Receptions are held indoors in our ballroom or on the covered stone Veranda on the front of the hotel.

Yes to both

Yes, the majority of our events are weddings. Some customers do both wedding and reception here while others just do one or the other.

Yes to both

**5. How many events per year do you hold? How many weddings?**

Weddings about 40-50, other events a few per year

See above

Weddings about 30, dinners about 20, and a few parties

There has been a large increase in the reservations for next year. In 2002, we held 7 events (6 of them being weddings) while we already have 12 reservations for 2003 so far (11 being weddings).

10-15 weddings per year, about the same number of other events

**6. What time, or times, of year are the most popular?**

We are open from May until November, so these are the times that people can have their events here

May and June are most popular for weddings here. September and October are second in popularity.

Spring, summer, fall

We are open from April to the first week in December. Our most popular times seem to be from May until September or October depending on the weather that year.

Good weather months

## 7. What are your fees?

It depends on the site and the services requested – see website

\$600 rental fee includes rental of the gazebo, ballroom, chairs for ceremony, horse and carriage ride for ceremony. Other fees for reception range from \$40 to \$60 per person.

Wedding - \$1,000, Reception - \$1,850, rooms \$98 - \$275/night

Depends on Size – Up to 30 guests \$250  
31 – 250 guests \$500  
Over 250 guests \$750

\*\*includes both wedding and reception if the person chooses to have both

\$300 – wedding, \$500 – wedding and reception

## 8. What reasons do your customers give for why they want to hold their event in an outdoor setting?

Nature is definitely the attractant; Explore Park has many unique natural settings that seem to draw people here. Most of the people who come here either like the natural settings, the historical aspect, or don't have a particular religious affiliation and, therefore, are looking for a beautiful place to have their wedding

Primarily they are outdoor enthusiasts or just do not want to have their wedding in a customary church setting.

Most say it's just because they want to be outside, but also because they are not very religious or consider themselves outdoorsy

Smithfield Plantation has a very natural, secluded setting. There aren't many modern, man-made things in site like roads etc, so this gives a peaceful feeling. Also, when the weather is nice people want to be outside.

They are outdoorsy people or don't really have a religious affiliation

**9. What do your customers say draws them to this particular place?**

I think for explore park it is the charm of the historical value that draws people. We have Mt. Union church, originally built in the 1880's, which was disassembled and then reassembled here. Most of our weddings take place either in the church or on the front porch of the church. The Herb Society also built a small herb wedding garden that is period appropriate in front of the church. This adds to the ambiance of the area. There are also a number of other beautiful and unique areas within the park where a few weddings have taken place.

Customers enjoy the isolation of the forested lake and surrounding property and beautiful historic stone hotel

The formality of the outdoor chapel and the enclosed space. They also like the amenities such as the sound system. Also, most customers are connected to the area in some way (ex. Student). Nesselrod also has an historical aspect and some people seem to really like that.

People like the historic nature of Smithfield. The house also provides a beautiful backdrop for events. The house is really only used for changing during weddings, because there aren't any rooms big enough to accommodate a large event.

They are students or employees of VT that have spent time here  
They don't have to decorate

**10. What are the specific characteristics, or design elements, of this place that people like?**

People like the fact that they can have their entire event here - rehearsal dinner at Brugh Tavern, wedding at their choice of location, and the Brugh Tavern will cater the reception in whatever facility they choose to have it. We have electrical power service to many locations throughout the park, so people can have lights, music, etc. and have equipped the Mt. Union Church with bathrooms and a changing area. In addition to the church, we have the Arthur Taubman Welcome Center, which has two different rooms that can be rented out. The Chestnut Ridge room has a deck that is surrounded by trees, so people can be indoors or out. The front of the welcome center also has beautiful hardscape and landscaping, this area can be used as well. We also have many locations throughout the park that provide a wonderful setting for photos. I think the fact that the park is very natural, without much development, makes people feel as if they are out in nature. We also offer horse drawn carriage service, which a lot of people really seem to like. One large bonus of Explore Park is the variety of facilities

– you can have your wedding inside, reception outside or vice versa, we provide several choices to make the event just the way the customer wants it.

People enjoy the rustic qualities of the entire property with its stone hotel and log cabins. They enjoy the rustic qualities of the wooden gazebo as well.

The formal setting, the long walk lined by the boxwoods, the enclosed space makes it like an outdoor room.

There are very nice trees in front of the house that usually serve as the setting for weddings and events here. The trees seem very old even though they have only been around for maybe 50-60 years. They give a sense of enclosure that adds intimacy to the event while also providing shade during hot weather. The views from the property are also important, the house is higher in topography than most of the surrounding areas therefore creating some lovely views. Another important element is the way the landscape creates usable space within the property. For example, the trees in the front create an “aisle” that is often used in weddings.

People like the open lawn and the beautiful garden setting

**11. How far are people willing to travel to hold their event at your facility?**

A maximum of about 50 miles

I have brides from as far away as London, California, Michigan. Most brides have some connection to the area from college days at VT or family in the area though.

It seems like most come no further than from Roanoke (45min), but sometimes people come from long distances for the weddings – they are affiliated with the area though.

The majority (approx 90%) of the people who have their events here are local, either students or town people. Others come from as far as Roanoke.

It really just depends. However, for weddings or receptions people are willing to drive a little further

**12. How do you deal with poor weather? Does your method work well?**

Every outdoor area either has an indoor or covered counterpart, if the weather gets bad the event can be moved to that location. We also have tents that can be put up, but this can end up adding some expense to the event. I think this works well – you can’t control the weather and people seem to be happy with this solution.

The decision must be made 1 and ½ hours prior to the ceremony time to move the event indoors. We move the ceremony to the stone covered Veranda first. If the weather is still too bad for that we move the ceremony into the ballroom. It works well for us as long as we get the decision in time to move the necessary chairs and decorations and cancel the carriage ride.

We put up a series of small tents. It seems to work ok, however people know with outdoor events that the weather is unpredictable.

We use tents during bad weather and this seems to work well. These days you can rent tents with sides and heat, so you can create an outdoor “room” if you need or want to.

We tell our customers they can rent a tent from someplace in town, but we do not offer that service

**13. What are the design elements that you feel could be changed to make this facility more attractive to potential users?**

Right now we can't accommodate very big events – we hope to, in the future, build an amphitheater that will seat up to 1000 people. We also hope to add a botanical garden that will provide another area within our park for events. If some of the areas were more accessible they may become more attractive for events, however, the purpose of this park is to be a living history museum and, therefore, we do not want to encroach on some of these areas. (side note – events in certain areas can only be held after park hours – so this can be limiting)

The lake needs to come back up, but that is mother nature and we have very little control over that. We do need more seasonal landscaping around the gazebo. However, most guests like that the flowers are not overdone, I think. It blends in more with the natural surroundings that way.

The reception area is a little small, we can't seat many people for a sit-down dinner. Our long range goal is to build a reception hall that will seat 200 people. We would also like to pave the guest parking lot. Another change might be to provide a sidewalk from the reception area around the back of the house to where the food is usually set up.

One improvement would be the construction of an indoor facility that could hold large groups to use in case of bad weather. Some people are discouraged from choosing an outdoor setting because of the possibility of bad weather and others are not, this would give those who might be discouraged a fall back area. A larger indoor facility like this could also serve many other purposes. We are thinking about constructing a visitor's center that would have this type of space. We could also use a larger and more modern kitchen.

We could use lighting – right now all events are early in the day

We could use some time of patio – for receptions and dancing

We would like to have chairs, tables, tents, etc so that customers don't have to go elsewhere.

We are in the process of expanding the gardens. A large part of that expansion is to offer a better place for events

**14. What is the “style” of your facility?**

Historic, rustic

Historic, rustic

It has an English style

Colonial

No particular style

**15. Do the particular plants used seem to have an impact on the users? Do you think the meanings associated with these plants (such as red roses being associated with passion and beauty) could enhance the experience of the users? How so?**

We do not have many areas that are landscaped; it is mostly just the natural setting. The meanings could enhance the experience but it would depend on how it was marketed – the customer would have to know about the meaning in order for it to add to their experience.

We do very little planting around the gazebo to maintain the natural appearance of the resort. All plantings at the resort are wildflowers or native shrubs.

We have an all-white garden – a lot of people like that because they know our flowers won't clash with whatever colors they are using in their event. Customers always ask what will be in bloom at the particular time of year that they are planning to use the gardens. I don't know if the meanings associated with plants are important, but they want to know if something they like or think is pretty will be in bloom. I think that maybe the meanings of the plants present could possibly be used as a marketing tool.

Yes, the plants are generally why people pick an outdoor setting to begin with and then why they may pick a particular place. The meanings could enhance the experience if the users recognize them.

Bloom time seems to be very important

Muted, subtle colors are good

Meanings could be a marketing tool

**16. What areas within your space are used most frequently?**

The Arthur Taubman Welcome Center is often used for receptions  
The Mountain Union Church  
The Shenandoah Life Picnic Pavilion  
The Brugh Tavern

The gazebo and surrounding amphitheater are used most frequently for weddings. All of our other meeting facilities are indoors.

The wedding chapel and the reception area.

The front of the house is used the most frequently. The side yard, with it's natural "bowl" has also been used.

Open lawn area used the most, also small pond for small events

**17. In your opinion, is the availability of outdoor settings for special events important to people?**

I think it is very important, sometimes we have as many as 3-4 weddings a week here – so apparently there are a lot of people who really want to have their event outdoors in a beautiful setting.

Yes, particularly to outdoor enthusiasts.

I think a lot of people want an outdoor setting for their special events.

Yes – we get a lot more requests each year than we actually have events.

The availability is very important.

**18. Is your facility specifically designed to accommodate special events? If so, do you think this design makes your facility more successful? If not, do you think that if the facility were specifically designed to hold events that it would draw more users?**

The park is not specifically designed for events, however because we have the infrastructure such as parking, electricity and bathrooms, they seem to work well. The church, of course, is a traditional setting for weddings. We may, in the future, create some additional spaces that are specifically designed for these purposes.

We are designed for events as we are a tourist destination. However, several improvements could be made to make our events more appealing to larger events. We need to have outdoor tents available for receptions for instance.

Nesselrod was originally a private formal garden for the original owners of the house and has been slightly modified to accommodate weddings. There is a sunken garden on the property that was designed for the wedding of the original owner's daughter. This area is in the process of being restored. I think that Nesselrod has enough design elements that suit weddings that it is successful, however I think the improvements mentioned above could make it more so.

No, this facility is not specifically designed for events. I think it would be used more frequently if we had the above mentioned facilities, but the people who use it really seem to like the history and natural setting, that might be ruined with too much design.

This facility is not designed for that purpose, but we hope the renovations will help with that. I think it helps to design for the events – it makes the space more accommodating

**19. What, in your opinion, makes outdoor settings for special events important to people?**

A connection with nature and a beautiful setting in which to celebrate.

A large portion of society loves the outdoors. Their fondest memories in life are connected to outdoor hobbies and settings. Outdoor settings for weddings are becoming increasingly important to upcoming generations who have more liberal religious beliefs. This increasing population does not want a traditional church setting for their ceremony.

A connection with nature.

The symbolism associated with an outdoor setting – the “communing with nature”. This type of feeling is important for special events.

It gives them a special place for their events – a connection with nature and it's beauty

## II. Questionnaire for Users of Celebratory Landscapes

### Purpose:

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather input from individuals who have chosen to have their wedding or other special event in an outdoor setting, or celebratory landscape. The questionnaire will be distributed to anyone who has held their special event outdoors and is willing to answer questions associated with their event. Contact information was provided by people who work for the outdoor setting where the event was held and, in an effort to protect privacy, permission to send the survey was obtained prior to sending it. The most important information will be to understand why people chose outdoor settings for their events and how these areas can be designed for expanded success. Outdoor settings add a whole new choice for anyone looking for a space for their special events, and because they draw people closer to their environment should be studied for their importance in people's lives and how they can be improved.

### Introduction:

Hello. My name is Ellie Carter and I am a graduate student in Landscape Architecture at Virginia Tech. I am interested in gathering as much information as possible on events gardens, how they are used and what they mean to people. I plan to incorporate the information from these surveys in my thesis, which will be on researching and designing a special event garden, and more specifically a place that can accommodate celebrations such as weddings. Any information you can provide will be much appreciated.

#### 1. What is the name of the facility where you held your special event?

Mountaintop Farm

Nesselrod On the New

The VT Arboretum

Virginia Tech Horticulture Garden

Nesselrod on the New & Professors's House

#### 2. Where is it located? (What town and where in the town)

Charlottesville, VA

Radford, Virginia (Specifically Fairlawn, Va)

Blacksburg, VA (VT Campus)

Blacksburg, Virginia. Off of Washington St.

Radford, VA & Blacksburg, VA

**3. What type of event did you have?**

Wedding reception

Wedding & Reception

Wedding

Wedding (ceremony & reception)

Wedding & rehearsal Party

**4. What fee did you pay for the use of the facility?(optional – if you don't feel comfortable answering this question – feel free to leave blank)**

Nothing

2500+

\$300 (Full Weekend Reservation)

\$300

\$1,000      Free

**5. Why did you want to hold your event in an outdoor setting? Did you consider indoors? What helped you decide?**

The view from Mountaintop is beautiful. Our marriage was a secret and therefore planning the reception was too! I manage the property so convenience was a big part too.

It was what I always had in mind. My parents and In-laws did but I didn't. Drive up to Nesselrod in the spring when it's most green and the flowers are just beginning to bloom - you'll see, it wasn't a hard decision

Always wanted an outdoor wedding. A military deployment determined that August was the only month when it could be done

We wanted to hold our event in a nontraditional setting where we could have an informal gathering. We both enjoy the outdoors and the horticulture gardens are always so beautiful. We did consider holding our event indoors, but didn't find anything that we liked as much as the gardens. We are not religious, so we didn't consider having the ceremony in a church and this allowed us to explore other options.

I did not consider indoors. I thought it was appropriate since my husband and I love nature so much. After all, it is God's house.

**6. What drew you to this particular place?**

Views, beauty.

The convenience of the location was unequaled. It was exactly half way between our families

My old neighbors had their wedding there and after I saw how well their pictures turned out, I was sold

My husband and I both went to graduate school at Virginia Tech and still live in Blacksburg. The horticulture gardens were very convenient and since I am still in graduate school, this made it easier to plan everything. In addition, we paid for the wedding by ourselves and the price to rent the gardens was unbeatable.

Nesselrod – outside, intimate space, only place in this area

House – outside, beautiful view

**7. What were the specific characteristics, or design elements, of this place that you liked?**

Stone terrace, large lawn, sufficient parking, beautiful views.

The terrace loggia was suited perfectly for an outdoor reception.

I loved the wooden area. We used it as the “alter.” I also loved the winding paths and the interest that the plant labels added.

We like the large open space that was convenient for a reception. In addition, there were numerous places to hold the ceremony and several secluded areas for waiting in before the ceremony and hiding out directly after the ceremony. The gardens have a wide variety of design elements that were perfect sites to take our wedding pictures!

I liked the intimate feeling of Nesselrod, with the tall hedges on both sides. The gazebo was a nice destination at the end of the aisle and I thought the aisle was outlined well with the boxwoods.

Ben’s – there was a terrace or overlook that seemed to enhance the view as well as providing a place for guests to congregate.

**8. What were the specific amenities (such as lighting, sound system, changing areas, etc.) that you thought were really important?**

Only electrical was provided.

a. adequate room outdoors suited well for 8-10 round tables

\*translates to comfortable seating for 64-80

b. excellent set up for DJ / Band open air yet and protected from weather

\*complete with all the electrical hookups necessary

- c. outdoor granite bar and sink
- d. clean outdoor facilities in perfect working order
- e. large flat area for caterer to use with plenty of room for various size tents
- f. awning available off the terrace for protection from sun or rain

All we needed was power. I brought a CD player which could have been louder. I should have used a microphone for the officiant.

The bathrooms, although not all that fancy, were located close by, which we felt was important for an outdoor event that lasted several hours. Many outdoor locations don't have any such facilities. Another important concern was electricity for the caterers and band. The gardens had four electrical outlets that were easily accessible.

Changing areas, lighting, sound systems, are all important. I think a place for the bride to be alone would have been nice.

**9. How far were you willing to travel to hold your event at a specific location?**

20-30 minutes tops.

No more than 30 minutes convenience for us and our families was key for us. That is also why we liked our wedding and reception at the same location

I live in Radford, VA so the travel wasn't an issue. All but one guest was from out of the area and or country however

The gardens are in the same town we lived in, so this wasn't an issue.

Less than 30 min

**10. Did you experience bad weather during your event? If so, how was it dealt with and did you think the solution worked well?**

No, weather was great.

No more than some strong sun around five o'clock during the ceremony

We had wonderful weather although it was very hot. (That is to be expected in August though.) I had netting on my dress that bugs ended up getting trapped in. If made for a laugh and a funny story.

The rain stopped before the ceremony started and started again after the reception ended – it was perfect! Our back up plan was to simply hold the ceremony under the tent we rented for the reception.

I guess you could say it was bad weather. It rained. We put up tents and went ahead as planned.

**11. Were there design elements that you feel could be changed to make this facility more attractive to potential users? What are they and why do you think it would make this a better place?**

Bathrooms would have been nice, we rented a porta-john. More electricity service. Closer parking and lights along the way.

Widen the entrance to the driveway use less starch in their sheets

I can't wait to see the waterfall/bridge project when complete.

We can't think of any design elements that need changing or that need to be added.

The landscape could have been better taken care of. The boxwoods were suffering from bad prune jobs. More space for changing. More separation of the bride and groom.

**12. Does the location you chose have a particular style? If so, what is it?**

Historical site for sure.

Nesselrod has an English Countryside feel

Not sure

The garden did not seem to have one particular style. It seemed to be more of a compilation of many styles, which also made it more interesting, seeming to create distinct focus/interest areas within the garden. I think this adds extra dimension to the gardens and makes it seem more interesting.

Nesselrod does have an English garden feel to it. However I did not choose it for that reason.

**13. Did the particular plants used seem to have an impact on your choice of location? Do you think the meanings associated with these plants (for example – Jasmine is associated with sensuality and red roses are associated with passion and beauty) could enhance the experience of the users?**

We did not add any plants. The yard is surrounded by boxwoods and other shrubs. There is also a lot of ivy here and there. The view was really the "thing" at Mountaintop.

Nesselrod's Gazebo is enclosed by 10 ten foot hedges for privacy. Even though you are right in the middle of town - you feel miles away.

I loved the coloring of the plants. The yellow section by the open area as well as the pinks and purples in the middle made for great pictures

We liked the way the garden was divided to represent different natural areas (a rock garden, water gardens, etc.). We did not give specific concern to what types of plants were used in the designs. However, this could be a good selling point for the location, if either the prospective customers knew the meanings of specific plants, or if they were highlighted/advertised as such. As far as a wedding goes, it seems that the colors used are more important than the actual meanings of the plants used.

No, but given a choice it may.

**14. What areas within the facility did you use the most?**

Stone terrace/yard.

We had a crowd of 200. We used all of the facilities available on the grounds; The Gazebo and Gardens for the ceremony, the sunken gardens for my portrait setting, the Guesthouse was available for tours in the early evening, wedding portraits were available for viewing on the mantel, our wedding cake displayed inside in the great room in front of a bay window, indoor facilities and outdoor facilities, the bridal parlor and grooms smoking room before the ceremony, the dance floor, the loggia terrace, and we also used a lower portion of the flat grounds to set up more tables for crowd overflow. The reception flowed both inside and outside. Our wedding party spent the night in the inn and we all had a five course breakfast the next morning.

We used the wooden area for the ceremony and walked from the covering by the waterfall for the processional

The large open area in the center of the garden was used for the reception and the deck by the fish pond (not the stream garden) was used for the ceremony.

The dressing areas, the wedding garden itself, and the back of the house for pictures. It was unfortunate that there wasn't a space to hide from guests that was attractive enough for pictures.

**15. In your opinion, is the availability of outdoor settings for special events important to people?**

Definitely! More room to move, breath..smoking is an issue for some people. Kids can run and play.

YES

Very. No one wants to be trapped in a stuffy old room when nature is so beautiful. It defiantly made our wedding more special and unique and the guests were able to browse the different plants while they waited.

Yes. It seems like more and more people are considering having their weddings in outdoor locations. The main drawback to outdoor settings is the unpredictable weather.

Yes.

**16. Was the facility you chose specifically designed to accommodate events such as the one you held? Do you think if these settings are specifically designed to accommodate these events they draw more people?**

Mountaintop farm hosts all sorts of events, they have an annual Kite Day, yearly resident party and other social functions hosted by the residents.

Nesselrod is well suited for weddings

Yes. I think if these places are listed correctly when people are looking for venues, they would be more apt to choose an outdoor setting.

The location we used was not designed specifically for weddings. If the places were specifically designed to hold special events the design should be done in such a way to preserve the natural feel of the place. For example, it would be more convenient to have electrical outlets dispersed through the garden to allow flexibility in planning an event that involved music or caterers. However, this would likely disturb the natural feel of the setting and be difficult to incorporate in an already established location. We did look at another location that had a sound system (speakers, etc.) hidden in hedges (Nesselrod). That was a neat way to incorporate amenities without disrupting the natural feeling. When done in ways that preserve the natural feel, amenities could draw more people. Other ways to attract more people would be to have recommendations for vendors (caterers, bands, florists, etc) or to have tables/tents/etc. available (as part of the rental fee or for a small fee - less than renting from Aztec).

I don't think this place was designed for weddings. Settings designed for outdoor events would definitely draw more people if they were done well.

**17. What, in your opinion, makes outdoor settings for special events important to people?**

Surrounding areas, convenience, accommodations for weather (huge!).

Aside from the threat of bad weather, I think outside settings offers more opportunity for a personalized event suited to your personality at a lesser cost.

Again, they make an event more special and unique

Outdoor settings provide a unique and unforgettable place for memorable occasions. So many banquet halls look the same and it was wonderful to find a setting that helped us create an evening we will never forget. We are still receiving compliments!

**Being in touch with nature. Its common ground.**

### III. Plant Names and Meanings

There are many different plant meanings lists - this one was downloaded from:  
[www.geobop.com/symbols/plants/meanings/](http://www.geobop.com/symbols/plants/meanings/)

Acacia—Chaste Love  
Acacia (pink)—Elegance  
Acacia (rose)—Friendship, platonic love  
Acacia (yellow)—secret love  
Acanthus—Artifice, the fine arts  
Aloe—Religious superstition  
Allspice—Compassion  
Almond (flowering)—Hope  
Almond tree—Indiscretion  
Alyssum (sweet)—Worth beyond beauty  
Amaranth—Immortality  
Amaranth (globe)—Unfading love  
Amaryllis—Pride, splendid beauty, timidity  
Ambrosia—Love returned  
Amethyst—Admiration  
Anemone—Expectation, sickness  
Anemone (garden)—Forsaken  
Angelica—Inspiration  
Apple—Temptation  
Apple blossom—preference  
Ash tree—Grandeur  
Ash (mountain)—Prudence  
Aspen tree—Lamentation  
Aster—Variety  
Auricula—Importune me not  
Auricula (scarlet)—Avarice  
Azalea—Temperance; love; romance  
Baby's breath posies—Gentleness, everlasting love  
Bachelor's buttons—Single blessedness  
Balm—Sympathy  
Balm of Gilead—Cure  
Balsam—Ardent love  
Balsam (red)—Impatient yet resolved to win your love  
Balsam (yellow)—Impatience  
Barberry—Sharpness  
Basil (common)—Hatred  
Basil (sweet)—Good wishes  
Bay leaf—Consistency, I change but in death  
Bay tree—Glory  
Bay wreath—Reward of merit  
Beech tree—Prosperity

Begonia—Dark thoughts  
Bell flower—Gratitude  
Belladonna—Silence  
Bindweed (Great)—Insinuation  
Bindweed (Small)—Humility  
Birch Tree—Gracefulness, meekness  
Bittersweet—Truth  
Bluebell—Constancy  
Borage—Bluntness  
Box Tree—Stoicism  
Bramble—Envy, lowliness, remorse  
Broom—Humility, neatness  
Buttercup—Childishness, ingratitude  
Cabbage—Gain  
Camellia—Steadfast love  
Camellia Japonica—Unpretending excellence  
Camellia Japonica (white)—Perfected loveliness  
Camomile—Energy in adversity  
Campanula—Gratitude  
Canary grass—Perseverance  
Candytuft—Indifference  
Canterbury Bell—Acknowledgement  
Caraway—Betrayal  
Cardinal flower—Distinction  
Carnation—Fascination, burning love, woman's love  
Carnation (red)—Alas, my poor heart  
Carnation (striped)—Refusal  
Carnation (yellow)—Distain  
Cedar—Strength  
Cedar leaf—I live for thee  
Cedar of Lebanon—Incorruptible  
Celadine—Joys to come  
Cherry (white)—Deception  
Cherry blossom—Spiritual beauty  
Cherry tree—Education  
Chervil (garden)—Sincerity  
Chestnut tree (sweet)—Do me justice  
Chickweed—Rendezvous  
Chives—Usefulness  
Chrysanthemum (red)—I love  
Chrysanthemum (white)—Truth  
Chrysanthemum (yellow)—Slighted love  
Cinquefoil—Maternal affection  
Clematis—Mental beauty  
Clematis (evergreen)—Poverty  
Clover (four-leaved)—Be mine  
Clover (white)—Think of me

Cloves—Dignity  
Cockscomb—Singularity  
Coltsfoot—Justice shall be done to you  
Columbine—Folly  
Columbine (purple)—Resolution  
Columbine (red)—Anxious; trembling  
Convolvulus—Uncertainty; bonds  
Convolvulus (Major)—Extinguished hopes  
Convolvulus (Minor)—Night  
Coriander—Concealed merit  
Coreopsis—Always cheerful  
Corn—Riches  
Cornflower—Delicacy  
Cowslip—Pensiveness, winning grace  
Cowslip (American)—Divine beauty  
Cranberry—Cure for headache  
Crane's Bill—envy  
Cress—Power  
Crocus (spring)—youthful gladness  
Currant—They frown will kill me  
Currants (branch of)—You please all  
Cyclamen—Diffidence  
Cypress—Death, despair, melancholy, mourning  
Daffodil—Regard  
Daffodil (yellow)—Chivalry  
Dahlia—Good taste, instability  
Daisy—Innocence  
Daisy (Michaelmas)—Afterthought  
Daisy (Ox-eye)—A token  
Daisy (Parti-Colored)—Beauty  
Daisy (red)—unconscious  
Daisy (white)—Innocence  
Dandelion—Love's oracle, rustic oracle  
Dill—Good spirits  
Dittany (white)—Passion  
Dock—Patience  
Dogsbane—Deceit  
Dogwood—Durability  
Eglantine—Poetry  
Elder—Zealousness  
Eupatorium—Delay  
Everlasting pea—Appointed meeting  
Fennel—Strength  
Fern—Sincerity  
Fern (flowering)—Reverie  
Fig—Argument, longevity  
Filbert—Reconciliation

Fir (Scotch)—Elevation  
Flax—Fate, I feel your kindness  
Fleur-de-Lis—Flame  
Fleur-de-Luce—Fire  
Flytrap—Deceit  
Forget-Me-Not—True love; fond remembrance; forget-me-not  
Foxglove—Insincerity; a wish  
French honeysuckle—Rustic beauty  
Fuchsia (scarlet)—Taste  
Gardenia—A secret love  
Gentian—You are unjust  
Geranium—Expected meeting  
Geranium (dark)—Melancholy  
Geranium (ivy)—I engage you for the next dance  
Geranium (lemon)—Unexpected meeting  
Geranium (oak-leaved)—True friendship  
Geranium (pencil-leaved)—Ingenuity  
Geranium (rose-scented)—Preference  
Geranium (scarlet)—comforting  
Geranium (silver-leaved)—Recall  
Geranium (wild)—Steadfast piety  
Gillyflower—Lasting and/or unfading beauty; bonds of affection  
Gladiola—Strong character  
Gloxinia—A proud spirit  
Golden rod—Precaution  
Gooseberry—Anticipation  
Gorse—Enduring affection  
Gourd—Extent  
Harebell—Grief  
Hawthorne—Hope  
Hazel—Reconciliation  
Helenium—Tears  
Heliotrope—Devotion; faithfulness  
Hemlock—You will be my death  
Hemp—Fate  
Hibiscus—Delicate beauty  
Holly—Am I forgotten?; foresight  
Holly herb—Enchantment  
Hollyhock—Ambition; fecundity  
Hollyhock (white)—Female ambition  
Honesty—Fascination; honesty  
Honey flower—Sweet and secret love  
Honeysuckle—Devoted affection  
Honeysuckle (coral)—Color of my life and/or fate  
Honeysuckle (french)—Rustic beauty  
Honeysuckle (monthly)—I will not answer hastily  
Honeysuckle (wild)—Inconstancy in love

Hop—Injustice  
Hornbeam tree—Ornament  
Hyacinth—Game, play  
Hydrangea—Heartlessness; boastfulness  
Hyssop—Cleanliness  
Iceland Moss—Health  
Ice Plant—Your looks will freeze me  
Imperial (crown)—Majesty  
Iris—Message for you; flame; my compliments  
Iris (yellow)—Passion  
Ivy—Fidelity; assiduous to please; marriage  
Jacob's ladder—Come down  
Jasmine (cape)—I am too happy; transport of joy  
Jasmine (Indian)—Attachment  
Jasmine (Spanish)—Sensuality  
Jasmine (white)—Amiability  
Jasmine (yellow)—Grace; elegance  
Jonquil—Desiring a return of affection  
Judas tree—Unbelief  
Laburnum—Pensive beauty; forsaken  
Lady's mantle—Fashion  
Lady's slipper—Capricious beauty; win me and wear me  
Lantana—Rigor  
Larkspur—Lightness; levity  
Larkspur (pink)—Fickleness  
Larkspur (purple)—Haughtiness  
Laurel—Glory  
Laurel (mountain)—Ambition  
Laurestina—Distrust  
Lavender (sea)—Dauntlessness  
Lemon—Zest  
Lemon blossom—Discretion, fidelity in love  
Lichen—Dejection  
Lilac (field)—Humility  
Lilac (purple)—Love's first emotion  
Lilac (white)—Youthful innocence; modesty; purity  
Lilac Polyanthus—Confidence  
Lily (Arum)—Ardor  
Lily (Imperial)—Majesty  
Lily (white)—Sweetness; modesty; purity  
Lily (yellow)—Falsehood; gaiety  
Lily of the Valley—Return to happiness; Let's forgive and be happy again  
Lime—Conjugal love  
Liquorice—I declare against you  
Lobelia—Malevolence  
Lotus flower—Estranged love  
Love-in-a-mist—Perplexity

Love-Lies-Bleeding—Hopeless but not heartless  
Lucerne—Life  
Lupine—Voraciousness, imagination  
Maidenhair—Discretion  
Magnolia—Love of nature  
Magnolia (laurel-leaved)—Dignity  
Magnolia (swamp)—perseverance  
Maple—Reserve  
Marigold—Grief; despair; melancholy  
Marigold (African)—Vulgar-minded  
Marigold (French)—Jealousy  
Marigold (prophetic)—Prediction  
Marjoram—Blushing  
Meadowsweet—Uselessness  
Mercury—Goodness  
Mignonette—You qualities surpass your charms  
Mimosa—Sensitiveness  
Mint—Virtue; wisdom  
Mistletoe—I surmount difficulties  
Mock Orange—Counterfeit  
Morning Glory—Affection  
Moss—Maternal love  
Mossy saxifrage—Affection  
Motherwort—Concealed love  
Mugwort—Happiness  
Mulberry (black)—I will not survive you  
Mulberry (white)—Wisdom  
Mushroom—Suspicion  
Mustard Seed—Indifference  
Myrrh—Gladness  
Myrtle—Love  
Narcissus—Egotism  
Narcissus (poet's)—self esteem  
Nasturtium—Patriotism  
Nettle (stinging)—Slander  
Nightshade—Witchcraft  
Nightshade (woody)—Truth  
Nosegay—Gallantry  
Nutmeg—Expected meeting  
Oak Leaves—Bravery  
Oak tree—Hospitality  
Oak tree (white)—Independence  
Oats—Music  
Oleander—Beware  
Olive Branch—Peace  
Orange tree—Generosity  
Orange blossoms—Your purity equals your loveliness

Orchid—A beauty  
Orchid (butterfly)—gaiety  
Ox eye—Patience  
Palm—Victory  
Pansy—Thinking good thoughts of you  
Parsley—Festivity; feasting; useful knowledge  
Parsley (fool's)—Silliness  
Passionflower—Belief; religious superstition; susceptibility  
Pea (everlasting)—Lasting pleasure; an appointed meeting  
Pea (sweet)—Lasting pleasure; departure  
Peach—Your qualities, like your charms, are unequaled  
Peach blossom—I am your captive  
Pear blossom—I am your captive  
Pear (prickly)—Satire  
Pennyroyal—flee away  
Peony—Bashfulness; shame  
Peppermint—Warmth of feeling; cordiality  
Periwinkle (blue)—Early friendship  
Periwinkle (white)—Pleasant recollections  
Persicaria—Restoration  
Petunia—Don't despair  
Phlox—Unanimity  
Pimpernel—Assignment; change  
Pine—Pity  
Pine (spruce)—Hope in adversity  
Pineapple—Welcome  
Pink —Boldness  
Pink (Carnation)—Woman's love  
Pink (double red)—Pure and ardent love  
Pink (Indian double)—Always lovely  
Pink (Indian single)—Aversion  
Pink (single red)- Pure love  
Pink (variegated)—Refusal  
Pink (white)—Talent  
Plane tree—Genius  
Plum tree—Keep your promises  
Plum tree (wild)—Independence  
Polyanthus—Pride of riches  
Polyanthus (crimson)—The heart's mystery  
Pomegranate—Foolishness  
Pomegranate flower—Mature elegance  
Poplar (white)—time  
Poppy—Evanescent pleasure  
Poppy (red)—consolation  
Poppy (scarlet)—Fantastic extravagance  
Poppy (white)—Sleep  
Primrose—Early youth

Primrose (evening)—Inconstancy  
 Primula—Diffidence  
 Quince—Temptation  
 Ranunculus—You are radiant with charms  
 Ranunculus (wild)—Ingratitude  
 Raspberry—Remorse  
 Reeds—Music  
 Rhododendron—Danger  
 Rhubarb—Advice  
 Robin (ragged)—Wit  
 Rocket—Rivalry  
 Rose—Love  
 Rose (Austrian)—Thou art all that is lovely  
 Rose (bridal)—Happy love  
 Rose (burgundy)—Unconscious beauty  
 Rose (cabbage)—Ambassador of love  
 Rose (campion)—Only deserve my love  
 Rose (Carolina)—Love is dangerous  
 Rose (china)—Beauty is always new  
 Rose (christmas)—Please relieve my anxiety  
 Rose (coral)—Admiration for your accomplishments and talents  
 Rose (daily)—I aspire to your smile  
 Rose (damask)—Brilliant complexion; freshness  
 Rose (deep red)—Bashful shame  
 Rose (dog)—Pleasure and pain  
 Rose (Guelder)—Age; winter  
 Rose (Lavender)—Pure love  
 Rose (May)—Precocity  
 Rose (Multiflora)—Grace  
 Rose (Mundi)—Variety  
 Rose (Musk)—Capricious beauty  
 Rose (Pink)—Friendship; graceful beauty  
 Rose (Pompom)—Prettiness  
 Rose (Provence)—My heart is in flames  
 Rose (Red)—Passion; beauty  
 Rose (Red-leaved)—Beauty and prosperity  
 Rose (Red and white together)—Unity  
 Rose (thornless)—Early attachment  
 Rose (Unique)—Call me not beautiful  
 Rose (White)—Purity; the giver is worthy of your love  
 Rose (Withered white)—Transient impressions  
 Rose (Yellow)—Jealousy; decrease in love  
 Rose (York)—War  
 Rosebud (Moss)—Confession of love  
 Rosebud (Red)—Pure and lovely; You are young and beautiful  
 Rosebud (White)—A heart ignorant of love; girlhood  
 Rosemary—Rememberance; Your presence revives me

Roses (Garland of)—Reward of virtue  
Rue—Disdain  
Sage—Domestic virtue  
Sage (Garden)—Esteem  
Saffron—Beware of excess; Do not abuse our relationship  
Saffron (Meadow)—My best days are past  
Salvia (Blue)—I think of you  
Salvia (Red) Forever thine  
Savory—Boldness  
Scabious—Unfortunate love  
Scabious (sweet)—Widowhood  
Scilla (Blue)—Forgive and forget  
Snapdragon—No; presumption  
Snowdrop—Hope  
Sorrel—Affection; parental affection  
Sorrel (wood)—Joy; maternal tenderness  
Southernwood—Bantering; jest  
Spearmint—Warmth of sentiment  
Speedwell—Female fidelity  
Spiked Willow Herb—Pretension  
Spiderwort—Esteem (without love)  
Starwort (American)—Cheerfulness in old age  
Stephanotis—You can boast too much  
Stock—Lasting beauty  
Stock (Ten-week)—Promptness  
Stonecrop—Tranquility  
Straw—Agreement  
Straw (broken)—Rupture of a contract  
Strawberry—Perfect elegance  
Strawberry tree—Esteem (with love)  
Sunflower (dwarf)—Adoration  
Sunflower (Tall)—Haughtiness  
Swallow-Wort—Cure for headache  
Sweet Basil—Good wishes  
Sweetbrier (American)—Simplicity  
Sweetbrier (yellow)—Decrease of love  
Sweet Flag—Fitness  
Sweet William—Gallantry; a smile; finesse  
Sycamore—Curiosity  
Syringa—Memory  
Syringa (Carolina)—Disappointment  
Tamarisk—Crime  
Taragon—Unselfishness  
Tendrils of Climbing Plants—Ties  
Thistle (Scotch)—Retaliation  
Thorn Apple—Deceitful Charms  
Thorns (branch of)—Severity

Thrift—Sympathy  
Thyme—Activity; thriftiness  
Toothwort—Secret love  
Traveler's Joy—Safety  
Tree of Love—Old age  
Trefoil (Birdsfoot)—Revenge  
Trillium Pictum—Modest beauty  
Truffle—Surprise  
Trumpet flower—fame  
Tuberose—Dangerous pleasures  
Tulip—Fame  
Tulip (Red)—Declaration of love  
Tulip (Variegated)—Beautiful eyes  
Tulip (Yellow)—Hopeless love  
Turnip—Charity  
Verbena (White)—Pure; guileless  
Veronica—Fidelity  
Vetch—Shyness  
Violet (Blue)—Faithfulness; love  
Violet (Dame)—Watchfulness  
Violet (Purple)—You occupy my thoughts  
Violet (White)—Innocence; modesty  
Violet (Wild)—Live in idleness  
Violet (Yellow)—Rural happiness  
Virgin's Bower—Filial love  
Wallflower—Fidelity in adversity  
Wheat—Prosperity  
Willow (Creeping)—Forsaken love  
Willow (Water)—Freedom  
Willow (Weeping)—Mourning  
Wisteria—Welcome  
Woodbine—Fraternal love  
Wormwood—Absence  
Yew—Sadness  
Zephyr Flower—Sickness  
Zinnia—Thoughts of an absent friend

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- ❖ On project team for conceptual design of Horseshoe Bend Trail Head, a 73 acre site offering RV camping, tent camping, horseback riding, trails, parking, an arena for rodeos, and all accommodations for horses.
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