

# The Designer

Fall 2013

## 2013 International Landscape Design Award Winners

2013 Landscape Designer of the Year  
Paul Connolly, APLD



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## Residential Merit Award

### Holistic Integration in Connecticut, Greenwich, Connecticut

Matthew Willinger, Professional Member APLD  
Doyle Hermon Design Associates LLC, Greenwich, Connecticut



When a large, aging tree came crashing down on their property, our clients decided that it was time to invest in the landscape of their property in USDA Zone 6. Set upon .731 acres, the site slopes down from back to front and for several years, a broken underground irrigation system had degraded the lower part of the property, and the wet conditions were harmful to existing trees. The site contained an abundance of plant material around the house and along the street, but the plantings were poorly sited and had grown completely out of scale. An inadequate retaining wall did little to encourage outdoor family activity. In addition, a back patio on two levels was awkward and uninviting.

The clients asked for a design to include a large, flat play area for recreation, an organic vegetable garden, and the absence of chemicals in landscape maintenance.

Foremost in our intent was the increased functionality of the site with clearer direction and harmonious, more orderly plantings. The architectural details of the house could be better complemented both in materials and the layout of landscape elements to promote a more integrated relationship between the building and the site. In addition, a large vegetable garden was to be incorporated to fulfill the homeowner's desire for the productivity of the property.

The scope of work included the construction of masonry walls and patio, re-grading, installation of fencing and lighting, and the planting of new formal garden areas. A substantial, level lawn was created for family sport, and the landscape has been ordered to provide distinct areas for various activities. Native Connecticut fieldstone retaining walls at several elevations and axial geometry organize the property. A secret garden below the play lawn runs perpendicular to the house and is surrounded by a deciduous wall of hornbeam which provides unique seasonal interest. One is directed through this garden by conical yews whose dark forms are set off by billowing masses of chartreuse Lady's mantle.

Photo Credits: Matthew Willinger and Eric Covenough



Care was taken to match the specific look of old existing stone walls by sourcing local reclaimed material. The uncomfortable patio was leveled and expanded around a new outdoor fireplace that extends the enjoyment the landscape and also serves as a striking focal point centered on the living room's French doors and a mini-orchard of Macoun apple trees. The fireplace is balanced by boxwood parterres brimming with the blue-violet flowers of Geranium 'Kotzeana'.

The gate to the organic vegetable garden stands centered at the end of a turf pathway between a double border of German iris and periwinkles. Espaliered pear trees in the border along the house provide additional fruit and interest without taking up additional space. A fieldstone ramp to the garden enables easy wheelbarrow access.



A custom-designed three-bin compost system serves for the local disposal of all yard debris and the nourishment of the vegetable garden. In keeping with the designer's desire to avoid waste, a large quantity of existing plant material was lifted on site and successfully reused in the new design. In the choice of new plant material, dependable and low-maintenance plant cultivars were selected, including the perennials and the thorny Mirtosquipo trees now thriving at the formerly wet front of the property. Similarly, larger trees, including century-old waxmains and cedars and mature Japanese maples, have been conserved and will continue to grace the property and neighborhood.



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## Specialty Projects Merit Award

### Dublin Mews House, Dublin, Ireland

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The renovation of this historic property in Dublin, Ireland (USDA Zone 8) represented a landscape architecture endeavor of a distinctly international character. Once functioning as a shelter for carriages and servants, the mews house at the rear of an 1847 Georgian manor in Dublin had become an eyesore in its grander neighborhood with a dilapidated unsafe structure, and a landscape overrun with invasive plants and vines. Before renovations began, the local planning council requested the preservation of the mews house's 1840s neoclassical facade, which added a distinctive physical and stylistic challenge.

The client wanted to maximize the value and functionality of the property as a contemporary residential site, maintain links to the site's history, and utilize up to date energy-saving structural features in construction and low-maintenance landscaping.

Our design intent was to build a modern structure juxtaposed to the Georgian wall. This encouraged a pared down and restrained hand in the design of the outdoor spaces. The new four-bedroom residence consists of two separate buildings that span the width of the narrow property, enabling three distinct garden areas that complement the building's prominent angles. Although each of these spaces was to serve a different function, the landscape designer unified the design through common elements of hardscaping and plant material. Because exterior glass walls were a prominent part of the home, the scheme of the gardens was planned so they would flow directly from the house and break down the division between outdoors and indoors. In addition, problematic grading and drainage challenges had to be addressed.



The simplicity and openness of the front garden area was dictated by the need for maximum parking and the style of building's facade. Composed of a gravel ground with a minimal planting scheme of a Texas hedge and a Cornus tree, the landscape provides a buffer without distraction from the bold glass and dark stone concrete wall of the building. LED in-ground luminaires help direct the visitor through the building to a passageway that slopes downward into a lushly planted central courtyard.

Emerging into this central garden space, one passes through the restored neo-classical wall. A pathway of traditional limestone cut into modern paving shapes, is lined with additional upright herbaceous and leads directly to the glass facade of the main residence. One can also descend stone slab steps of the same local material to a sunken patio off the home's lower level. The descent to the lower level is given dimension by the suspended glass and steel pedestrian bridge that crosses from within the residence to the media building through an existing window frame of the old coach house wall. The steps beside the steps is densely planted with variegated wintercreeper. Climbing jasmine and Virginia creeper soften the vertical surfaces of the enclosed space. The rear garden space is the main outdoor living area and is completely visible from the home.

The yard is divided into two levels connected by steps that echo the floor elevations of the main house. A row of upright herbaceous provide a sense of enclosure. Just off the angular plane of the living room's wall, a stone patio of indigenous limestone leads to an open lawn area at the lower level. Up above, off the bedroom, neatly edged blocks of purple hued perennials surround a gravel path.

Very close collaboration was necessary between the landscape designers and the engineering and architectural firms to incorporate complex drainage requirements into the landscape design. Gravity and pumping solutions, for both foul and storm drainage, had to be integrated into all three green spaces. A unique pedestal system was designed for the lower central courtyard terrace, which allowed a concealed pumping station below to collect and control all stormwater. The use of locally sourced materials and sustainable features such as an underground system for recycled graywater, as well as rooftop solar panels for domestic water heating, were used and contributed to the designer's goal of conserving resources in the installation and future maintenance of the property. The contrasted architectural styles that are dynamically incorporated in the architecture were significant and directed the design decisions of the landscape. Although the green spaces are of minimal size, their elements and layout reflect the juxtaposition of old and new and they greatly enhance the visitor's experience of crossing the threshold between the two.