



SUN-Bo7

The Beauty of Drought:
Ecology and Aesthetics of Planting in
Water-Constrained Landscapes

Sunday, October 22, 2017
2:30 - 4:00 pm

Image: Arizona State University Biodesign Institute by Ten Eyck Landscape Architects

NOTES:

ASLA
LA2017
Common Ground

OVERVIEW:

As global temperatures rise, the intensity and frequency of droughts are expected to increase, creating a wide range of impacts. Illustrated with case studies from across the United States, this session explores the ecology and aesthetics of plantings that embrace and celebrate drought—both periodic and prolonged—to create beautiful, resilient, regionally expressive landscapes.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Provide a cross continental perspective on the challenges and opportunities of creating beautiful and abundant planting design in times of drought.
- Understand the ecology and dynamics of different types of drought and how natural plant communities respond to these challenges.
- Extract practical, real-world tactics from a range of high-profile projects to help designers create more abundant plantings that need less water.
- Discuss the aesthetic and functional challenges of getting clients to embrace a drought-tolerant planting palette.

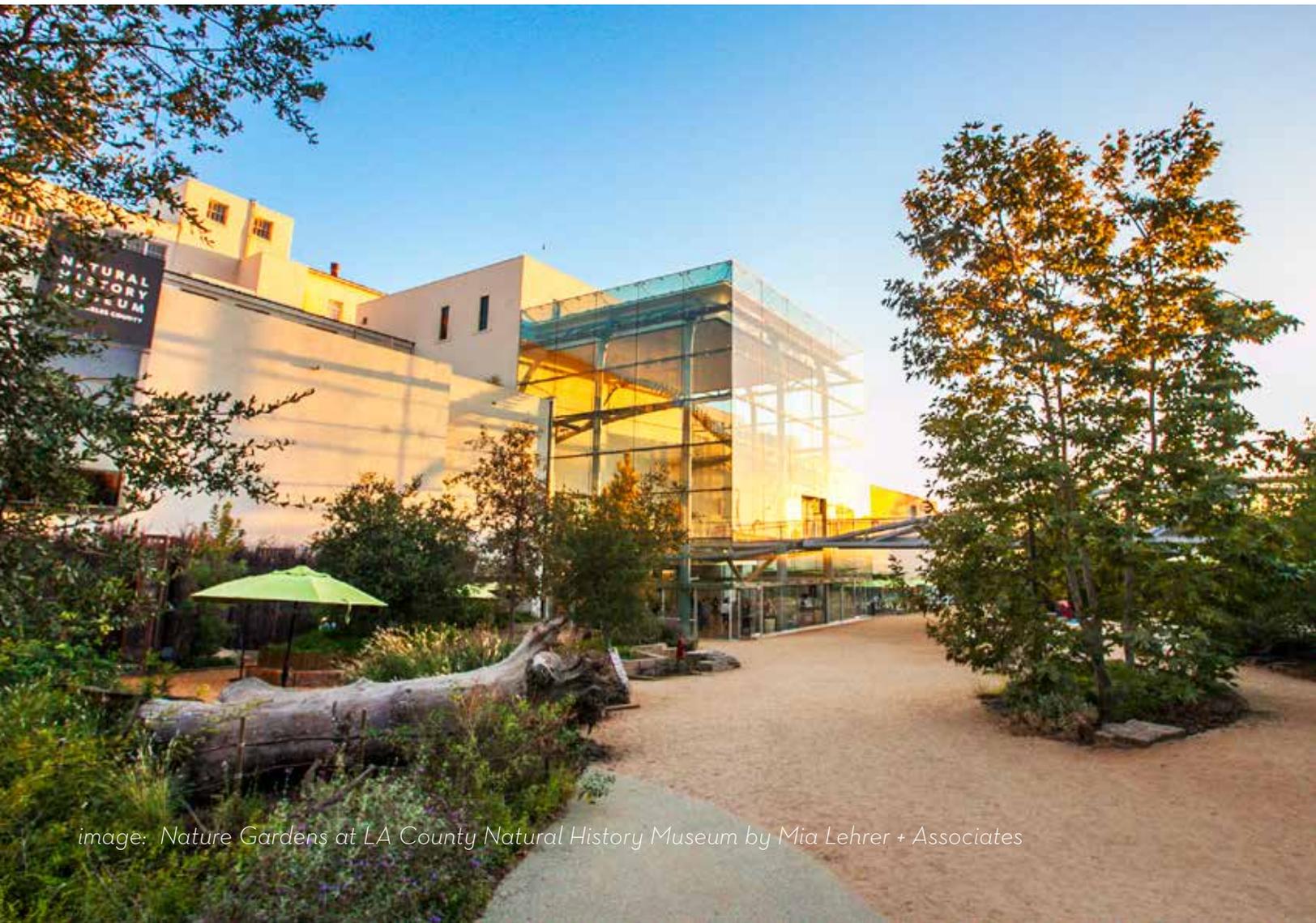


image: Nature Gardens at LA County Natural History Museum by Mia Lehrer + Associates

PRESENTERS:



THOMAS RAINER, ASLA, Principal, Phyto Studio

Thomas is a registered landscape architect, teacher, and author working in Washington, D.C. Thomas, a leading voice in ecological landscape design, has designed landscapes for the U.S. Capitol grounds, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, and The New York Botanical Garden, as well as over 100 gardens from Maine to Florida. He is a celebrated public speaker who has garnered acclaim for his passionate presentations to audiences across the U.S. and in Europe. Thomas serves as a Principal for the landscape architectural and consulting firm Phyto Studio in Washington, D.C. His book, *Planting in a Post-Wild World*, won the 2016 AHS Book of the Year.

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MICHELLE SULLIVAN, ASLA, Principal, Mia Lehrer + Associates

Michelle manages and designs many of the firm's ecologically attuned projects, including the Nature Gardens at Los Angeles County Natural History Museum, and the Robert Redford Conservancy for Southern California Sustainability at Pitzer College. Her background in horticulture and arborist certification root her designs in climate-appropriate strategies. In addition, she manages large visitor-oriented projects such as Dodger Stadium's improvements. Michelle's work focuses on connecting the public to the natural environment, and on making nature's restorative and beautiful qualities tangible through design.

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CHRISTY TEN EYCK, FASLA, Founding Principal, Ten Eyck Landscape Architects

Christy is founding principal of Ten Eyck Landscape Architects based in Austin, Texas and previously Phoenix, Arizona. During a career that has spanned over 35 years, Christy has drawn upon her intuition and knowledge to build a body of work that celebrates the inherent beauty of Texas and the southwest, the culture of its people and the sacred path of water, pioneering contemporary regionalism in the southwest. This ethos is exemplified in the recently constructed 11.5-acre Campus Transformation Project for the University of Texas at El Paso, the first USGBC Sustainable Sites-certified project in the world.

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image: Lancaster bio-retention planters, planted entirely in sand-mix, must withstand extreme drought as well as periodic inundations. Design by Claudia West of Phyto Studio.

SESSION OUTLINE

This talk is focused on a combination of inspiration - the poetics of drought as a means of expression - and practical tools - distilled lessons, combinations, and design strategies.

A. Introduction: The Challenges

The increasing challenge of drought and the need for new approaches to planting design that do more with less resources.

Interactive piece: The three presenters will give a short, interactive reflection on experiences of drought on the east coast, mid-continent, and west coast.

- 1. The challenge of the future: The need for planting design that thrives without supplemental potable water.*
- 2. The challenge of the ecological: The science and dynamics of what drought does to ecosystems and plant health.*
- 3. The challenge of the aesthetic: How early attempts at xeriscaping embraced a philosophy of drought tolerance, but a new approach can embrace a philosophy of drought abundance.*

B. The Alternative: Beyond Succulents - A Toolkit of Planting Types and Strategies for a Drought-Abundance Landscape (Thomas Rainer)

The focus of this session is the ecology of drought and distilling practical tools for designers in any climate.

- 1. An aesthetic ecology: A visual tour of wild plant communities and the ecological principles they use to deal with the stresses of drought.*
- 2. Periodic drought vs. permanent drought: How to adapt plantings to unknown circumstances.*
- 3. The plantsman's toolkit: Essential layers and planting types for covering the ground in water-restricted sites.*
- 4. Strategies for success: Tactics for implementation, establishment, and long-term management.*



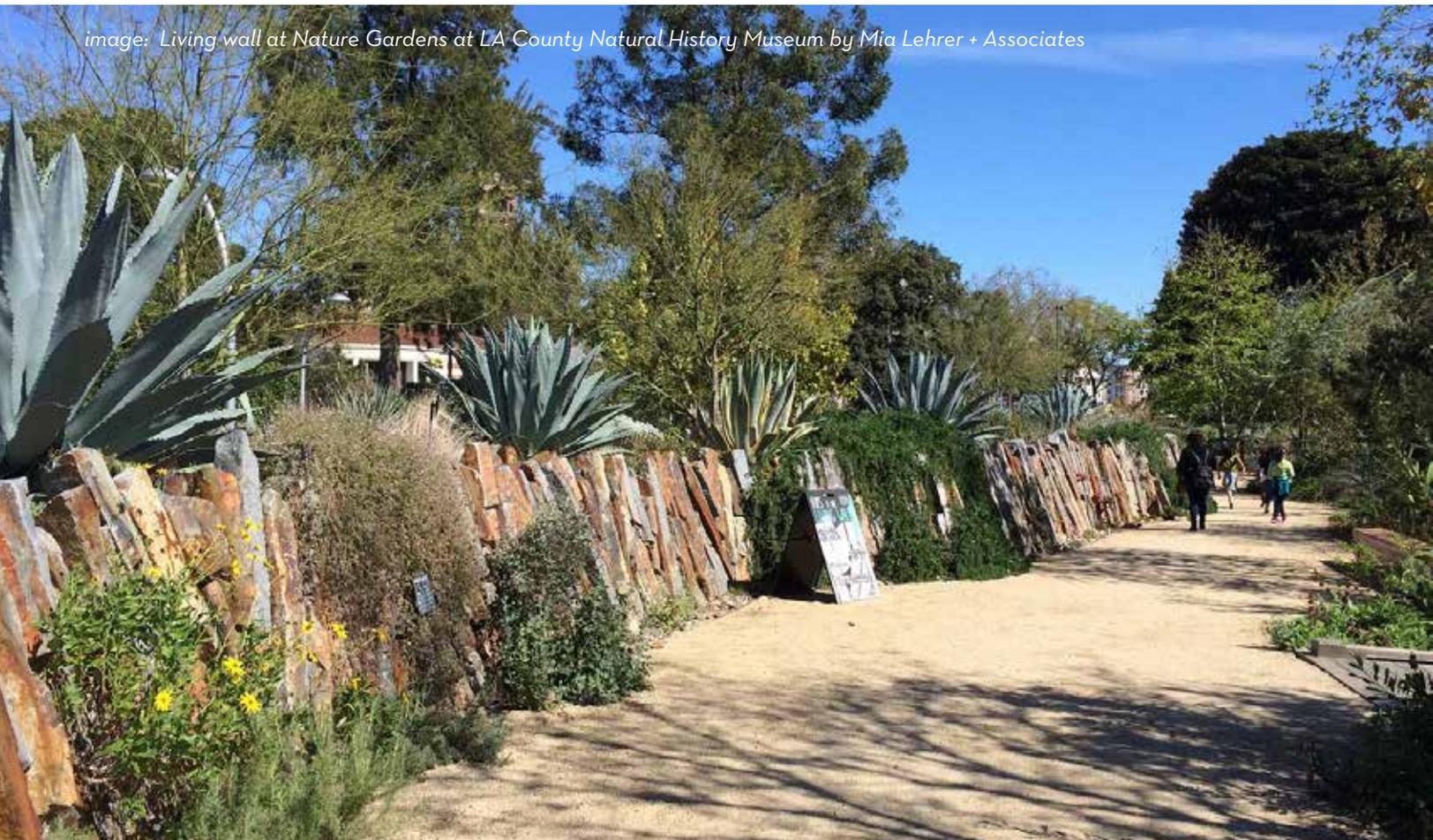
image: Little Bluestem meadow in Martha's Vineyard.

C. Bold Dry Landscapes in Public Spaces (Michelle Sullivan)

The focus of this section is designing for drought at a larger, more public scale. The work of Mia Lehrer + Associates will be used to highlight design at a public and regional scale - emphasizing the broader context of this challenge for our profession.

1. *Southern California context*
 - a. *A semi-arid Mediterranean landscape*
 - b. *Biodiversity hotspot*
 - c. *A dryer reality: embracing our climatic challenges*
2. *Vista Hermosa Park*
 - a. *Testing a new aesthetic*
 - b. *"A Window to the Mountains"*
3. *LA Zoo Parking Lot*
 - a. *Sustainable approaches to managing runoff and public perception*
4. *Nature Gardens at LA County Natural History Museum*
 - a. *Making an urban ecological laboratory*
5. *LA Federal Courthouse*
 - a. *A cross-section of Southern California plant communities in an urban context*
6. *Robert Redford Conservancy*
 - a. *Educating the community in a garden planted with site-collected plants*
6. *Conclusion*
 - a. *Lessons learned*

image: Living wall at Nature Gardens at LA County Natural History Museum by Mia Lehrer + Associates



D. Aesthetics. Harsh Beauty: Celebrating Abundance with Less Water (Christy Ten Eyck)

The focus of this section is how thoughtful design can change the aesthetic of water-constrained landscapes. Design principles will be illustrated with a range of beautiful, high profile projects from across the southwest.

1. *The aesthetic challenge of drought; the aesthetic opportunity of drought*
2. *Drought as a means of creating regionally expressive landscapes*
3. *Harshness as a form of beauty*
4. *Case Studies: Southwest Landscapes*
 - a. *Arizona State University Biodesign Institute*
 - b. *Arizona State University Polytechnic Campus*
 - c. *Pearl Brewery*
 - d. *University of Texas at El Paso*
 - e. *Residential*
4. *Lessons learned*

E. Moderated Discussion and Q&A



image: Arroyo at Arizona State Polytechnic Campus by Ten Eyck Landscape Architects