

Durham Public Library
Special Projects Committee Meeting: Library Garden
Wednesday, January 4, 2023
10-11:30 am
Heritage Room of Durham Public Library

In Attendance: Sheryl Bass (Library Director), John Carroll (Agriculture Commission), Joan Drapeau, Nancy Lambert (Trustee), Rich Reine (Director of Public Works)

Absent: Martie Gooze, Trustee; Erik Waddell, Trustee

1. Outside Evaluation of Library Grounds

a. Four areas were identified as needing improvement. The four areas were prioritized in importance as indicated below. A plan presented to the Trustees will recommend that each area be addressed individually over time in the order indicated below.

i. PHASE 1 - Streetside (East) cultivated area adjacent to the building along with the ball-playing area immediately behind the Library's sign.

1. Joan noted maintenance issues with the cultivated area next to the building. She also thought there could be more attractive plants.
2. Sheryl expressed concern about the safety of kids playing ball in the area circumscribed by Madbury Road and the Library entrance and exit roads. She thought this problem may be rectified now that the Middle School playing fields are available to students.
3. Nancy said that landscaping could be used to address the ball-playing problem. Rich suggested planting a perimeter around the ball-playing island or having islands of cultivated beds within the area would discourage ball playing.

ii. PHASE 2 - Slope behind the Library (North) which currently features exposed foundation and moss along the steep embankment.

1. This area is currently weed-whacked because of its steepness. Nancy thought that a different planting might be more attractive, offer better habitat, and reduce some of the current maintenance requirements.
2. Rich suggested that planting the slope with white clover and/or sedge would offer pollinator habitat and be more attractive.
3. Rich thought that there was potential to improve the look of the foundation with concrete treatments. He noted that plantings adjacent to the foundation could be problematic for the building itself because of potential damage from moisture.

iii. PHASE 3 - Cemetery (West)

1. Joan described the area that serves as an entrance to the cemetery as messy and overgrown in the summer.
2. Sheryl said that according to Janet Mackie, the cemetery may be the burial site of servants or slaves who worked at the residence.
3. The site has potential because of its:
 - a. stone birdbath
 - b. as a viewing area to the planned art installation on the Library's west wall,
 - c. the historic significance of the cemetery.
4. Other items to note about this site:
 - a. The presence of the cemetery makes it a sensitive area and inviting access to the site could be problematic
 - b. Public Works has records on all the cemeteries in Town.
 - c. Landscaping the site would probably be too large a project for Public Works.
 - d. The Janet Mackie and the Durham Historic Association could be consulted about its historic significance and the possibility of a historic marker.

iv. PHASE 4 - Rain Garden (North)

1. Rich thought the rain garden was currently well-maintained but might eventually benefit from additional plantings.
2. Joan recommended looking at the Atlantic Grill in Rye as an excellent example of a rain garden and pollinator garden.

2. Border Garden along parking lot at main entrance to Library (South)

- a. Meeting participants thought this area was mostly fine as is and did not need to be included in the landscaping plan.
- b. Joan said many of the daffodils planted there did not bloom this year and asked if they could be fertilized.
- c. Rich said the decreased blooming may be a result of the recent drought and suggested that the soil be tested before any fertilizer is applied.
- d. Sheryl suggested that soil testing could be incorporated into youth programming.

3. Pollinator Garden(s)

- a. John Carroll shared information about the pollinator garden installed at his home. The design was done by Catherine Neal, retired Horticultural Specialist with UNH Cooperative Extension who now lives in Amherst, MA. The installation was completed by Wentworth Gardens in Rollinsford. Public tours of the garden were conducted by Tom Brightman of DPW.
- b. There was consensus that making a pollinator garden at the Library would be beneficial.
 - i. Such a garden would enhance the habitat for birds, butterflies, bees, and other insects.

- ii. Creating an educational landscape addresses the Library’s educational mission.
 - iii. Sheryl noted opportunities for Library programming to engage with the landscaping projects. Examples include soil testing, planting, etc.
 - iv. A partnership with the Agricultural Commission and Public Works is consistent with the Library’s strategic plan.
 - c. Pollinator gardens require signage and public education.
 - i. John emphasized that pollinator gardens are not planted for their aesthetic appeal and that public education and signage would be required for the project to be acceptable to residents.
 - ii. Nancy suggested that part of what is needed is to transform our sense of aesthetics around the landscape so that we no longer see sterile lawns as attractive and instead value the appearance of more environmentally sound landscapes. The Library’s garden could help educate people about healthy landscapes.
 - iii. John cited the books of entomologist Doug Tallamy from the University of Delaware as being helpful when contemplating pollinator gardens and healthy landscapes. All of his books are available at the Library including “Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants” and “Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your yard.”
 - iv. The Agricultural Commission could possibly partner with the Library on educational signage.

4. Native Plants

- a. Nancy suggested that we direct the designers to use native plants.
- b. Rich noted there are problems with limiting an urban landscape to native plants because there are a limited number of native plants adapted to an urban landscape, so the resulting landscape may not have sufficient diversity and could be vulnerable to pest infestations (e.g., emerald ash borer). He also said it can be difficult to procure native species.
- c. John thought a pollinator garden has to be limited to native species in order to attract insects.
- d. Joan thought it was important to have plants that flower at different times of the year. Nancy suggested that each bed doesn’t have to have flowers throughout the growing season; rather, flowering can occur in different sections of the landscape at different times because the eye is drawn to whatever is flowering. Part of the landscape can be the spring garden, another part the late summer garden, winter garden, etc.

5. Next Steps

- a. It was decided that nurseries that offer free landscape design with the purchase of plant materials should be invited to make a proposal for Phase I.
 - i. Nurseries identified

1. Wentworth Greenhouses –
 - a. John was very happy with their installation work on his garden.
 - b. Nancy will contact them to request a proposal.
 2. Cole Growers – Loudon
 - a. Doug Cole serves on the Board of one of the UNH fraternities on Madbury Road.
 - b. Rich knows him and will contact him about a possible proposal.
 3. Piscataqua Nursery - Lee
 4. Stratham Circle Nursery - Stratham
 5. Studley's - Rochester
 - ii. Local Landscape Designers
 1. Robbie Woodburn
 - iii. Town procurement rules were explained by Rich
 1. Less than \$10,000 does not have to have competing proposals
 2. More than \$10,000 but less than \$25,000 requires three quotes
 3. More than \$25,000 requires a formal bidding process
6. Other items of note
- a. Rich said that when undertaking such projects, it's important to think of them over a longer period and plan for five years from now when the plantings will be larger.
 - b. Sheryl said the woods behind the Library are not currently incorporated in Library programming, but a staff member is newly trained in Nature education and will be offering outdoor programs that might include the woods.
 - c. The Town currently doesn't have any universal library signs directing people to its location.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Lambert