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## March 2012

More than a plot of land, a site opened to landscape construction is the sum of its many parts: its historic uses, soils, water, plant life, and other resources that have become an integral part of the site, whether native or imported. Articles this month look at some specifics of site analysis as well as at the broader framework provided by the Sustainable Sites Initiative™ and a view through the lens of permaculture. Plus, there's an overview of another great ELA Conference. Happy Birthday, ELA!



### Site Considerations When Reclaiming Previously Developed Land by Anja Ryan

Throughout New England's cities and towns there are many uncovered opportunities to reclaim previously developed land. Forgotten over the years, old railroad beds, burned-out mill foundations, and vacant lots have become overgrown with successive vegetation and been vandalized and used as dumping grounds. Sometimes structures remain, beckoning us from a not so distant past. As our urban centers start to see a new renaissance through the "smart growth" movement gains

and as people from the suburbs move back to urban areas, the land these abandoned places occupy is becoming more valuable. [\[click to continue...\]](#)

### The Consciously Designed Life - Living with the Active Voice of Permaculture

#### Part 2: Conscious Design in the Yard and Landscape by Lauren Chase Rowell

*" That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics." -Aldo Leopold*



Dalton's Pasture is a historical name our family has chosen to call our nineteen-acre, permaculture "farmstead" in honor of the folks who first planted their roots in the soils and harvested its timbers to build the farmhouse. We say they did the "really hard work" by building the post and beam structure, clearing the land with an axe and team of horses, and surrounding the fields and pasture with over a mile of stone walls. Here they eked out an existence, raised a family, and died as the cemetery on the northeastern corner of the property affirms. [\[click to continue...\]](#)

by CeCe Haydock

The Sustainable Sites Initiative™, or SITES™ for short, was born from a need for a nationwide, voluntary rating system for landscape construction. The collaborative effort involved forty groups, with the Lady Bird Johnson Wildlife Center, the American Society of Landscape Architects, and the U.S. Botanic Garden as lead partners, and the rating system was codified in the *Guidelines and Performance Benchmarks 2009*. In May 2010, over 150 projects from 34 states as well as from Canada, Iceland, and Spain were chosen as part of an international pilot project program to evaluate the new SITES™ rating system for landscapes both with and without buildings. [\[click to continue...\]](#)

### The Patina of Found Materials

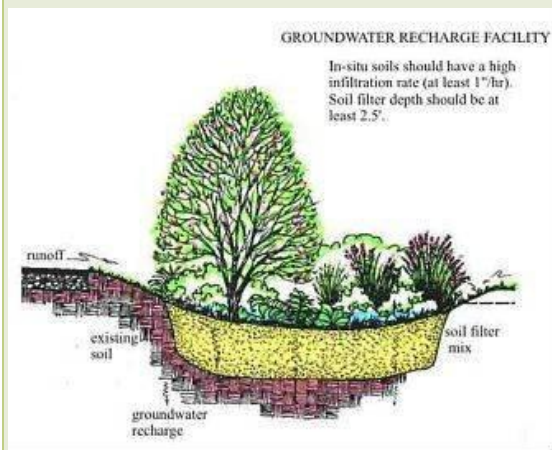
Text by Ben Crouch

Photos by Kimberly Moa

The use of environmentally friendly materials is becoming widely accepted in all trades. Eco-friendly products are common on the shelves of every garden store. Most people have a favorable view of the branding. Yet, a more environmentally friendly approach to landscaping often involves skipping



the shelf with the new products and instead seeking found and recovered materials. [\[click to continue...\]](#)



### Bioretention Soils

by Tom Barry

Stormwater runoff has become an increasing environmental concern as urbanization of our society has created massive areas of impervious surfaces that flood our storm drains and waterways with pollutant laden water. Stormwater management techniques are gaining popularity in urban environments to offset this "paved paradise" syndrome. One of the techniques that

has shown promise is bioretention. Bioretention cells are depressions in the landscape that capture stormwater before it can enter waterways. Stormwater is collected and percolated back down into the ground where it is filtered through a media. The components of this media, or bioretention soil, play an important role in the success or failure of the cell. Ongoing research and technology has increased the capabilities of these soils to succeed. [\[click to continue...\]](#)

**Eighteenth ELA Conference & Eco-Marketplace**



Engaging and informative speakers, knowledgeable exhibitors, great books, good food...all are significant parts of the ELA Conference, but the real value of the Conference is greater than the sum of its parts. Get rooms full of people with the same concerns and passions, and you find insuppressible energy - that is the ELA Conference & Eco-Marketplace. And nearly 400 people contributed to that energy over the two days of this year's Conference.

Martha Schmidt manages an IPM greenhouse full of tropical plants destined for research by USDA scientists and has attended the ELA Conference

twice in recent years traveling from Maryland. Martha says she attends "to exchange ideas with other down-to-earth, like-minded folk who are as committed to tending to nature's ecological bottom line as they are to their economic bottom line. Both times I have been pleasantly surprised to meet other ELA members from Maryland." Martha also signed up for ELA's first Conference field trip to Smith College. "I had heard about Smith College's conservatory while I was a student at UMass/Amherst in plant and soil sciences..., but never took the opportunity to visit until this year on the spring bulb tour arranged by ELA. It was a treat. The Smith Conservatory is an undeservedly well-kept secret of western Massachusetts."

This year, ELA celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> birthday as part of the Conference. Sponsored by [Greenscapes](#), the party gave new members of ELA a chance to hear from founding members about the early days of ELA. Look on the ELA website for a slideshow that encapsulates ELA's 20 years. Founding member, Sue Storer, provided a history of the evolution of ELA and, with audience participation, closed with a Swedish Birthday song. You may read the text of Sue's comments [here](#).

ELA thanks the many, many people who made another ELA Conference possible, including Sponsors: Greenscapes, Groundscapes Express, Herbanatur, and North Creek Nurseries; co-hosts: The Conway School and New England Chapter of APLD; many dedicated volunteers; and the talented committee that works its magic year after year. ELA is already looking forward to the 19<sup>th</sup> Conference in 2013 and hopes to see you there!



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### March Gleanings

[Invasive Plant Management Certification Program](#), URI Bay Campus, Narragansett, RI; March 21-22, 9:00am-4:00pm.

[The 30<sup>th</sup> National Pesticide Forum](#). Yale University School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, New Haven, CT; March 30-31.

[Neighborhood Plant Exchange](#). 3811 Lakeshore Ave, Oakland, CA; March 31, noon-4:00pm.

[Rhode Island Residential Rain Garden Training Program](#), East Providence Public Library; April 3,

8:00am-5:00pm.

Pollinator Conservation Planning Short Course, Vernon Connecticut; April 12, 9:00am-4:00pm. Groundworks Lawrence seeks instructors and presenters for classroom and hands-on practice for a Sustainable Landscaping and Brownfield Parkscaping Training Program. Contact Kathryn Prybylski at [PrybylWorks@gmail.com](mailto:PrybylWorks@gmail.com). This program is a joint venture with the Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board and is part of an Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training Grant funded by the Environmental Protection Agency.

APLD has produced a new Guide to Sustainable Soils that covers the physical, chemical, and biological properties of soil and their interactions

Interested in Biodiversity, Landscape Change, and Human Health? You can join a new listserv aimed at facilitating information sharing, communication, and discussion. Contact Greg Hellyer: [hellyer.greg@epa.gov](mailto:hellyer.greg@epa.gov) or Montira Pongsiri: [pongsiri.montira@epa.gov](mailto:pongsiri.montira@epa.gov).

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We hope that you enjoy this edition of the ELA newsletter.

We welcome your comments at [ela.info@comcast.net](mailto:ela.info@comcast.net).

Maureen Sundberg, ELA Newsletter Editor