landscape architecture

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Visitors walk through the Caribbean Garden, designed by Robert E. Truskowski Inc., one of five landscape architecture firms that worked together on the plans for the Naples Botanical Garden in Florida and designed the spaces within it.

VANESSA ROGERS PHOTOGRAPHY

IMAGINE LYING IN A HAMMOCK, surrounded by lush plantings, looking out toward a lake in the distance. You hear the sound of steel drums and the clunk of two bocce balls colliding. Farther down the trail, children run through a fountain, collect bugs, and get their clothes dirty sculpting the sandy soil. An elderly art aficionada walks her dog around a pond, taking in the colorful mural and sculptures, while her boyfriend, a plant enthusiast, peruses the bromeliads.

While the February day I visited the Naples Botanical Garden was a bit chilly by Florida standards and no kids were splashing about, it was still quite active. The garden was clearly more than just a museum of plants.

It aims to be a "world-class paradise," proclaims its web site. "A place of bliss. A region of supreme delight. A state of happiness." The garden aspires to be a community gathering place—a space to spend happy hour listening to jazz, to warm up by a bonfire on the darkest day of the year, to paint, and to picnic.

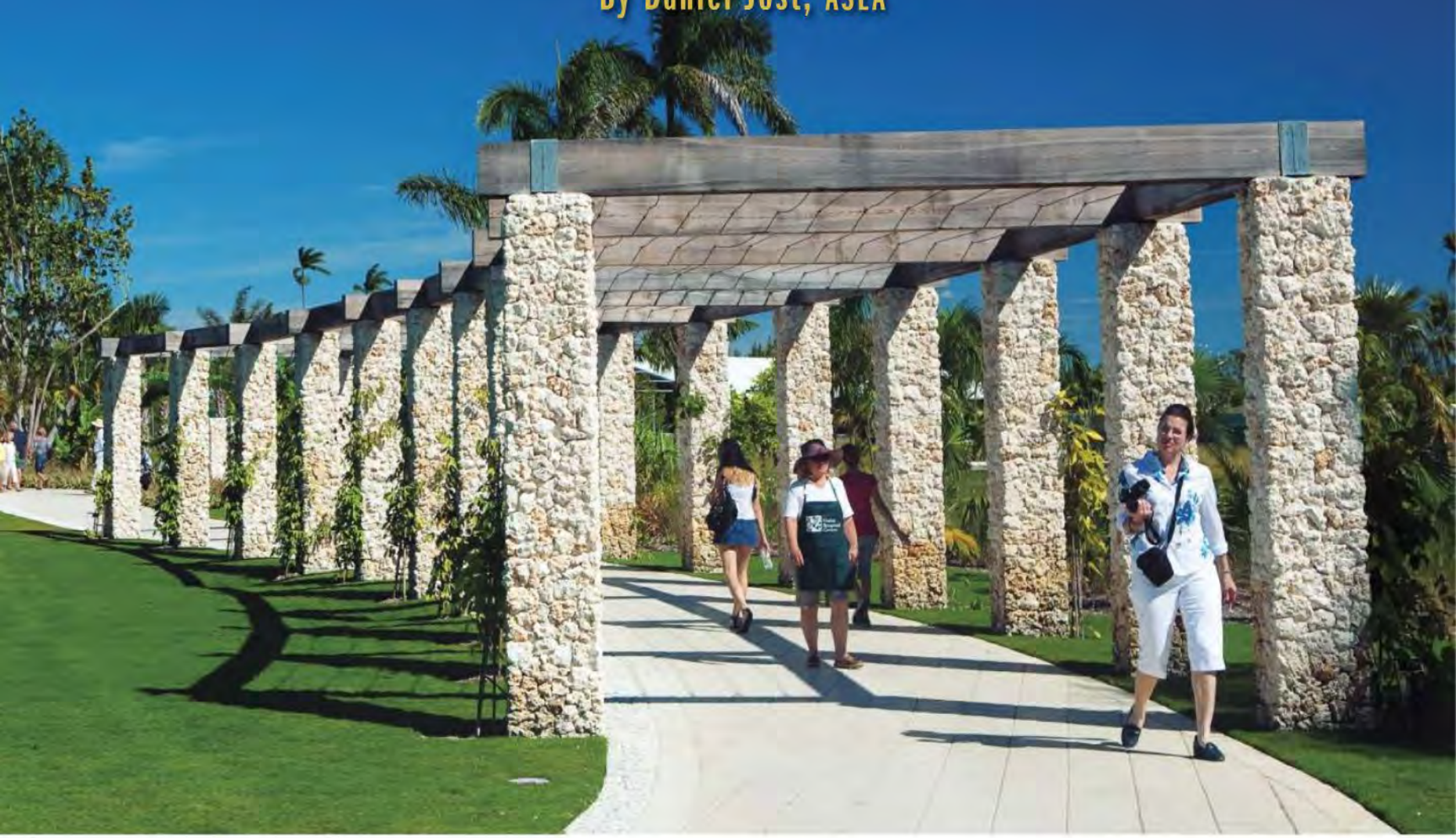
Some older botanical gardens were organized taxonomically without much concern for aesthetics, explains Brian Holley, the garden's executive director. Modern botanical gardens are usually more artfully designed landscapes. "I think the next step is to look at how people engage in the garden," says Holley. "We're trying to humanize botanical gardens .... Nothing is more delightful to me than those kids playing bocce ball and the people in hammocks."

Attracting families with a small garden for children is nothing new. Performances within botanical gardens are also becoming more common. But few botanical gardens provide lawn games, musical instruments, and special days for walking dogs, as the Naples Botanical Garden does. Holley notes that two of the landscape architects who worked on the project, Robert E. Truskowski, ASLA, and Herb Schaal, FASLA, of AECOM, were particularly

Humanizing the Botanical Garden

The Naples Botanical Garden in southwest Florida is not just a pretty plant museum.

By Daniel Jost, ASLA



strong advocates for these sorts of amenities. Not only did Schaal apply this thinking to his own work, but Holley had him brainstorm ideas for activating other parts of the garden as well.

Of course, this doesn't mean Holley thinks botanic gardens should abandon their more traditional educational role. "This feeling that you can create gardens that are fun and funky (and maybe a little silly sometimes) doesn't mean you can't have great collections and great research," he explains. In fact the Naples Botanical Garden is scheduled to become the home of the national collection of the Plumeria Society of America. It has also developed a partnership with Florida Gulf Coast University, which just completed new classrooms and research facilities on site.

While the activities within the landscape are clearly visible, the educational aspects are somewhat hidden at first glance. "The

The Naples Botanical Garden strives to be a "world-class paradise." In addition to its garden for children, there are hammocks, *above,* drums, and a game lawn. Days are set aside for artists, *below right,* for people to bring their dogs, *below,* and for events such as a large bonfire to celebrate the winter solstice.

docents are fantastic, and that avoids the issue of creating this garden of signs," says Holley. Trees and ground covers are labeled with small signs, but there are few larger signs at chest or eye level. It's an approach grounded in the garden's vision. "If you constantly have something you are supposed to read, it really interrupts that feeling of relaxation," says Holley.

Grounded in the Florida Landscape

The Naples Botanical Garden traces its roots back to 1993, when a group of eight local garden enthusiasts came together with the idea of founding a botanical garden. A gift from the Harvey Kapnick family in 2000 provided the funding necessary to secure a 170-acre site on the edge of Naples, not far from the Gulf of Mexico.

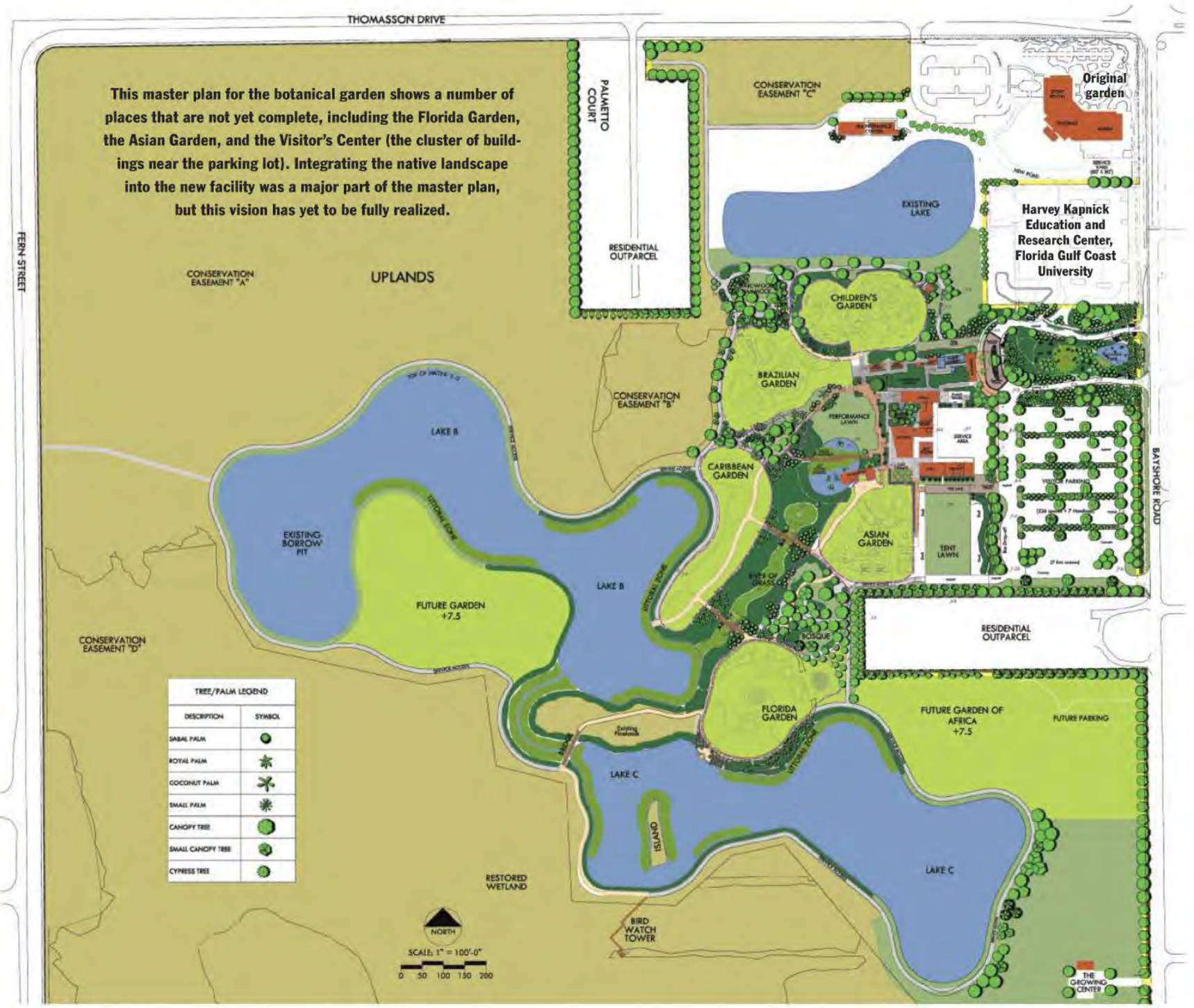
The site included fragments of many different native ecosystems; however, much of the area had been cleared for development years earlier and was taken over by invasives such as Brazilian peppertree *(Schinus terebinthifolius),* Australian pine *(Casuarina equisetifolia),* and punktree *(Melaleuca quinquenervia),* which has displaced saw grass meadows throughout the Everglades.

Soon after the deal was closed, a small strip mall at the northwestern corner of the site was converted into a temporary visitor center, and a one-acre garden was developed on a parking lot adjacent to the building. (Nearly 400 trees and palms found in the garden today were first nursed in this space.)

But after a couple of years, the project was at an impasse. In 2004, the board overseeing the garden approached Holley, who had recently led an expansion at the Cleveland Botanical Garden, to push the project forward. For a year and a half, Holley split his time between the two gardens, then came on as the full-time executive director at Naples in the fall of 2006.

Holley was not satisfied with the previous master planning done for the site. "I didn't want a cookie-cutter garden," says Holley. So, rather than working with a single firm that specializes in botanical garden design, he decided to engage a number of talented landscape

VANESSA ROGERS PHOTOGRAPHY, TOP AND BOTTOM RIGHT; COURTESY NAPLES BOTANICAL GARDEN, BOTTOM LEFT



COURTESY GOETZ + STROPES LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS INC.

architects to work together on the master plan and develop individual gardens that would have a unique feel—the Millennium Park approach. Holley enlisted Schaal; Truskowski; Raymond Jungles, FASLA; Ellin Goetz, FASLA; and Made Wijaya to design the gardens, and he hired Lake|Flato to design a new visitor's center.

Holley says quite a bit of time was spent orienting the design team to the area. "So often, the temptation in Florida is to be of somewhere else," says Goetz, whose firm, Goetz + Stropes Landscape Architects Inc., is based in Naples. "We're into this Mediterranean BS.... What I found stunning is everyone who came from other parts of the country was really appreciative of the beauty of the natural world [here]."

"They set the direction that we really had to make the core of the garden give the visitor a sense of place," says Holley. In addition to preserving and restoring a 90-acre preserve, the landscape architects used pieces of native Florida landscape to weave together gardens with plants from Brazil, the Caribbean, and Asia. The Children's Garden would take its cues from native ecosystems, and a garden would be dedicated to Florida plants. This sense of place would be especially strong at the visitor's center, which would be inspired by Florida's vernacular architecture and the Sarasota School of Architecture, a forerunner to today's green construction movement.

The Naples Botanical Garden originally planned to open its doors in fall 2010, with the entire garden in place. However,

those plans changed after Florida's housing bubble burst in 2006, followed by the major stock market crash two years later. As philanthropic giving dried up, it became clear that the garden would be unable to raise the amount of money needed to be completed on schedule.

However, the economic downturn did present opportunities. The cost of construction dropped, and a large number of high-quality plants were for sale that had been sitting in nurseries since residential construction stalled.

Using the $33 million the garden had raised already, crews began clearing the invasives. They dug out a large lake, using the fill to raise the elevation of all the gardens to at least seven and a half feet above sea level so that a storm surge would not leave the soils inundated with salt, a serious concern given the garden's proximity to the gulf.

The board fast-tracked construction of the first three gardens—the Children's Garden, the Brazilian Garden, and the Caribbean Garden—opening them to the public last November. The Asian Garden by Wijaya and the Florida Garden by Goetz are set to open within the next year. However, the visitor's center and much of its surrounding landscape are on hold until more funding becomes available. Instead, a bright pink double-wide trailer serves as a temporary visitor's center and gift shop.

The preserve area is also open to visitors. A birding tower designed by Lake|Flato provides a place to look out over the wetlands. Some upland habitat was preserved as well, which is rare near the coast, as it is often developed in favor of preserving wetlands that are protected. "That little remnant of pine was very important to us," says Holley, pointing to a small area covered with pine trees. "Even with aerial photos, it was hard to know it was here. The melaleuca was so prolific. We realized we could move the lake edge and save a whole stand of pine." There is also an island within the lake, created as a roosting area for birds.

Much of the native core of the garden itself, however, is not yet implemented. While a beautiful "river" of Jamaican saw grass *(Cladium mariscus)* and other native species can be found near the far edge of the site, with boardwalks through it (see front cover image), the current entry experience is somewhat generic. Today's visitors never really have a chance to establish a sense of place before they move on to the more exotic gardens. The parking lot, planted with native species, does not really provide a sense of immersion—its rain garden, while attractive, is not designed to be appreciated on foot. Funding hopefully will be secured so that the original intent can be realized. Celebrating the natural beauty of Southwest Florida as you enter the botanical garden would make for a memorable experience.

Meanwhile, the opening of the Florida Garden later this year will make an important statement by showing locals that a natural preserve isn't the only place where Florida natives can shine. Small, residential scale gardens will demonstrate how home owners can integrate natives into their own properties. They'll be able to see that there's more to gardening than the "Mediterranean BS."

A birding tower by Lake|Flato Architects, *opposite*, provides a place to survey the native landscape, which was once overrun by melaleuca. Both wetland and upland habitats were restored and are being managed to discourage such invasive species from taking them over in the future. The parking lot drains into a series of bioswales, *above*, which then flow into a larger rain garden.

PROJECT CREDITS **Client:** Naples Botanical Garden (Brian Holley, Brian Galligan, Chad Washburn, Rich Lewis, Greg Kessler). **Owner's representative:** RhodesDahl, Charleston, South Carolina (John Carson, Linda Rhodes, Vickie Dahl). **Landscape architecture/planning:** **Children's Garden:** AECOM (formerly EDAW), Fort Collins, Colorado (Herb Schaal, FASLA; Megan Moore; Craig Russell) in collaboration with Goetz + Stropes Landscape Architects Inc.; **planning documents/river of grass/entry rain garden/parking bioswales/Florida Garden (not complete):** Goetz + Stropes Landscape Architects Inc., Naples, Florida (Ellin Goetz, ASLA; Jerry Stropes; Bill Bromley); **Asian Garden (not complete):** PT Wijaya Tribwana International, Bali, Indonesia (Made Wijaya); **Brazilian Garden:** Raymond Jungles Inc., Miami (Raymond Jungles, FASLA); **Caribbean Garden:** Robert E. Truskowski Inc., Laguna Beach, California (Robert Truskowski, ASLA). **Architecture/planning/birding tower:** Lake|Flato Architects, San Antonio, Texas (Ted Flato, Robert Harris, Tenna Florian). **Architecture/garden structures:** David Corban, Naples, Florida. **Geotechnical engineer:** Forge Engineering Inc., Naples, Florida. **Structural engineer:** Gary Foreman, Fort Myers, Florida. **Civil engineer:** Wilson Miller, Naples, Florida (Jared Brown, David Goodman). **Environmental consultant:** Turrell, Hall, and Associates, Naples, Florida (Tim Hall). **Graphic and interpretation design:** ESI, New York (Ed Schlossberg, Kris Haberman). **Sitework:** Mitchell & Stark Construction Co., Naples, Florida. **General contractor:** Kraft Construction, Naples, Florida. **Landscape contractors:** **Brazilian and Caribbean gardens:** Dias Landscapes, Boynton Beach, Florida; **site and Florida landscape:** O'Donnell Landscapes Inc., Estero, Florida; **Children's Garden:** Valley Crest, Seffner, Florida. **Water features in Brazilian Garden:** Legacy Fountains, Naples, Florida. **Children's Garden structures:** TMD Construction Company, Fort Myers, Florida. **Brazilian mural installation:** Siena Marble and Granite, Naples, Florida. **Paving:** Keyestone Interlocking Paving, Naples, Florida.

VANESSA ROGERS PHOTOGRAPHY, OPPOSITE: DANIEL JOST, ASLA, THIS PAGE

The Children's Garden

To enter the Children's Garden, I pass under a series of palmettos, interlaced to form a tunnel. For a young child, this must feel like entering another world.

An eager volunteer greets visitors and tells them about the garden. Kids are generally given free rein to experience the place as they choose, and this volunteer is here, at least partially, to let parents know that it's okay to loosen the leash—that no one will be angry if their child runs off the trail.

Highlights of the Children's Garden include a tree house, *top,* and a play fountain designed to evoke a natural spring, *above.* A small house, *left,* known as the "Cracker House," celebrates Florida's early pioneers and encourages make-believe.

VANESSA ROGERS PHOTOGRAPHY, TOP AND BOTTOM LEFT; COURTESY NAPLES BOTANICAL GARDEN, BOTTOM RIGHT

"Nothing's off-limits here, really," says Mary Porter, the volunteer. "You can sit down and relax and the children can go free."

The Children's Garden is a place where the kind of freedom I experienced as a child can be simulated —at least to a point. The entire area is enclosed, so if the parents hang out near the entry, their children can't get very far. Small spaces within the garden also have clear boundaries, so parents can keep track of their young children without hovering.

That said, eliminating hovering and encouraging parents to let their children enjoy themselves may take time. During our visit, Ellin Goetz hears one of the parents yell: "Don't touch!" "I want to say of course you can touch," says Goetz. "You're supposed to touch."

This is the 20th children's garden designed by Schaal of AECOM's Fort Collins, Colorado, office, but the first in Florida. He worked closely with Goetz of the local firm Goetz + Stropes Landscape Architecture, who provided valuable insight into local culture, chose and sourced many of the plants found in the garden, and supervised construction.

Schaal says this garden is not a playground. "There are millions of playgrounds and this was a chance to do something different," he explained in a phone interview. "[We wanted children] to be able to play in an environment that has bugs, that you can get dirty in, where the wood is real and the rocks are real rocks." (There are a few exceptions to the rock rule including a concrete waterfall/cave where Schaal says real rock would have been impractical.)

Visitors enter the Children's Garden through a series of saw palmettos, interlaced to form a tunnel, *above*. A "fire tower," *left*, allows children and adventurous adults to survey a small area representing Florida's grasslands, where fire is an important part of the ecosystem. The tree house was incorporated into the topography, *below left*, so it could be ADA accessible. This makes it feel a bit less like a tree house and more like a terrace.

DANIEL JOST, ASLA, TOP AND CENTER; VANESSA ROGERS PHOTOGRAPHY, BOTTOM

Juan Ponce de León, the European explorer who "discovered" Florida, may have never found the "fountain of youth," but its namesake is one of the first things children discover when they enter the garden, which brims with references to Florida's ecology and history. It's a Tuesday in February—the water is too cold for the locals—so only a few adventurous tourists approach it. However, Goetz says this area is quite popular during the hot summer months. The fountain evokes a natural spring.

To the left are a butterfly house and a vegetable garden where kids can learn about healthy eating. To the right, a tree house provides a place to look out over the space. My eyes are drawn to the giant strangler fig integrated into this structure. This expressive, nonnative tree was moved here from elsewhere on site. The ability to relocate large trees without much trouble is one of the perks of working in Florida, says Schaal.

The tree house is accessible from the top of a hill—the same hill integrated into the Brazilian Garden. The way the structure is integrated makes it feel more like a terrace than a tree house when you are in the space, taking away a little of the magic, but there is an "adventure tower," a series of staggered platforms completely enclosed by barriers, where children can feel the true tree house spirit. The tree house also includes a rope bridge. Tree houses can end up being static spaces if you don't provide some interest, says Schaal, and the swaying of the bridge adds excitement for a small child.

From the heavily shaded "hardwood hammock" area surrounding the tree house, I walk through a series of vignettes representing a variety of Florida ecosystems—a grove of gumbo-limbos, a cypress swamp, mangroves, a grassland, and a sandy beach. Schaal says the "trees to sea" theme was suggested by Thomas Hecker, the garden's former horticulturist, who provided sketches made by his children and collected images of the Florida landscape.

Through a series of collaborative workshops in Naples, the landscape architects expanded on that idea. They added mounds of shells, resembling those once created by the native Calusa people, with signs that encourage kids to dig. They added chickees, small houses with palm thatched roofs that resemble those built by the Seminole and Miccosukee peoples. One of the most popular areas for children to play is a miniature house with a small garden in front, called the "Cracker House." The poor, white frontiersmen and cowboys that settled Florida before the invention of air-conditioning were often called "Crackers," and many of their ancestors now wear this label as a badge of pride.

Brooms, watering cans, and other props are provided for children to play with, to encourage make-believe. "[The kids] love sweeping," says Goetz. She tells me about a woman who was originally skeptical about the garden, but quickly changed her tune. "My kids have swept it out 16 times," the woman told Goetz.

The garden is not just about imaginative play. There are obstacles throughout that encourage small children to take risks and learn to overcome their fears. The landscape architects provided stepping-stones, a hill to roll down, a net that allows you to crawl over a bed of grass representing the Everglades, and a second "adventure tower"—designed to resemble a fire tower—overlooking the coastal grassland, where fire is an important part of the ecosystem.

"We try to make everything look adventurous, but we make sure it's extra safe," says Schaal. To this end, the designers applied playground safety standards throughout most of the site. For instance, the "fire tower" is surrounded by a subtle use zone filled with engineered wood mulch, as are a number of places a child might try to climb—including an alligator statue.

The Children's Garden also serves an educational purpose. In Schaal's opinion, a children's garden should not just force feed the kids a lot of facts; rather, it should encourage an appreciation of nature and leave them wanting more. "The bottom line for us is to create a place where kids can learn to love the outdoors," says Schaal. "Rachel Carson has a wonderful quote: 'It's not half so important to *know* as to *feel*. If *facts* are the *seeds* that later produce knowledge or wisdom, then the *emotions* and the *impressions* of the senses are the *fertile soil* in which the seeds must grow.'"

The butterfly house, *top,* is popular with parents, but children seem to prefer the less-structured areas where they can run free, *above,* or play imaginative games. A map of the Children's Garden, designed by AECOM in collaboration with Goetz + Stropes Landscape Architects, shows how it references Florida's natural ecosystems and cultural landscapes, *opposite.*

VANESSA ROGERS PHOTOGRAPHY, TOP: COURTESY NAPLES BOTANICAL GARDEN, BOTTOM

"Nothing's off-limits here, really. You can sit down and relax and the children can go free." —Mary Porter

Construction Detailing

HAND PUMP: The Cracker House has a hand pump out front where children can fill watering cans. But though the water is meant for plants, it is potable, unlike most of the irrigation used on site. "We have to be careful with these kinds of features," says Herb Schaal, FASLA, of AECOM. "The kids will always end up drinking out of the spout, and the adults will actually encourage them to."

SIMPLE FOUNTAIN SOLUTION: At the Children's Garden tall irrigation posts typically used for agricultural applications are part of the play experience, providing an inexpensive fountain during the summer months. The posts are located near the sand area and work on a timer, keeping the sand nice and moist for sculpting. As with the hand pump, the water that comes out of these posts is not recycled, but potable water. There is no drain to collect the water and cycle it back through a system, so it uses more water than most fountains. However, the water is not entirely wasted. It drains to the man-made lake nearby where it is recycled for irrigation elsewhere on site.

NET CRAWL: The net crawl allows children to "crawl like a spider" over an area of tall native grass without completely destroying the grass. "We learned from another project that the spacing between the ropes needed to be less than four inches rather than greater than nine inches," says Schaal. "In between four and nine inches, that's where there's a chance they'd get their head stuck. When we [specified] the nine-inch [net], it was too adventurous for little kids. The four-inch net is boring for bigger kids but that's okay because this is meant for the smaller kids." Age seems to be less important than their experience level. "I was there [and I saw a girl]—I bet she was eight years old," says Schaal. "She got halfway across it and freaked out and had to back off with her parents' help. The next minute there was a four-year-old who just ran right across it."

The fall from the net is less than two feet. However, the surface beneath and around the net crawler is still designed to provide impact attenuation. The tall grass grows in 30 inches of pea gravel partially inundated with water. "The typical river of grass plant is saw grass *(Cladium* spp.), but we couldn't use that because it's too abrasive," says Schaal. They ended up using *Eleocharis interstincta* (knotted spikerush), *Eleocharis cellulosa* (Gulf Coast spikerush), and *Juncus roemerianus* (needlegrass rush). However, the needlegrass rush was a bit too pointy, so they're slowly removing it and allowing the other species to take over. Maintenance is also necessary to keep the grass beneath the net from overtaking it.

PRESSURE-TREATED WOOD: The posts for the tree house are pressure-treated timbers. "There was concern about toxic chemicals—that they'd be risky for children," says Schaal, "even though the EPA allows [pressure-treated wood] and says it's safe. There's too much public exposure with kids to risk any sort of controversy so we're using all cedar posts on [our latest project]. In Naples, we wrapped the pressure-treated posts with a wood lattice to prevent them from being touched where they are within reach."

BENTONITE POOLS: The landscape architects lined the pools at the Children's Garden with bentonite. "It's a kind of clay and you get it in powder form," says Schaal. "It's a great sealer, and because we wanted to grow the cypress trees in the water, we needed a dynamic sealant that would seal around the roots and prevent extensive leakage.

"When we proposed [using bentonite] to the gardens, they talked to all the water feature contractors in the area. They said we needed to do a PVC liner and cover it with concrete, which was really out of our budget." Schaal brought in a soils engineer he had worked with in the past, who spoke favorably of the material, and eventually they found a contractor who had experience installing it. So far, it has been a great success. Now they are using it for other ponds within the project.

RAIN GARDENS (PARKING LOT): The parking lot is almost entirely curbless. The entire space drains into a rain garden, through a series of smaller planting strips between the rows of parking. The planting strips are about two feet below the finished grade of the parking lot. For a previous project, Goetz says she used riprap for the edges of these strips, but the concrete block walls used here are visually much less intrusive and allow the native saw grass planted in these areas to shine.

COURTESY NAPLES BOTANICAL GARDEN

The Caribbean Garden

Visually, the Caribbean Garden by Truskowski is not the most striking of the gardens completed thus far. The planting budget was somewhat smaller and the plants used were not quite as mature as those found in the Children's Garden and the Brazilian Garden, which look as if they've been here for years.

Yet it already has an energy to it that is quite intriguing —more than any of the other gardens, it encourages you to make yourself feel at home. It is here that I spy the steel drum, the hammocks, and the bocce set. "I was worried that children would go out there and wouldn't have something to do," says Truskowski by phone. "I find you go to a botanic garden, but there's no place to really sit and enjoy."

The Caribbean Garden is located on a relatively flat piece of land next to the water, which seems appropriate given its subject matter. Over the years, Truskowski has worked on a number of very high-end residential projects in the Caribbean and has become familiar with the region. Like the other gardens, the Caribbean Garden doesn't just reference the plants of its namesake region; it makes cultural references as well.

"I was looking to give people a vignette of the Caribbean 50, 75, 100 years ago," says Truskowski. The Caribbean Garden does not use electric lighting; rather, the soft glow of tiki torches enlivens the garden during evening events. When Truskowski decided there was need for a structure where people could escape from a sudden storm, he patterned it after a chattel house.

Years ago, working-class people in Barbados lived in modular structures called chattel houses, and when they moved from one job to another, they'd often break down their house and move it with them. While this structure is not fully enclosed and cannot be moved, its style and detailing mimics those structures. It is bright teal with a simple tin roof, "so in a rainstorm, you could really experience the sound of the rain," says Truskowski. The chattel house also acts as an interpretive station. There is

VANESSA ROGERS PHOTOGRAPHY, LEFT; COURTESY ROBERT E. TRUSKOWSKI INC., BOTTOM AND OPPOSITE

The Caribbean Garden encourages visitors to feel at home. Two women take advantage of the lawn area for a game of bocce, *above.* A pavilion patterned after a chattel house, at the right end of the section *below,* provides a focal point and a place to escape the rain. The plants used in the garden help tell the story of the Columbian Exchange, *opposite.*

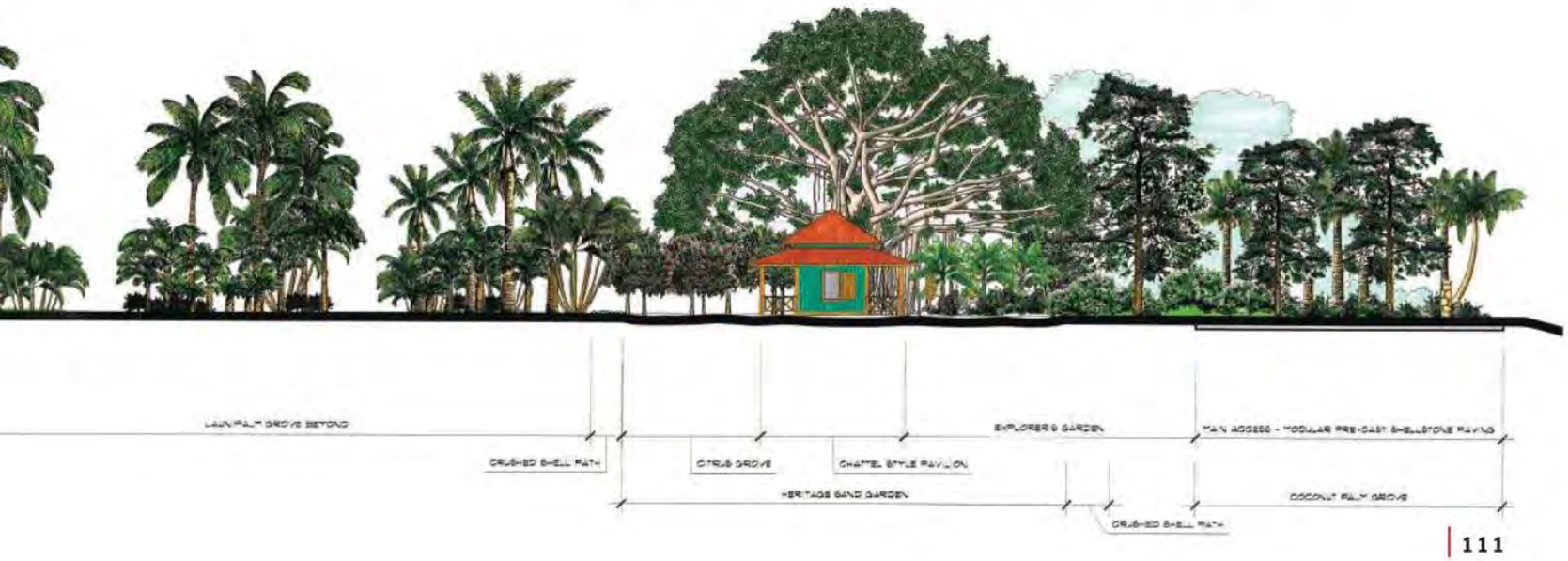
The plan, *left*, shows the variety of spaces and planting areas, including: (A) coconut grove; (B) Pre-Columbian Garden; (C) elevated garden with natural stone outcroppings; (D) seating or hammocks; (E) Explorer's Garden; (F) Citrus Garden; (G) Heritage Sand Garden; (H) chattel-style open pavilion; (I) pineapple field; (J) sugarcane field; (K) crushed shell path; (L) modular precast shellstone paving; (M) great lawn; (N) Palmatum Garden; (O) halyard flagpole with flags of all the Caribbean islands; (P) Xeriphytic Garden with internal paths; (Q) Jungle Garden with internal paths; (R) salt-tolerant coastal plantings; (S) view platform for lakes and water jet; (T) extended River of Grass Garden; (U) coral stone columns at all entry points; and (V) vine-covered pergola.

a steel drum visitors can play and signs that talk about the movement of plants through the Caribbean as Europeans first explored the Americas. (The signs are based on research by Truskowski's firm but were designed by others.)

The small, simple chattel house contrasts with the much grander trellis that leads to it. The trellis is built out of coral stone, a material commonly used in Caribbean estates. Seeing the garden structure overwhelm the house, it almost seems like a cartoonish commentary on the disparities between rich landowners and the working poor, though this wasn't necessarily the intent. Truskowski says the trellis needed to be quite high so that a crane—for resetting trees after hurricanes—could be brought down the path beneath it. He notes that it will blend in with the chattel house much better in the future as it becomes covered by jade vines. "You'll have four or five feet of plant mass that just cascades down," he explains. This will obscure all but the top six feet or so of the coral stone posts.

A sports lawn is located at the center of the narrow site. Truskowski says he chose a seashore paspalum grass cultivar for the lawn because it is soft and extremely salt tolerant. "Many grasses in Florida are coarse textured and not suitable for comfortable use," says Truskowski. "I wanted to show people that you could grow something other than the basic St. Augustine that everybody grows."

The lawn is surrounded by plantings. To teach children (and adults) where their food comes from, the garden includes tropical crop plants like pineapples and sugarcane. There is also a section where visitors can learn about drought-tolerant coastal plants. "We have everything from what a collector would find interesting to what a child would find interesting," says Truskowski.



The Brazilian Garden

It was no surprise when I came upon a photo shoot under way in the Brazilian Garden; it's a striking backdrop. Of all the gardens completed so far, this garden makes the strongest first impression.

Jungles designed the space as a tribute to Roberto Burle Marx, the famous Brazilian landscape architect and artist, who was a friend and mentor to Jungles. "To me, Burle Marx is Brazil," said Jungles through a spokesperson. "The garden's design is intended to open viewers' eyes to the poetry of landscape design."

A large pond sits at the center of the Brazilian Garden, and a path winds around it. The garden's focal point is a colorful ceramic mural designed by Marx himself. The mural is located at the high point of the garden, atop a concrete waterfall, and it is framed by an unusual concrete trellis. Sandblasted concretework,

At the Brazilian Garden, *below,* Raymond Jungles, FASLA, paid tribute to Roberto Burle Marx, a pioneering modernist landscape architect from Brazil. The focal point of the garden is a tile mural by Marx himself, *top right,* and the site is filled with colorful bromeliads, *center right.* Prior to construction, the site of the Brazilian Garden, like much of the area, was covered in invasives; however, the landscape architects were able to preserve a small stand of native upland vegetation (shown in the background, *bottom right).*

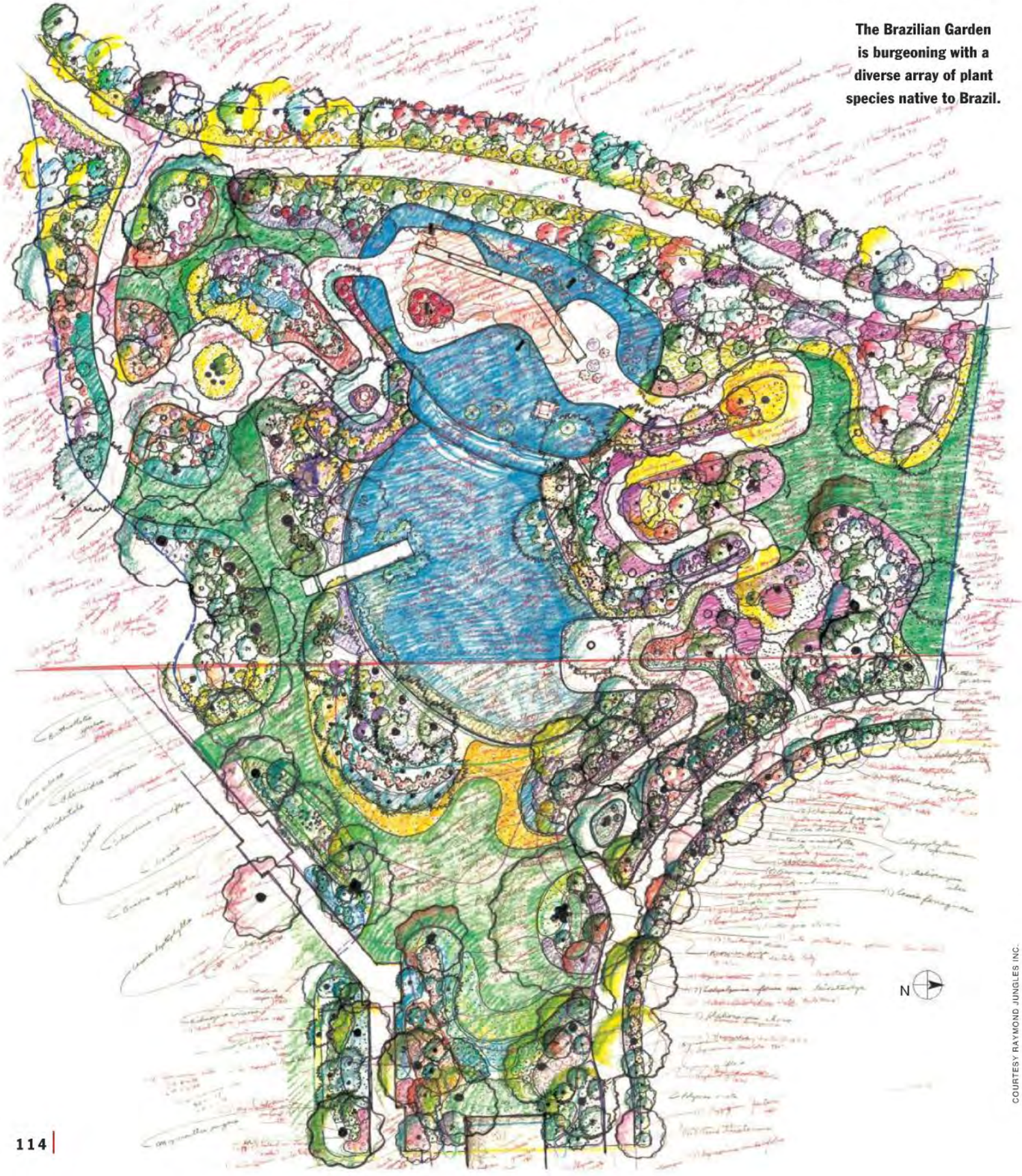
BEFORE

COURTESY RAYMOND JUNGLES INC., LEFT AND BOTTOM; VANESSA ROGERS PHOTOGRAPHY, TOP; DANIEL JOST, ASLA, CENTER

simple panels of lawn, and calm reflective pools contrast with the busier and more colorful mural and plantings.

The plantings, which are all Brazilian natives, are laid out in large sweeps of color, recalling Marx's painterly approach. "The color...and the texture.... I still haven't gotten over my infatuation with bromeliads," says Holley, the garden's director. Their foliage is available in a range of colors—from green to bright yellow to orange to red—and a number of different cultivars can be found in the garden.

While the garden is fairly small, its plantings, particularly its trees, are very diverse, with at least 20 different species of palms alone. The plants are meant to represent seven major ecosystems found in Brazil, though this is difficult for a visitor to discern. Holley says that for a landscape architect, Jungles is "quite a



The Brazilian Garden is burgeoning with a diverse array of plant species native to Brazil.

COURTESY RAYMOND JUNGLES INC.

"To me, Burle Marx is Brazil. The garden's design is intended to open viewers' eyes to the poetry of landscape design."

plantsman" and was able to suggest many unusual species. Holley smiles as he points out a blood-red bromeliad cultivar: "That one's called 'Hannibal Lecter.'"

There is a 12-foot difference in elevation from the top of the hill where the mural sits to the top of the pond, a fairly significant amount of topography for Florida. As you walk through the upper part of the garden, reflecting pools surround the mural on both sides, "[inviting] the sky into the garden," notes Jungles. Their undulating edges recall the iconic concrete pools of the early modern era. The water is dyed black with a nontoxic dye that helps to conceal the planters and utilities below the water's surface and increases its reflective quality.

As you approach the mural wall, a concrete seat wall juts out like an arm welcoming you into the space. The trellis overhead frames long views out to a larger lake. Its wire canopy has squares where it is completely open and squares where the wires are knit closely together. Eventually, the latter will be covered with a red jade vine, but the rest will remain open to the sky.

As you move away from the mural, the edge of the pond softens. The pond is dotted with aquatic plants like Amazon waterlily *(Victoria amazonica),* and a concrete jetty juts out into the pond, allowing visitors to experience these plants up close.

While the design for the Brazilian Garden was Jungles's work, it provides an excellent example of how the various designers worked together—particularly during the early stages. Today, it is one of the first experiences for visitors when they enter the botanical garden, but this wasn't always the plan. "My site was originally where Raymond [Jungles's] is now," says Truskowski, who designed the Caribbean Garden. "When Raymond said he was donating the Burle Marx mural, I said to him we should switch locations because I think that's the key entry feature.

"There was a lot of flexibility among the team members because we were really trying to maximize the impact of each garden," Truskowski explains.

VANESSA ROGERS PHOTOGRAPHY

An unusual trellislike structure will create a checkerboard of hanging vines and sky.