



Gardens Hires Renowned Firm to Help Shape Its Future

Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens has engaged internationally acclaimed Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects to guide the organization into its second 20 years and its next phase. The NBW team will present initial findings on Monday, October 21, and within a year will finalize the new master plan for the Gardens' 248-acre waterfront property off Barters Island Road in Boothbay.

"This is a giant step into the Gardens' future," says Executive Director William Cullina. "The NBW team not only brings expertise and talent to the master planning process, but also shares CMBG's values regarding sustainability and ecology. We feel this is a great fit and look forward to working with them."

Nelson Byrd Woltz, with offices in Charlottesville, Virginia; New York City; and San Francisco, has been involved in public and private projects in more than two dozen states and nine countries as distant as New Zealand and China and has garnered more than 80 national and regional awards for its work. Among its numerous landscape-design projects are the Devonian Botanic Garden in Edmonton, Alberta; Hudson Yards in New York; Flight 93 National Memorial in Pennsylvania; Google Corporate Headquarters and Catalina Island, both in California; Children's Hospital of Philadelphia; and Southwest Waterfront in Washington, D.C.

"It's a pleasure and privilege to work with a visionary firm like Nelson Byrd Woltz," says Director of Horticulture Rodney Eason. "There's a great dynamic and rapport when our team and their team get together. That was a determining factor in our selection."

President Susan Russell agrees. "We were impressed with how well the Nelson Byrd Woltz team *listens*," she says. "They listen to our ideas and dreams for the future, they listen to Maine's unique landscape, and they listen to our guests and stakeholders."

Thomas L. Woltz, owner of Nelson Byrd Woltz, will be the principal in charge of the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens master planning project. He is hailed as a rising star in the field of landscape architecture and in 2011 was invested into the American Society of Landscape Architects Council of Fellows, thus receiving one of the highest honors in his profession.

"NBW is honored to have been selected to work with the founders, staff, and board members at Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens in creating a vision for the next 20 years," says Woltz. "The mission of CMBG aligns seamlessly with the design values of Nelson Byrd Woltz in honoring, revealing, and celebrating the plants of the unique coastal Maine regional ecology."

"Our process is one of listening to the natural and cultural clues we discover in the site and then making those visible to the public through an iterative, site-responsive design process," he explains. "We look forward to providing a design framework and vision for extending the reach of garden visitors'

landscape experience into the rich and diverse ecosystems of the entire 248-acre property, as well as accommodating enhanced visitor engagement through research and education programs.”

“Discovering” the Gardens

Phase I of the new master plan is the “discovery” process: careful observation of all aspects of the site, followed by creative interpretation and design incorporating both local materials and universal forms. The end result will be implementation tailored to the needs and goals of the Gardens and its property.

Because NBW’s 35-member staff represents broad expertise in the sciences and arts, the firm will take a multidisciplinary approach, studying the many facets of the Gardens and its varied functions as it creates the master plan. Several consultants, including Stockwell Environmental Consulting on Southport Island and the Knickerbocker Group in Boothbay, will aid NBW in the initial phase of master planning.

Russell and Cullina introduced the new master planning team at the August 13 President’s Reception. The following day, the Gardens staff and members of the boards of directors and overseers attended an all-day session, where they heard presentations by Woltz and other professionals associated with the project and, in turn, offered the consultants a comprehensive view of the organization and its strategic goals. There was a lively give and take, with board and staff members sharing their ideas on what makes a garden great and how Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens can continue to improve to better serve guests. Before they present their initial findings in October, Woltz and his team will return to study the Gardens and begin the master planning process in earnest.

A Shared Philosophy

Both Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens and Nelson Byrd Woltz are deeply committed to education and conservation and strive to achieve the highest quality in their projects and services. The professionals at NBW feel that landscape design should honor and reveal the local history and natural context of a project, a philosophy that meshes with the Gardens’ mission to protect, preserve, and enhance the botanical heritage and natural landscapes of coastal Maine for people of all ages through horticulture, education, and research.

“We have worked to assemble a team that shares our values as a design firm and is prepared to be creatively responsive to the various needs of the Gardens as it expands into the future,” says Woltz. He adds that the project should also “reveal to the public of all ages the special magic of coastal Maine.”

A Force in the Regional and State

After 15 years of planning and design, planting, and building, Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens opened to the public in 2007. In the seven seasons since the opening, the Gardens has welcomed about 500,000 guests, with 100,000 of those expected this year alone. Spectacular plantings and unique features set this garden apart from others. Dozens of programs appeal to all ages, year-round.

Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens’ ever-greater economic impact on the region is overwhelmingly positive, and the Maine Tourism Association numbers it among the state’s top three attractions. Based on

visitor reviews, TripAdvisor named it the best public garden in the country in 2013.

Nonetheless, only half of the Gardens' nearly 250 acres is currently accessible to visitors. "We look to NBW to provide the guidance and vision to allow us to open all of our garden to our guests," says Eason. "The entire garden experience should be inspiring, innovative, and yet quintessentially Maine."

Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens is a model of a 21st century garden, and the new master plan will address the need for research, as well as the horticulture and education components of the Gardens' mission. Goals also include enhancing the guest experience, ensuring financial stability, and promoting stewardship of the natural and cultural environment of the property.

The 20-Year Master Plan Committee began meeting regularly last winter to examine options and goals, opportunities and constraints, as the nonprofit organization moves into its next phase. The group, comprised of Gardens staff and board and chaired by landscape architect and board member Paula Swetland, came up with questions as well as guidelines. This spring the committee began an extensive search for a landscape architecture firm to create a master plan that will help the organization define and achieve its goals, and Nelson Byrd Woltz was the clear choice.

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