

I want to put the mystery back into the heart of garden design, where it needs to be. It's what lures you in through the gate, keeps you moving through the landscape, and fills you with excitement along the way.

— James van Sweden, *The Artful Garden*

THE NEW AMERICAN GARDEN

The Landscape Architecture of Oehme, van Sweden



The Cultural Landscape Foundation
www.tclf.org

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For a complete list of sponsors see page 67.

Acknowledgements

This gallery guide was created to accompany the traveling photographic exhibition *The New American Garden: The Landscape Architecture of Oehme, van Sweden*, which debuted at the National Building Museum on October 17, 2015. The exhibition was organized by The Cultural Landscape Foundation (TCLF) and co-curated by Charles A. Birnbaum, President & CEO, and Nord Wennerstrom, Director of Communications, in collaboration with G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Senior Curator at the National Building Museum.

The production of the exhibition would not have been possible without the help and support of OEHME, VAN SWEDEN | OvS Principals Sheila Brady, Lisa Delplace, and, in particular, Eric Groft, and Marketing & Communications Coordinator Justin Maglione. We also wish to thank the site owners and administrators who graciously allowed us to document their properties, and the photographers who generously donated their time and energy. At TCLF, Matthew Traucht gathered information about the sites, and Amanda Shull helped organize the exhibition and secured new photography. Many thanks are also owed to Russell Hart for making sure the exhibition's photographs looked just right. Finally, we are grateful to the National Building Museum's Executive Director Chase W. Rynd, Senior Curator G. Martin Moeller, Jr., Vice President for Exhibitions and Collections Cathy Frankel, and Registrar Nancy Bateman for their guidance in this collaboration.

This gallery guide was written by Nord Wennerstrom.

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THE NEW AMERICAN GARDEN

The Landscape Architecture of Oehme, van Sweden

A GUIDE TO THE NATIONAL TRAVELING EXHIBITION

National Building Museum • Washington, DC
October 17, 2015 - May 1, 2016

Traveling thereafter



John Neubauer

Portrait of James van Sweden and Wolfgang Oehme
1982
C-print
24 x 36 inches

[previous page]

Volkmar Wentzel

Portrait of Jim and Wolfgang in the Field
ca. 1990 / C-print / 36 x 24 inches

Wolfgang Oehme and James van Sweden revolutionized landscape architecture with the creation of the **New American Garden**, a type of garden characterized by large swaths of grasses and fields of perennials.

Their style celebrated the seasonal splendor of the American meadow while promoting its inherent ecological, sustainable, aesthetic, and ornamental values. According to van Sweden: “It is vigorous and audacious, and it vividly blends the natural and the cultivated.”^[1]

Artistically, their style evolved from the Modernist tradition, and while they were not known for creating architecturally composed hardscapes—walkways, seating, fountains, and so on—such as those associated with landscape architects Dan Kiley, Lawrence Halprin, and M. Paul Friedberg, their early planting plans show a geometric rigidity that they would later abandon until, ultimately, plants became the dominant and signature feature of their work. As van Sweden said in a 2008 *Washingtonian* interview: “[Our designs] did not feature lawn but tapestry-like plantings and perennials and masses of the same plant—3,000 black-eyed Susans instead of six.”^[2] Significantly, the landscapes were created to be interesting in all four seasons. “Grasses dry and turn a golden color, so they’re wonderful in the fall and winter,” van Sweden observed, and “dried petals ... catch snow.”^[3]

This gallery guide complements the traveling photographic exhibition *The New American Garden: The Landscape Architecture of Oehme, van Sweden*, which was presented in collaboration with The National Building Museum and documents the work of the landscape architects through newly commissioned photographs and archival images. It coincides with the 25th anniversary of *Bold Romantic Gardens: The New World Landscape of Oehme and van Sweden*, a widely influential book the two business partners wrote with Susan

Rademacher, former executive director of the Louisville Olmsted Parks Conservancy, Inc., and currently the parks curator at the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, chronicling 21 projects that introduced the world to Oehme, van Sweden & Associates’ horticulturally exuberant designs.

Many individuals worked with Oehme and van Sweden on the projects illustrated in the exhibition, most notably the three principals of the successor firm, OEHME, VAN SWEDEN | OvS—Sheila Brady, Lisa Delplace and Eric Groft—who continue their legacy.

This exhibition and gallery guide are meant to be introductions to the work of Oehme and van Sweden, not exhaustive accounts of their professional activities. In fact, there are numerous well-written and beautifully illustrated books about their work, many written by van Sweden individually and in collaboration with others. Along with *Bold Romantic Gardens: The New World Landscape of Oehme and van Sweden* (Acropolis Books, Ltd., 1990; revised and reprinted 1998, Spacemaker Press), they include *Gardening with Water* (Random House, 1995); *Gardening with Nature* (Random House, 1997); *Architecture in the Garden* with Tom Christopher (Random House, 2003); and, *The Artful Garden: Creative Inspiration for Landscape Design* with Tom Christopher (Random House, 2011). There is also *Ornamental Grasses: Wolfgang Oehme and the New American Garden*, by Stefan Leppert (Frances Lincoln Ltd., 2009).

In addition, TCLF produced a video oral history with van Sweden in 2009, part of the foundation’s ongoing and award-winning *Pioneers Oral Histories* series featuring first hand interviews with leading and influential practitioners. Over the course of two dozen one-to-six minute video clips, van Sweden discusses his biography, design theory and built projects. There are also seventeen written recollections from friends, clients and colleagues (some of which are

cited in this gallery guide). All of the oral histories can be found at TCLF’s website: tclf.org/oralhistories.

Finally, the *New American Garden* exhibition is presented within the context of TCLF’s *Landslide* program, which brings attention to nationally significant works of landscape architecture and landscape features that are threatened and at-risk. Already 9 of the 21 projects in *Bold Romantic Gardens* have been lost, including van Sweden’s garden at his former home and the Nef Garden (p. 61), both in the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington, D.C. Another site represented in this catalogue, Pershing Park (pp. 62-63) on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C. (two blocks from the White House), could yet be demolished. The park was designed by M. Paul Friedberg and opened in 1981. Subsequently, Oehme and van Sweden were brought in to redesign the planting plan. Efforts are underway to demolish Pershing Park and replace it with a national World War I memorial. In addition, the garden at Ferry Cove (pp. 58-60), van Sweden’s country home in Sherwood, Maryland, has undergone major alterations under new ownership. A primary goal of the exhibition and catalogue is to make the Oehme, van Sweden legacy, much of which is in private hands, visible and valued, and to promote a dialogue that will lead to informed stewardship.

On behalf of The Cultural Landscape Foundation’s Board of Directors, Stewardship Council, and staff, and the exhibition’s many supporters, I hope you enjoy the work of these great artists.

Sincerely,

Charles A. Birnbaum, FASLA, FAAR
PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER, THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE FOUNDATION

*Portrait of James
(in Kimono)*

Richard Felber

2001
C-print
24 x 24 inches



James van Sweden at Ferry Cove, his home on Maryland's Eastern Shore. He had invited the staff over for an afternoon party – here he is making his entrance.

James van Sweden (1935 - 2013)

The son of a building contractor, van Sweden was raised in a large Dutch community in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He loved plants and gardening from an early age, and he honed his gardening and design skills in the small backyard of his family's suburban bungalow. In 1960, at the age of 25, he earned a bachelor's degree in architecture from the University of Michigan before studying landscape architecture at Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands. After three years, he returned to the United States and became a partner at Marcou, O'Leary and Associates. Then, in 1975, he founded the partnership with Wolfgang Oehme that would define his professional career and introduce the world to the New American Garden, an aesthetic that challenged conventional approaches to landscape design. Based in Washington, D.C., Oehme,

van Sweden & Associates, now in its second generation (and known as OEHME, VAN SWEDEN | OvS), grew to encompass architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design, and completed many high-profile public projects in the nation's capital and beyond.

Van Sweden promoted the firm's ideas through lectures and books, including *Bold Romantic Gardens* (1990, co-authored with Wolfgang Oehme and Susan Rademacher), *Gardening with Water* (1995), *Gardening with Nature* (1997), *Architecture in the Garden* (2003), and *The Artful Garden* (2011). He was a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) and among his many awards was the ASLA Design Medal in 2010. Van Sweden was honored by the Garden Writers Association of America, the American Horticultural Society, and other organizations.

*Portrait of
Wolfgang*

Roger Foley

1995
C-print
24 x 24 inches



Wolfgang Oehme in the Vollmer Garden, Baltimore, MD.

Wolfgang Oehme (1930 - 2011)

Born and raised in Karl-Marx-Stadt (formerly Chemnitz), Germany, Oehme trained as a gardener at the Illge Nursery and worked in his teens and early twenties at the Bitterfeld Parks and Cemeteries Department. His mentors in Europe were Hans-Joachim Bauer and the well-known gardener and plantsman Karl Foerster. Oehme studied landscape architecture at the University of Berlin's Advanced School of Garden Design, graduating in 1954. After working at a nursery near London and as a planner in Frankfurt, he moved to Baltimore, Maryland, in 1957, where he worked for the Baltimore County Department of Parks. Oehme practiced landscape architecture independently between 1966 and 1974, and in 1975 he partnered with James van Sweden.

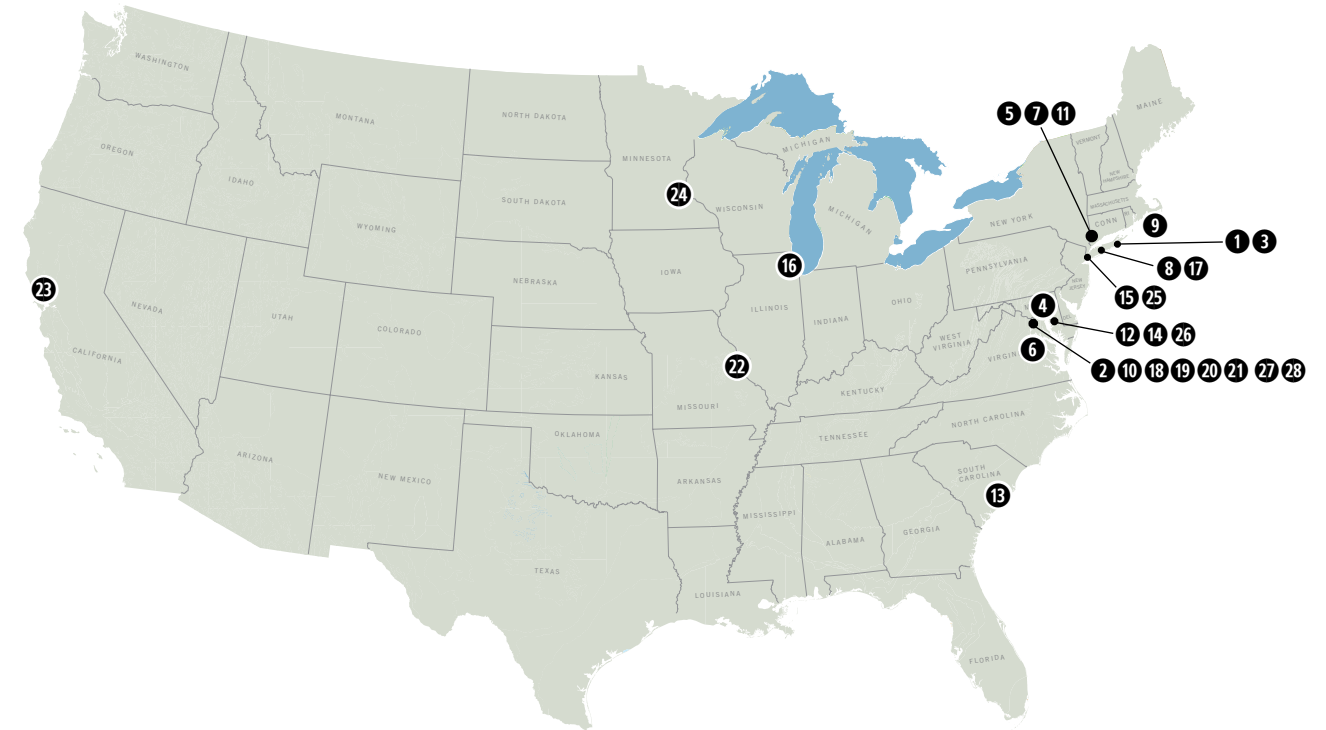
Oehme co-authored *The Encyclopedia of Ornamental Grasses* (1992, with John Greenlee and Derek Fell). His life and work are documented in Stefan Leppert's *Ornamental Grasses: Wolfgang Oehme and the New American Garden* (2009). Oehme taught at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Georgia, and was a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects. His many awards include the Landscape Design Award from the American Horticultural Society in 1992, and the George Robert White Medal of Honor in 2002. Oehme retired from OvS and started WOCO Organic Gardens with Carol Oppenheimer in 2008.

Landslide

The exhibition is a project of TCLF's *Landslide*® program, established in 2003, which raises awareness about threatened and at-risk works of landscape architecture. It includes an annual thematic compendium, which this year is focused on Oehme and van Sweden's significant, influential and ephemeral legacy. Unfortunately, nine of the 21 pioneering projects in *Bold Romantic Gardens* are now gone, including van Sweden's own Washington, D.C., townhouse garden, highlighting the innate ephemerality of landscape architecture and the essential role of stewardship.

Landslide includes hundreds of parks, gardens, horticultural features, environmental art, and working landscapes—collectively, places that embody our shared landscape heritage. From monitoring threats to chronicling ongoing care and management, *Landslide* draws immediate and lasting attention to these places and rallies public support for them. TCLF's website provides deeper knowledge and critical links to advocates working to safeguard these priceless resources for future generations: www.tclf.org/landslide.

Garden at Cornerstone, Sonoma, CA, 2015 (photo by Marion Brenner)



About this Guide

This gallery guide was created to complement the traveling exhibition *The New American Garden: The Landscape Architecture of Oehme, van Sweden*, and is divided into four sections: Bold Romantic Gardens, featuring three residential commissions and one civic project that appeared in the 1990 book *Bold Romantic Gardens*; Residential Gardens; Civic and Commercial Projects, and *Legacy and Stewardship*, focusing on threatened and lost projects, and the need for informed stewardship decisions.

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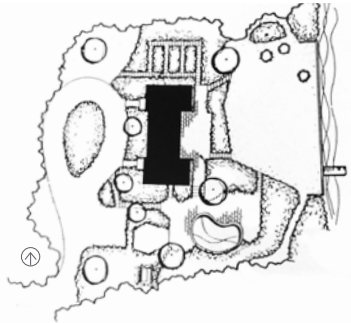


Bold Romantic Gardens

Following the publication of *Bold Romantic Gardens*, Oehme and van Sweden were named “America’s most interesting landscape practitioners” by the influential landscape designer John Brookes.^[4] London’s *Daily Telegraph Magazine* said the designers “have pulled up the American garden by its roots, and their revolutionary approach is gaining an international audience.”^[5]

The Federal Reserve Board Garden (pp. 14-15), composed of native plantings in tapestry-like swaths that contrasted against the more rigid shapes of the building and hardscape, is considered their breakthrough project. One artist whose work they cited at the Federal Reserve, sculptor Lila Katzen, suggested in August 1981 that Alex and Carole Rosenberg engage the designers for their Water Mill, New York, property. The Rosenbergs did and the results created a sensation. Carole Rosenberg recalls that “newspapers and magazines began calling, [and] we realized we had started something new and special.”^[6] The Slifka Beach House in Sagaponack, New York, and the Vollmer garden in Baltimore, Maryland, are other seminal projects.

Vollmer Residence, Baltimore, MD, 2015
(photo by Roger Foley)



Rosenberg Residence

ONGOING SINCE 1981 • WATER MILL, NY

Situated on the shores of eastern Long Island's Mecox Bay, this sequence of outdoor rooms in a 0.9-acre garden features plant materials that thrive in the site's difficult growing conditions. According to owner Carole Rosenberg, "Our Water Mill house was set in a magnificent garden where design blends with the natural elements of water, sky, and reed. Sweeping masses of ornamental grasses, perennials, flowering bulbs, and rare clump bamboo create a different palette in each season."¹⁷¹

A matched pair of images illustrates part of the garden in winter and summer (opposite), while a third shows a Henry Moore sculpture *in situ* (above).

DESIGNERS

Oehme, van Sweden & Associates

Wolfgang Oehme

James van Sweden



**Andre
Baranowski**

2014-2015
C-print
36 x 24 inches

Amy Lamb

2015

C-print

36 x 24 inches



Roger Foley

2007

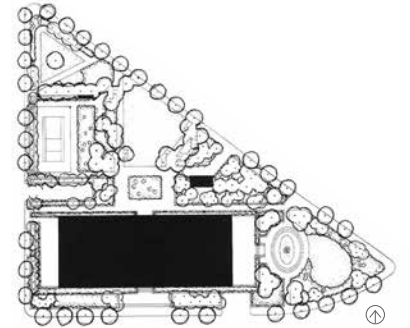
C-print

36 x 24 inches



In those early days, the firm relied primarily on residential projects. Few commercial clients at the time were interested in the maintenance and special qualities of these fine gardens. The Federal Reserve was one of those rare exceptions.

—Sunny Scully Alsup



Federal Reserve Board Garden

ONGOING SINCE 1977 • WASHINGTON, DC

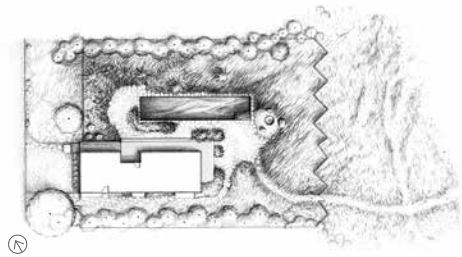
The first public iteration of the New American Garden came in 1977 with Oehme, van Sweden's first major commission, a public garden atop an underground parking garage. The original garden by George Patton was largely destroyed during a severe winter. David Lilly, a member of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, championed the hiring of the two. As van Sweden later wrote in *Gardening with Nature*: "Little did [Lilly] know that our 'office' at the time was a drafting table in a bedroom of my townhouse and an aging Volkswagen Squareback stocked with mulch, tools, and potted shrubs."^[8]

DESIGNERS

Oehme, van Sweden & Associates

Wolfgang Oehme

James van Sweden



Slifka Beach House

ONGOING SINCE 1986 • SAGAPONACK, NY

In *Bold Romantic Gardens*, van Sweden described this project as a “compact composition of distinct places and connections,” in which “we took a loose, unfussy approach, relying heavily on grasses and foliage plants.”^[9] The plantings vary in color and texture throughout the seasons and offer moments of contrast, such as the tall, purple ornamental onion flowers emerging from the low-growing, yellow-blooming tickseed. The project continues to evolve and be refined; in 1998 the original house was moved further from the ocean and replaced by a new beach house in 2004.

DESIGNERS

Oehme, van Sweden & Associates
Wolfgang Oehme
James van Sweden



Sara Cedar Miller

2015
C-print
36 x 24 inches

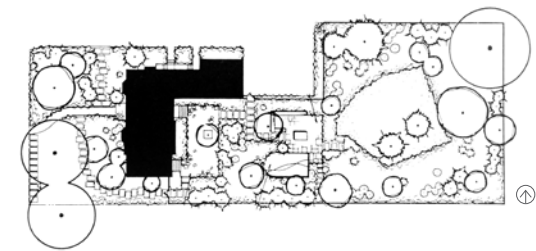


Roger Foley

2015

C-print

36 x 24 inches



Vollmer Residence

COMPLETED 2011 • BALTIMORE, MD

Wolfgang Oehme began this project in 1962, radically transforming a typical suburban landscape into the progenitor of the New American Garden. As van Sweden wrote in *Gardening with Nature*, “Removing two-thirds of an American suburban lawn was quite revolutionary in the early 1960s; however, before long the Vollmers asked to have the remaining lawn removed and planted with perennials.”^[10] Mrs. Vollmer called the garden “an environment of serenity with a fascinating variety of forms and textures,” adding, “it changed my life.”^[11]

DESIGNERS

Oehme, van Sweden & Associates

Wolfgang Oehme

James van Sweden

Residential Gardens



For more than three decades, Oehme and van Sweden collaborated on hundreds of residential commissions, developing working relationships and great friendships with clients who became some of their most ardent advocates. As David Ebershoff, van Sweden's editor at Random House, said, "Jim understands that the art of garden design, like the art of storytelling, is about people—that there is no point in laying a path or seeding a meadow or writing a book if it is not going to touch the people who experience it."^[12]

In *The Artful Garden*, van Sweden wrote, "I want to put the mystery back into the heart of garden design, where it needs to be. It's what lures you in through the gate, keeps you moving through the landscape, and fills you with excitement along the way. The sense of mystery is what turns a mere display of plants, paths, and ornaments into an adventure."^[13]



North Salem Residence

ONGOING SINCE 1997 • NORTH SALEM, NY

The design of this 25-acre property located 40 miles northeast of New York City is carefully orchestrated to selectively focus and conceal/reveal views. The firm collaborated with architects Elizabeth Demetriades and Patrick Walker to site the house, and deployed locally quarried stone and dense plantings of grasses, perennials, and specimen trees and shrubs, to connect the modern house with its rural, upstate setting. Flowering dogwood trees, tall grasses, and perennials conceal hard edges and overlap stepping stone pathways extending into the landscape.

DESIGNERS

Oehme, van Sweden & Associates
Wolfgang Oehme
James van Sweden



Frederick Charles

2015
C-print
24 x 36 inches

Roger Foley

2006

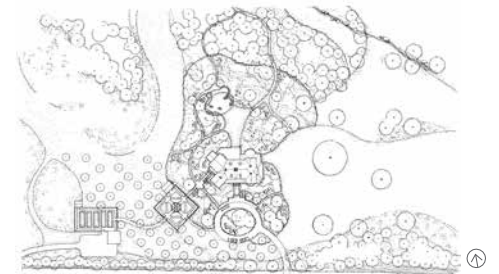
C-print

20 x 13 inches



Outside, scale is tricky because everything looks smaller. I think the most important element of garden design is getting the proportions right and building a garden that fits into its surroundings, in the sense of the materials you use.

—James van Sweden



Kendale Farm

ONGOING SINCE 1998 • CHANCE, VA

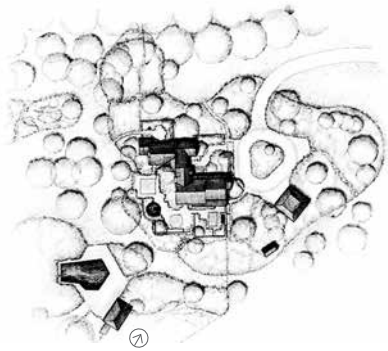
“A well-planned garden is not one but a sequence of experiences,” van Sweden wrote in *The Artful Garden*, in an essay that accompanied an image of this 2,500-acre family estate that fronts five miles of the Rappahannock River.^[14] “These experiences may take many forms: a spot where you are embraced by the scents of aromatic herbs, a seat that faces you toward a beautiful vista, a walk through a flowery meadow, the fountain whose trickling water music soothes you.”^[15]

DESIGNERS

Oehme, van Sweden & Associates

Wolfgang Oehme

James van Sweden



Sky Meadow

ONGOING SINCE 1995 • PURCHASE, NY

“This wedding of house and land,” van Sweden wrote: “... is one of the happiest and most harmonious I have ever achieved.” The chief work on this 1920s stone and shingle house set amid nine acres included the creation of individual garden rooms off the kitchen, dining, and living rooms. “By associating indoor spaces with outdoor space of a related purpose and architectural style, I could practically erase the distinction between house and garden.” [16]

DESIGNERS

Oehme, van Sweden & Associates

Wolfgang Oehme

James van Sweden



Frank Oudeman

2015

C-print

36 x 27 inches





Boxwood Farm

ONGOING SINCE 1995 • BROOKVILLE, NY

This 20-acre estate features a Georgian Revival mansion designed in the 1920s by Julian Peabody of Peabody, Wilson & Brown, and grounds by the influential landscape architect Ellen Shipman. The project began in 1998 and included new plantings throughout the property, and the addition of a forecourt, terraces, a pond, and restoration of a formal garden. Understory planting of ornamental grasses, groundcovers, and perennials beneath canopy trees surrounding the site's lawn facilitates the transition between the highly manicured garden and encompassing forest.

Richard Felber

undated
C-print
24 x 24 inches



Harwood Residence

ONGOING SINCE 1986 • HARWOOD, MD

To wed this house with its forested, waterfront setting on a peninsula surrounded by the West River and overlooking the Chesapeake Bay, four-season plantings and informal pathways, two of the firm's signature design elements, were employed. Of the latter van Sweden wrote: "A skilled garden choreographer ... [can] use a twist in a path to turn the visitor suddenly toward a view; the turn will slow the steps and cause visitors to take notice of their surroundings."^[17]

James van Sweden

1992
C-print
24 x 24 inches



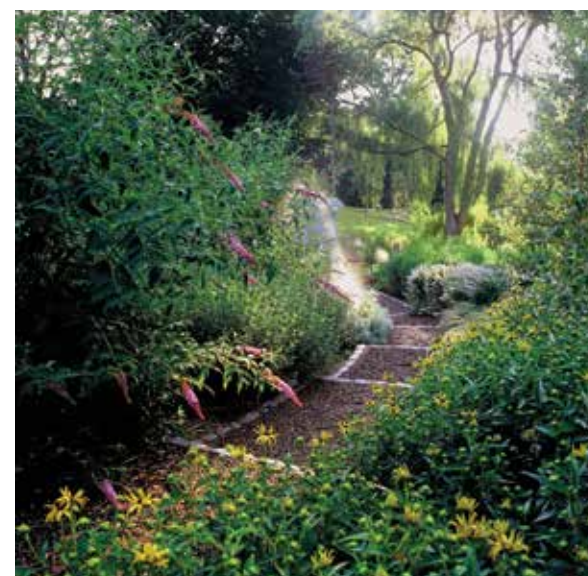
Nantucket Residence

COMPLETED 2006 • NANTUCKET, MA

The challenging growing conditions at this 85-acre coastal estate on Nantucket—principally strong winds and salt spray—called for the use of adaptable species. The ecologically sensitive planting palette includes little bluestem, switchgrass, goldenrod, and pitch pine that link the main house and guesthouses to the surrounding environment. From the building perimeter, the design transitions from formal, ordered plantings and gathering spaces to informal, naturalized planted areas that blend into the native dune vegetation.

Richard Felber

2008
C-print
24 x 24 inches



Greenwich Residence

ONGOING SINCE 1992 • GREENWICH, CT

Most of this 25-acre property with a 19th-century farmhouse, set close to a road, is wooded. Working on the remaining five acres, to create some privacy, Oehme and van Sweden relocated the primary entrance so access is now through an entry court and garden. Terracing steepened the grading of the hillside behind the house, creating a series of outdoor rooms at multiple elevations making the house appear to be on a stage.

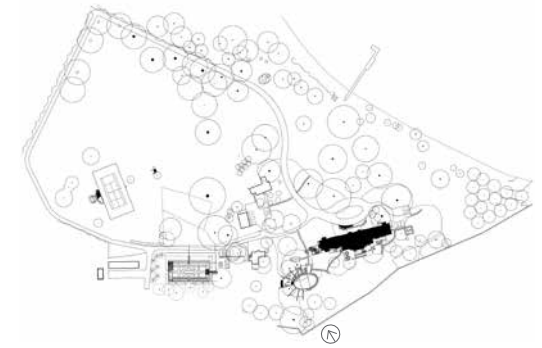
Richard Felber

undated
C-print
24 x 24 inches



James van Sweden

2000
C-print
36 x 24 inches



Halcyon

ONGOING SINCE 2004 • EASTON, MD

“The greatest asset” of this 85-acre landscape along the shore of the Tred Avon River, van Sweden wrote, “was the expansive views across the water. When we began work, however, the site was otherwise uninspiring.” To create structure within the site, the firm used “massed perennials and grasses, statuesque, headhigh species...to informally enclose...different areas.” The plantings were “visually permeable, allowing glimpses of the areas beyond, inviting exploration.”^[18]

DESIGNERS

Oehme, van Sweden & Associates
Wolfgang Oehme
James van Sweden



Kiawah Residence

COMPLETED 2004 • KIAWAH ISLAND, SC

Situated at the tip of a peninsula surrounded by tidal marshes, this eleven-acre estate is nestled among native oak, pine, and palmetto trees. The house's location on a coastal barrier island floodplain required raising the building off the ground. To bridge this vertical separation, the firm designed 5,000 square feet of balconies, steps, terraces, pavilions, and porches. Raised planters and ground-level native plantings nestle the main house, guesthouse, and garage into the surroundings.

DESIGNERS

Oehme, van Sweden & Associates
James van Sweden



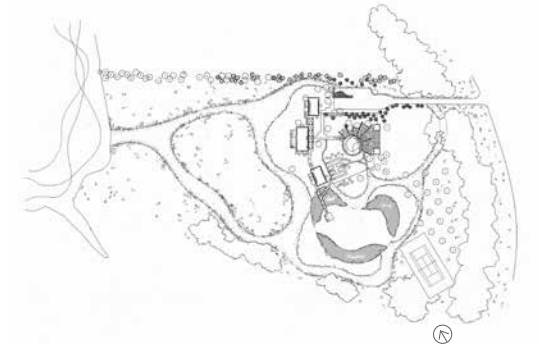
Roger Foley

2006
C-print
20 x 13 inches



Petra Barth

2015
C-print
20 x 13 inches



Sorg Residence

COMPLETED 2006 • SHERWOOD, MD

Van Sweden and his friends and colleagues Suman Sorg and Marilyn Melkonian purchased contiguous property on Maryland's Eastern Shore upon which Sorg and van Sweden built individual weekend retreat homes (the third site is an undeveloped meadow between the two houses). Sorg, an architect, designed houses for van Sweden and herself, while van Sweden designed their landscapes. Van Sweden sited the homes inland from the bay rather than on the edge, yielding each commanding views across the landscape towards the water.

DESIGNERS

Oehme, van Sweden & Associates

Wolfgang Oehme

James van Sweden

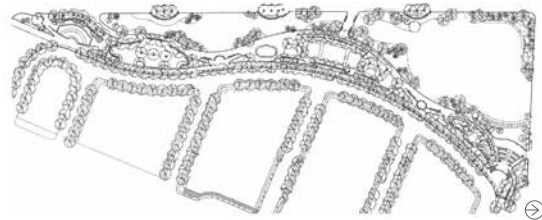


Civic and Commercial Projects

Landscape architecture, van Sweden said in an interview with *Washingtonian* magazine, is “not just about plants,” ^[19] it’s also about lighting, paving, drainage, grading, and much more. Here he was speaking specifically about his work on the World War II Memorial commission, but the complexities of creating public parks on landfills, gardens, and plazas over parking garages and in other challenging environments are often little understood. Moreover, unlike residential commissions, civic and commercial projects often have numerous constituencies with distinct agendas requiring the designer to synthesize aesthetic, programmatic, and didactic concerns.

Over the decades the firm has worked on commercial shopping centers, public parks, memorials, embassies, mixed-use developments, and other projects. Some are completely new designs, while others need to be sympathetic with an existing design or must honor a larger context (such as the National Mall).

Rockefeller Park, New York, NY, 2015
(photo by Mick Hales)



Rockefeller Park

COMPLETED 1992 • BATTERY PARK CITY, NEW YORK, NY

Transforming a flat, sandy patch of landfill in the Hudson River, this waterfront parcel is one of 26 that constitute lower Manhattan's Battery Park City. Van Sweden, in *Gardening with Nature*, wrote, "The first design challenge was to shape the land for a softer, more natural appearance." One portion was to be a "subtle reminder of the beach environment that flourished on the site centuries ago," while the "upland reaches" feature plantings native to the Hudson River Valley.^[20]

DESIGNERS

Oehme, van Sweden & Associates

Wolfgang Oehme

James van Sweden



Mick Hales

2015

C-print

20 x 13 inches





Nate Matthews

2014-2015
Arch Bridge and Evening Island

[pp. 42-43]
Arch Bridge and Evening Island in all four seasons
C-print / 36 x 24 inches



Chicago Botanic Garden Great Basin & Evening Island

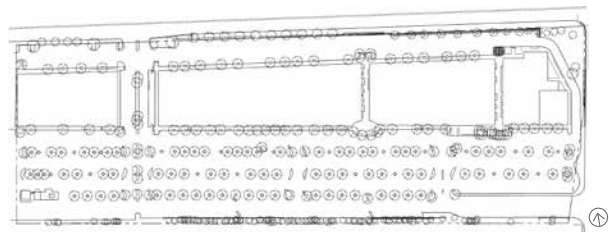
ONGOING SINCE 1997 • GLENCOE, IL

This commission was of considerable import to both the firm and the client. Barbara Whitney Carr, retired president of the Chicago Botanic Garden, recalled, “The design of Evening Island and the Gardens of the Great Basin were at the very heart of the garden both literally and symbolically.” Moreover, “the view [to be created] ... was to be an iconic vista.”^[21]

After van Sweden’s presentation for the project, in which he said he was inspired by the colors and composition of the painting *Nature Abhors a Vacuum* by Helen Frankenthaler, an artist beloved by the project’s lead patron, Pleasant Rowland, Carr said, “We knew this man understood our vision, knew he could create something we could only dream of, and that NOTHING could make him happier than to do it for us.” She added: “Now when Chicago Botanic Garden visitors look out toward Evening Island, they see a classic New American Garden landscape.”^[22]

The photographs on pp. 42-43 show the project in all four seasons >





Americana Manhasset

ONGOING SINCE 1985 • MANHASSET, NY

This luxury shopping complex on Long Island originally opened in 1956. Architect Peter Marino was brought in to update the buildings beginning in 1980, and in 1986, the center's owner, Frank Castagna, engaged Oehme, van Sweden & Associates to develop the landscape. The plant palettes, which are updated seasonally, vary in composition depending upon their location within the complex, and include meadow-like sweeps of ornamental grasses, perennials, trees, and shrubs. The landscape architects also designed seating, lighting, fountains, a pergola, and sited public art.

DESIGNERS

Oehme, van Sweden & Associates

Wolfgang Oehme

James van Sweden



Francis
Dzikowski

2015
C-print
36 x 24 inches



Townhomes on Capitol Hill

COMPLETED 1998 • WASHINGTON, DC

The mixed-income housing community developed by Telesis was designed to blend with the surrounding Capitol Hill neighborhood. The 134 townhouse-complex, designed by architect Amy Weinstein and completed in 1998, replaced a public housing project open from 1941 to 1988. Oehme, van Sweden & Associates designed the brick sidewalks and alternated canopy trees underplanted with groundcovers with replicas of Washington's historic streetlights. Front yards were planted with small flowering trees and shrubs, perennials, ornamental grasses, and other plants.

James van Sweden

2000
C-print
24 x 36 inches



Washington, DC Region

A substantial body of civic, commercial and private residential projects spanning four decades of practice by Oehme, van Sweden can be found in the mid-Atlantic area, principally because the firm is located in the nation's capital.



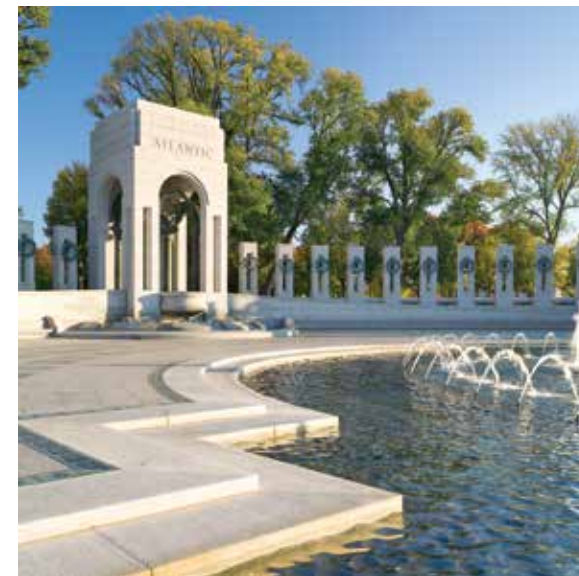
German American Friendship Garden

ONGOING SINCE 1983 • WASHINGTON, DC

Designed *pro bono* by Wolfgang Oehme in 1983, this small garden occupies a prominent place on the National Mall. Symbolizing the bond between Germany and the U.S., the plant palette comprises species native to each of the two countries. In 1988 President Ronald Reagan and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl formally dedicated the garden, whose design contrasts highly textured, diverse plantings with an orderly, geometric form. The project was restored in 2014.

James van Sweden

1991 / C-print / 24 x 24 inches



National World War II Memorial

ONGOING SINCE 1997 • WASHINGTON, DC

This 7.4-acre memorial, which opened to the public in 2004, is centrally located on the National Mall. It was designed by Friedrich St. Florian in association with Leo A Daly and George Hartman, along with sculptor Raymond Kaskey and Oehme, van Sweden. The project, van Sweden said, "was the most difficult thing I've ever done." Along with working on the lighting, paving, drainage, and grading, the firm used a palette of white-flowering plants—symbolizing the spirit of remembrance—that expands outward from the memorial's perimeter, softening its edge and integrating the site into surrounding parkland.^[23]

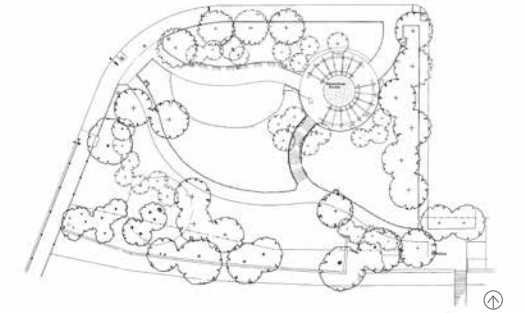
Roger Foley

2006 / C-print / 24 x 24 inches



Barrett Doherty

2015
C-print
36 x 24 inches



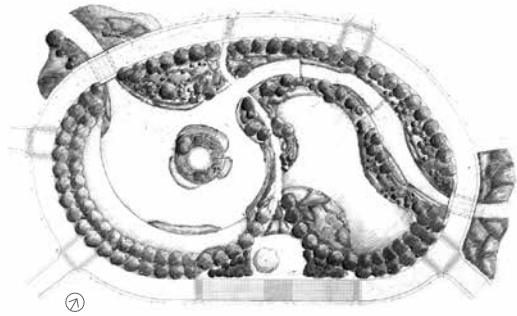
Francis Scott Key Memorial

COMPLETED 1993 • WASHINGTON, DC

This one-acre National Park Service site by the C&O Canal honors the author of the words to “The Star Spangled Banner.” In *Gardening with Nature*, van Sweden wrote, “Wolfgang and I seldom encounter projects with so many competing influences. We had to satisfy a design program that called for dramatic combinations of landscaping, architecture, and sculpture, while respecting the site’s history, natural features, and location.”^[24] Their design includes a circular, wisteria-covered arbor and a sloped meadow with 7,000 perennials, 32,000 bulbs, flowering trees, and shrubs.

DESIGNERS

Oehme, van Sweden & Associates
Wolfgang Oehme
James van Sweden



Forest Park – Pagoda Circle

COMPLETED 2004 • ST. LOUIS, MO

The Pagoda Circle, located within the 1,371-acre Forest Park, five miles west of downtown St. Louis, is the site of the park's original bandstand built in 1876 and replaced in 1925. Pedestrian bridges cross a new waterway that winds around the bandstand and cascades over concrete weirs. The renewal of this area by Oehme, van Sweden & Associates was the centerpiece of their larger involvement with the park, included 27,000 plants, along with a comprehensive program of invasive plant management.

DESIGNERS

George E. Kessler

Henry Wright

Julius Pitzman

Oehme, van Sweden & Associates

Wolfgang Oehme

James van Sweden



Greg Barth

2015

C-print

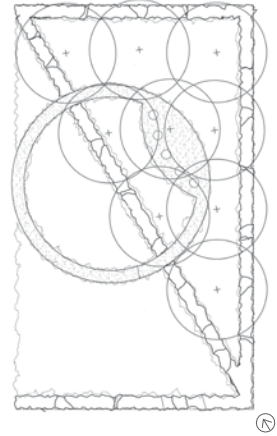
36 x 24 inches

Marion
Brenner

2015

C-print

27 x 36 inches



Garden at Cornerstone

COMPLETED 2006 • SONOMA, CA

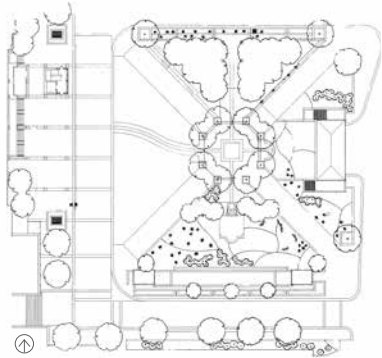
This nine-acre property is occupied by twenty themed gardens, each approximately 1,800 square feet, created by renowned landscape architects and artists, a concept inspired by the International Garden Festival in Chaumont-sur-Loire, France. According to Cornerstone, the Oehme, van Sweden “garden’s ground plane, a plant tapestry, combines texture and form, color and scent, while a canopy of olive trees adds a third dimension that changes in color and opacity as the seasons advance.”^[25]

DESIGNERS

Oehme, van Sweden & Associates

Wolfgang Oehme

James van Sweden



David Lilly Plaza

COMPLETED 1986 • MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Installed atop a parking garage and enclosed by buildings, this square (200 x 200 foot) courtyard plaza is heavily used by students of the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus. Named for David M. Lilly, the former Federal Reserve Board Governor who helped secure the firm's Federal Reserve Board Garden commission, the garden was planted with a cold-hardy, drought-tolerant palette that contrasts with the traditional lawns found in nearby courtyards.

DESIGNERS

Oehme, van Sweden & Associates

Wolfgang Oehme

James van Sweden



Wolfgang Oehme

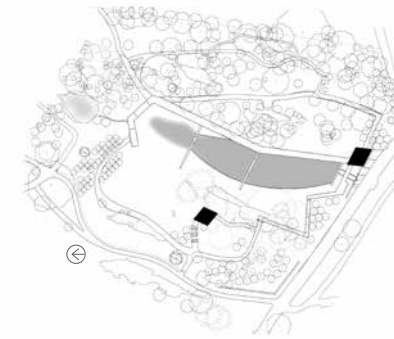
1989

C-print

36 x 24 inches

Sally Gall

2015
C-print
36 x 24 inches



New York Botanical Garden

The Native Plant Garden & Azalea Garden

COMPLETED 2011 • BRONX, NY

The overwhelmingly positive response to the firm's work at the Chicago Botanic Garden, led by van Sweden with Sheila Brady, resulted in two commissions at this New York City site: Substantially reworking the Native Plant Garden and helping to update the Azalea Garden. Sadly, at this point van Sweden's health was severely compromised and he was unable to participate. It marks a significant moment in the firm's transition to a new firm, OEHME, VAN SWEDEN | OvS, and a new generation of leaders.

The 3.5-acre Native Plant Garden was designed by Sheila Brady at OEHME, VAN SWEDEN | OvS. The Azalea Garden is a collaboration: OLIN is responsible for the master plan; staff from the New York Botanical Garden and the Royal Horticultural Society designed the azaleas and rhododendrons; Towers | Golde designed the pathways and overlooks; and OEHME, VAN SWEDEN | OvS designed the herbaceous perennial plantings.

Legacy and Stewardship

A photograph of a field of tall grasses, some green and some golden-brown, under a clear blue sky. In the background, there is a wooden structure made of vertical poles, possibly a fence or a small building, and some trees.

During their lifetimes, Wolfgang Oehme and James van Sweden developed ongoing working relationships and great friendships with clients. They and Oehme, van Sweden & Associates, Inc. (now OEHME, VAN SWEDEN | OvS) created more than 1000 projects since the firm's founding in 1975. They also wrote extensively, so we have a deep understanding of their design and stewardship philosophies, inspirations, and values.

Along with illuminating their design legacy, this exhibition illustrates that great gardens and well-maintained public works endure because of sound stewardship, whether an ongoing collaboration between designers and their patron/stewards or other reasons. The exhibition also reveals the tenuousness of this unique built legacy—especially the private commissions. As Oehme and van Sweden saw in their lifetimes, residential gardens can be wiped away with changes of property ownership, while carefully conceived public commissions can be lost through inadequate maintenance or a desire for something new. Not all landscapes or buildings will last, but the decision-making about their futures is more thorough when their creators' design intent and body of work are understood and valued.

Ferry Cove, Sherwood, MD, 2003
(photo by Richard Felber)

Ferry Cove

COMPLETED 2012 • SHERWOOD, MD

This three-acre bayside property, with a modern house designed by architect Suman Sorg, was van Sweden's weekend residence. In the southwest corner of the site along a road, he created a pond, planted with wild rice, cannas, water lilies, and bulrush, abutted by hardy perennials and grasses. To the southeast, a dense grove of native American holly, sweetgums, catalpas, and southern magnolias provides a visual screen from passersby. To the north, beyond a pool, he experimented with native plantings. The low-maintenance landscape changed throughout the seasons, until in February, when the grasses would be cut down, and the cycle would begin again.

In 2013 the property was sold. Recent images indicate that major, character defining elements of van Sweden's design are gone.



DESIGNERS

Oehme, van Sweden & Associates
Wolfgang Oehme
James van Sweden

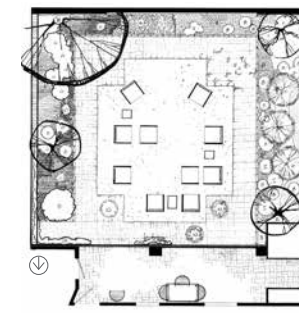


James van Sweden

undated
C-print
24 x 24 inches

Roger Foley

2011
C-print
24 x 24 inches



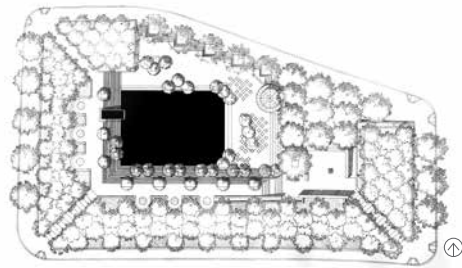
DESIGNERS

Oehme, van Sweden & Associates
Wolfgang Oehme
James van Sweden

Nef Residence

COMPLETED 1996 • WASHINGTON, DC

For art patrons John and Evelyn Nef, the firm created a showcase for *Orphée*, a 10-by-17-foot mosaic, which was a wedding gift from artist Marc Chagall to the Nefs. The project, which commenced in 1977, was refined several times by van Sweden, who also designed the paving and furniture. The goal was to provide a lush backdrop without detracting from the mosaic's grandeur. In 2009, after Evelyn Nef's death, the mosaic was donated to the National Gallery of Art and is now in the gallery's Sculpture Garden. While the mosaic has been preserved, the garden for which it was created, and with which it had a unique relationship, is gone.



Pershing Park

COMPLETED 1988 • WASHINGTON, DC

This 1.8-acre park, named for World War I General John J. Pershing, was commissioned by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation, designed by landscape architect M. Paul Friedberg, and opened in 1981. Oehme, van Sweden did the planting design. The focal point is a shallow pool, which the firm transformed into a water garden. The park has suffered from years of diminished maintenance, sidewalks and other hardscape elements are damaged, the fountain is dry and now a proposal to locate a national World War I Memorial on the site could lead to the park's demolition.

DESIGNERS

M. Paul Friedberg
 Oehme, van Sweden & Associates
 Wolfgang Oehme
 James van Sweden



**Volkmar
Wentzel**

undated
 C-print
 20 x 13 inches

**Brian K.
Thomson**

2015
 C-print
 20 x 11 inches

About the Artists

Andre Baranowski (Polish-American, b. 1956)

New York-based Baranowski is best known for his still life, food, landscape, and travel photographs. His work has been featured in *Saveur*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Garden Design*, *Country Gardens*, and annual publications in the photography industry.

Greg Barth (American, b. 1966)

Barth earned a bachelor's degree in photography from the University of Central Missouri in 1989. After working in a commercial studio, he began a quest to discover why he photographed. He is drawn to the calm of landscape and architecture, which are his natural subjects, and his work has been featured in many art and photography shows. He lives with his wife and two children in Wildwood, Missouri.

Petra Barth (German, b. 1964)

Born in Germany, Barth studied fashion design in Milan and worked for many years in the fashion industry before studying photography at the Corcoran College of Art and Design in Washington, D.C. She is interested in communities and focuses on human, social and environmental issues. Her photography is included in the Archive of Documentary Arts in the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Duke University.

Marion Brenner (American, b. 1944)

Brenner's garden and landscape photographs have appeared in books and magazines, including *Landscape Architecture*, *Martha Stewart Living*, the *New York Times*, and *Garden Design*. In 1992, she collaborated on a series of cards featuring plants used to treat cancer. In 2002, she was the subject of a one-person show, entitled *The Subtle Life of Plants and People*, at the Berkeley Museum Art Museum. Her photographs are in the permanent collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Berkeley Art Museum.

Frederick Charles (American, b. 1957)

Charles is a New York-based architectural photographer. His work has been included in *Landscape Architecture*, *TIME*, *Dwell*, and *LIFE* magazines, among other publications. Charles has

documented award-winning New York historic preservation projects such as the Pierpont Morgan Library and Museum and the New York Botanical Garden's Enid A. Haupt Conservatory.

Barrett Doherty (American, b. 1973)

After earning a B.A. in English from the University of Virginia, Doherty turned to photography to document his travels and experiences while living in Tokyo, Japan. He worked as a professional photographer in New York City for a number of years before receiving an M.L.A. from the University of Pennsylvania. He has worked with Gap Japan, James Corner Field Operations, *Garten + Landschaft*, and Friends of the High Line, and his photographs have been featured in numerous publications and have won national awards.

Francis Dzikowski (American, b. 1966)

Dzikowski attended the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University's foundation program in architecture and studied photography at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. He spent a decade living and traveling abroad, photographing historic preservation projects and archaeological excavations. He taught photography at the American University in Cairo while photographing Egypt's Valley of the Kings for the Theban Mapping Project. Dzikowski currently lives in Brooklyn, New York, working as an architectural and interiors photographer.

Richard Felber (American)

Felber, who passed away in 2015, was a lifelong New Yorker. He began his photography career as a commercial photographer of still lifes and interiors, later finding inspiration to pursue garden and landscape photography. His work has been featured in magazines and books, including *Martha Stewart Living*, *House & Garden*, *Architectural Digest*, *Beautiful American Rose Garden*, and *Potted Gardens*.

Roger Foley (American, b. 1951)

Foley earned a B.A. in art from the University of Notre Dame with a concentration in photography. He published his first solo book, *A Clearing in the Woods: Creating Contemporary Gardens* in 2009, and his work has won top honors from the Garden

Writers Association. His photography can be found in hundreds of books, and his commercial work has been featured in magazines, newspapers, and websites. He conducts workshops and frequently lectures for various groups, including the American Horticultural Society, and the Garden Club of America.

Sally Gall (American, b. 1956)

In addition to her fine art career, Gall, who is based in New York City, teaches photography and works as an editorial, landscape, and lifestyle photographer. Her work is part of several museum and corporate collections and she has been awarded prestigious fellowships, including two MacDowell Colony Fellowships and a Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Residency. Her work is published in two books of photographs, *The Water's Edge* and *Subterranea*, and has been included in numerous shows.

Mick Hales (British-American, b. 1951)

Hales was born in England and grew up in Pakistan and Nigeria. He studied photography at the London College of Printing and moved to New York City in 1982. Hales' work has appeared in some 37 books and in more than 270 magazine articles. His editorial range includes interiors, gardens, travel, architecture, food, and sculpture.

Amy Lamb (American, b. 1944)

Lamb grew up in Birmingham, Michigan. She graduated from the University of Michigan with a Ph.D. in biology and a passion for the scientific beauty of the natural world. Lamb creates close-up images of flowers and fruit to create a dialogue between the viewer and the natural world.

Nate Matthews (American, b. 1982)

Mathews received his M.F.A. in photography from Columbia College Chicago in 2008 and is currently an assistant professor of photography at Northeastern Illinois University. His work has been shown at the Rockford Art Museum in Rockford, Illinois, in the exhibition *Four by Five* at the New Orleans Photo Alliance, and at the Noyes Cultural Arts Center in Evanston, Illinois. He recently curated *The Space Between*, a photographic exhibition at the Fine Art Center Gallery at Northeastern Illinois University.

Sara Cedar Miller (American, b. 1944)

As the official photographer and historian of Central Park for the Central Park Conservancy, Miller's work has been dedicated to conserving the natural environment of both Manhattan's East End and Central Park. She received an M.F.A. in photography from the Pratt Institute. She has written and photographed three award-winning books on Central Park and its enduring legacy.

John Neubauer (American)

Born in New York City, Neubauer, a self-taught photographer, was one of the many photojournalists to contribute to the Environmental Protection Agency's *Documerica* project in the early 1970s. His work has been published widely.

Frank Oudeman (Netherlands, b. 1966)

Brooklyn-based Oudeman grew up in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, and earned his M.F.A. in photography at Bard College's Graduate School of the Arts. He is known for his exquisitely calibrated photographs of interiors and exteriors. His work has been featured in the *New York Times*, *Interior Design*, *Dwell*, *New York Magazine*, *Elle Décor*, and *Architectural Digest*.

Brian K. Thomson (American, b. 1963)

After co-founding a successful internet-based business-travel technology company and founding the Ethan James Foundation, Thomson has returned to his original passion for photography. He donates much of his time to documenting historic sites and structures for such programs as the Historic American Buildings Survey and the Historic American Landscapes Survey.

Volkmar K. Wentzel (German-American, 1915-2006)

Born in Dresden, Germany, Wentzel immigrated to the United States with his family after World War II. He went to work for *National Geographic* in 1937, starting a long and illustrious career. His notable assignments included early photographs of Nepal and Africa, as well as a two-year photographic survey of India. A longtime resident of Washington, D.C., his images of the city were published as a book, *Washington by Night*, in 1993.



Oehme, van Sweden & Associates

2007 • WASHINGTON, DC

[seated] James van Sweden; [standing, from left] Vernae Jones-Seals, Eric Groft, Lisa Delplace, Charles Turner, Sheila Brady, and Wolfgang Oehme (Photo by Roger Foley)

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2. Jill Gleeson, "What I've Learned: Reinventing the Garden," *Washingtonian*, April 1, 2008, <http://bit.ly/1O6nDBM>.
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4. Wolfgang Oehme, James van Sweden, and Susan Rademacher Frey, *Bold Romantic Gardens: The New World Landscapes of Oehme and van Sweden* (Herndon, Virginia: Acropolis Books, 1991), third cover.
5. James van Sweden, *Gardening with Nature* (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 2003), fourth cover.
6. "Carole Rosenberg's Memorable Reflections, August 2010," TCLF.org, last modified October 2, 2010, <https://tclf.org/sites/default/files/pioneers/oralhistory/vanSweden-Reflections.pdf>.
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22. Ibid.
23. Jill Gleeson, "What I've Learned: Reinventing the Garden," *Washingtonian*, April 1, 2008, <http://bit.ly/1O6nDBM>.
24. James Van Sweden, *Gardening with Nature* (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 2003), 51.
25. "James van Sweden: The Garden of Contrasts," CornerStone Sonoma, accessed September 15, 2015, http://www.cornerstonegardens.com/gardens_james.php.

SITE PLANS:

Plans courtesy Oehme, van Sweden & Associates: Americana Manhasset (p.44); Chicago Botanic Garden—Great Basin and Evening Island (p.41); David Lilly Plaza (p.54); Federal Reserve Board Garden (p.15); Ferry Cove (p.58); Forest Park—Pagoda Circle (p.50); Francis Scott Key Memorial (p.49); Garden at Cornerstone (p.53); Halcyon (p.31); Kendale Farm (p.25); Kiawah Residence (p.32); Nef Residence (p.61); New York Botanical Garden—the Native Plant Garden and Azalea Garden (p.57); North Salem Residence (p.22); Pershing Park (p.62); Rockefeller Park—Battery Park City (p.38); Sky Meadow (p.26); Slifka Beach House (p.16); Sorg Residence (p.35).

Plans from Process Architecture ["Wolfgang Oehme & James van Sweden." *Process Architecture: 130*. (Tokyo: Japan, Process Architecture Publishing Co., 1996): Rosenberg Residence (p.12); Vollmer Residence (p.19).

About the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)

Founded in 1899, ASLA is the national professional association for landscape architects, representing more than 15,000 members in 48 professional chapters and 68 student chapters. The Society's mission is to lead, to educate and to participate in the careful stewardship, wise planning and artful design of our cultural and natural environments. www.asla.org

About *Landscape Architecture Magazine*

Founded in 1910, *Landscape Architecture* magazine is the publication of the American Society of Landscape Architects. It is published each month for more than 22,500 subscribers and newsstand sales. The mission of the magazine is to elevate the practice of landscape architecture by providing timely information on built landscapes and on new techniques for ecologically sensitive planning and design. www.landscapearchitecturemagazine.org

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TCLF provides the tools to see, understand and value landscape architecture and its practitioners in the way many people have learned to do with buildings and their designers. Through its Web site, lectures, outreach and publishing, TCLF broadens the support and understanding for cultural landscapes nationwide to help safeguard our priceless heritage for future generations. www.tclf.org

About The Davey Tree Expert Company

With US and Canadian operations in 45 states and five provinces, The Davey Tree Expert Company provides a variety of tree services, grounds maintenance, and consulting services for the residential, utility, commercial, and government markets. Founded in 1880, Davey is employee owned and has more than 7,000 employees. www.davey.com

About the National Building Museum

The National Building Museum is America's leading cultural institution dedicated to advancing the quality of the built environment by educating people about its impact on their lives. Through its exhibitions, educational programs, online content, and publications, the Museum has become a vital forum for the exchange of ideas and information about the world people build for themselves. www.nbm.org

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