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Mastering Landscape Architecture
A survey of graduate programs gives a glimpse of the future of the profession.
By Lolly Tai, FASLA, and Rob Kuper, ASLA

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Thinking Big…and Small
Philadelphia Green is a flexible nonprofit working at a variety of scales to fight blight, create community, and beautify its namesake city.
By Daniel Jost, ASLA

Gateways to The Desert
Three new trailheads for Scottsdale’s McDowell Sonoran Preserve are designed to have as light a touch as possible on the existing landscape.
By Rachel Hill, Student ASLA

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Borrowing the Beach
A Malibu coastal garden creates a natural link between mountains and sea.
By Debra Prinzing

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Don’t Sweat the Invasion
Some scientists are challenging conventional approaches to invasive species.
By Rebecca Tuhus-Dubrow
TREETOPS are all the rage these days. Ecotourism destinations include a tree house restaurant in Auckland and a tea house in Japan. And for the stir-crazy office worker there are even tree house offices popping up in the Pacific Northwest. Add to this list the University of Pennsylvania’s Morris Arboretum in Philadelphia.

Out on a Limb, a new permanent installation at the arboretum, invites you to literally experience trees as the birds and squirrels do. Visitors move from solid ground into the canopy through a series of gently sloping boardwalks, wooden gateways, and human-sized habitat structures that reach heights of up to 50 feet. Constructed of galvanized steel and locally harvested hardwoods, the branching walkways wind through woodland habitat vignettes rising out of some of the oldest tree specimens in the collection.

The stark contrast of steel with the organic texture and structure of the surrounding hardwoods is jarring at first, but lead architect Alan Metcalfe says it was intentional. The designers at Metcalfe Architecture & Design, working with arboretum...
director Paul Meyer, CVM Engineers, and
Forever Young Treehouses, wanted to re-
main honest about the fabricated character
of the exhibit while still reflecting and re-
spending to the natural architecture of the
surrounding mature forest and providing
space for learning and connection.

One of the most popular spaces in Out on
a Limb is a convergence of boardwalks, af-
fectionately known as the “Squirrel Scram-
ble,” where two oversized hammocks hang
several stories above the ground. Metcalf
says the intent of the “Scramble” was to
provide the feeling that one is suspended,
literally, in the canopy. Adults and chil-
dren alike can be seen enjoying these struc-
tures, some reclining in the dappled sun-
light, others actively exploring the space,
climbing and playing as squirrels or chip-
munks might.

A giant nest at the end of a
suspension bridge isn’t for the
birds—it’s a people perch.

Other points of interest include a giant
nest woven of grapevine at the end of a
swinging suspension bridge and a teahouse
pavilion that provides an outdoor classroom
space and broad views into the surrounding
woodland. For hours, admission, and pro-
gram information visit the Morris Arbore-
tum online at www.morrisarboretum.org.

—JENNIFER DOWDELL,
ASSOCIATE ASLA

SURFIN' TURF

Even the Ocean
Is Going Green

Cruise ships take green roof technology
to the high seas.

CRUISE SHIP PASSENGERS can now
enjoy earth in addition to water and
sky, thanks to green roof technology.
Three Celebrity ships now feature the
Lawn Club, the first live turf installations
on mobile sites. And Royal Caribbean’s
new Oasis of the Seas is home to Central
Park, which features a new concept in
ship layout.

Central Park contains 12,000 tropical
plants placed among seating areas and
artwork. It connects the various “neighbor-
hoods” that make up Oasis and is used
for games and relaxation. According to Royal
Caribbean, a horticulturist will offer educa-
tional programming for the passengers. The Lawn
Club, located on the upper deck of the Celebri-
ty ships, offers a green place for passengers to
relax, picnic, or play light lawn sports.

Growing about half an acre of lawn on the
deck of a ship poses some significant chal-

Plants in Royal Caribbean’s Oasis of
the Seas were chosen for salt tolerance
and a low potential to spread pests
and diseases along the ship’s route.