

Dane Spencer Landscape Architect

By Lalaena Gonzalez-Figueroa | Photography: Pool, Greg Wilson, balance Giovanni Lumardi

Attorneys think with words, musicians think with notes, and mathematicians think with numbers. Dane Spencer, Landscape Architect, thinks with pictures.

When visiting a site for the first time Dane uses careful observation to note the assets and limitations a project site has to offer. Every site is different: Where is the shade? Are there views, and from what vantage point? What and where should be screened? What indoor uses influence outdoor spaces?

It's an exhaustive list of items to be considered before Dane puts pen to paper.

Through strong communication with his clients, Dane gathers their ideas to build an understanding of the garden they seek to create.

"A client's vision is overlaid with the existing conditions of a site, and this is where design begins," Dane reveals.



"But foremost in design, you must consider the region where you live. We live in Flatwood Pines, covering more than 50% of Florida."

"It's called Flatwood Pines because that's the plant association that could be found, before we all moved here over the last 250 years."

Because native plants grow best where they are most supported by weather conditions and soil type, Dane likes to use 70% to 80% natives in his designs. "I use subtropical and ornamental plants as accents where appropriate in the design; it's all about the right plant in the right place."

But well before he begins thinking through the plant pallet he studies the interaction and relationships of spaces. By creating the structure of the garden first, all things follow: hardscape followed by softscape. Swimming pools, decks, garden walls, screens and arbors define the areas of use to create the setting for plants.

Dane is a graduate of one of the earliest Landscape Architecture programs in the United States and has practiced for over 20 years. His alma mater, Iowa State University, boasts one of the nation's leading L.A. programs and is

recognized around the country as a competitive force within the industry.

Dane fights the perception that Landscape Architects only provide planting plans. "Landscape Architects are generalists," he states. "Our service melds science with art. Without our science, the art suffers, and visa-versa."

"We integrate what we know about natural systems," he explains. "We aren't simply planting trees or installing trellises; each component that we incorporate has significance and purpose."

"As Landscape Architects, we need to understand complex natural systems; everything from precipitation rates to drainage systems, the dynamics of water and erosion control, rehabilitation of wildlife habitat, soil hydrology, etc. We reinforce what is already here, rather than impose our will upon nature."

Dane is highly interested in the integration of sustainable ecology through the use of elements such as rainwater cisterns. "We are able to significantly reduce the demand for potable water through the harvesting of rainwater. By utilizing a cistern of 10,000 gallons or more, we reduce not only the storm water runoff that would normally go into the city storm system, but it lowers the demand



for one of our most precious natural resources," he says.

Whether Dane's projects are commercial or residential, he is able to impart his signature of gentle tranquility. A mélange of textures and colors accomplish specific criteria, while emotional respite for the inhabitants remains his ultimate goal.

Dane's insightful transformations have earned him industry recognition. In 2010 he was honored with the First Annual James Rose Award for "Mid-Century Revival," a project that artfully integrated outdoor and indoor living spaces. His work has won recognition in the American Society of Landscape Architects and was featured in Garden Design magazine.

"I like the focus on modern architecture in Sarasota; the geometry and simplicity of elements allows me to reflect the identity of each unique piece of architecture."

At the heart of his professional approach, says Dane, is the psychology of landscape design. "My work has a capacity to affect individuals on an emotional level," he offers. "This is about utilizing space to achieve a unique and positive environment that helps people feel more in touch with nature and the nature within themselves."

Dane Spencer Landscape Architecture

530 South Orange Avenue
Sarasota, FL 34236

(912) 660.1354

dane@ds-la.com

www.DS-LA.com

