

# ARCHITECT and INTERIORS INDIA

Inspiration and insight for architects and interior designers

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The brightest trends

## MANHATTAN TRANSFER

THE AMERICAN DREAM COMES TO INDIA AT MANHATTAN  
IN PUNE, CREATED BY MOCO DESIGN STUDIO





# SCENE BUILDING

Landscaping goes beyond the greening of outer space and involves ecologically-sensitive planning and design

BY ARUNA RATHOD

**T**he term 'landscape architecture' became common after 1863, when Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux designed New York's Central Park. In India, the Mughal gardens and Vrindavan gardens are fine examples of landscape architecture before its time. Pune-based landscape architect Vikas Bhosekar observes, "The Taj Mahal is the best example of how architecture and landscape complement each other, without reducing the value of the other. The landscape creates a perfect setting for architectural structures, if considered beforehand."

Today, landscape architects deal with increasingly complex relationships between the built and natural environments. In urban settings, most building projects need the combination of architectural planning for built structures, interior planning for inner spaces, and landscape architectural planning for outdoor spaces. A combination of all three aspects in a project gives a total and comprehensive design solution.

"In the case of large projects occupying vast areas, the site planning becomes an important aspect of the overall

design. In such projects, the landscape architect provides valuable inputs and solutions, along with the architect, in locating the various buildings, facilities and infrastructure based on site conditions like topography and contours, slopes and gradients, existing flora and fauna, views and vistas, climatic conditions, quality of open spaces etc.," says Coimbatore-based architect S. Jeyakumar of Jeyakumar Associates.

Landscape architecture is important for all kinds of projects – be it residential, gated communities, condominiums, colleges and universities, office and commercial complexes, hotels, resorts, hospitals, industries, SEZs, etc. "Landscape architectural design takes into consideration three important design aspects: aesthetic, functional and environmental. It tries to combine all these factors while providing a solution to a project – though the significance and percentage may vary from project to project, depending on its type, nature, location and user profile," adds Jeyakumar.

Commercial projects need a higher percentage of aesthetic appeal for the surroundings and frontage. They have to attract visitors and customers, and provide a pleas-

1. Landscape design by Jagtap Nursery, illustrating the combined beauty of softscape and hardscape.





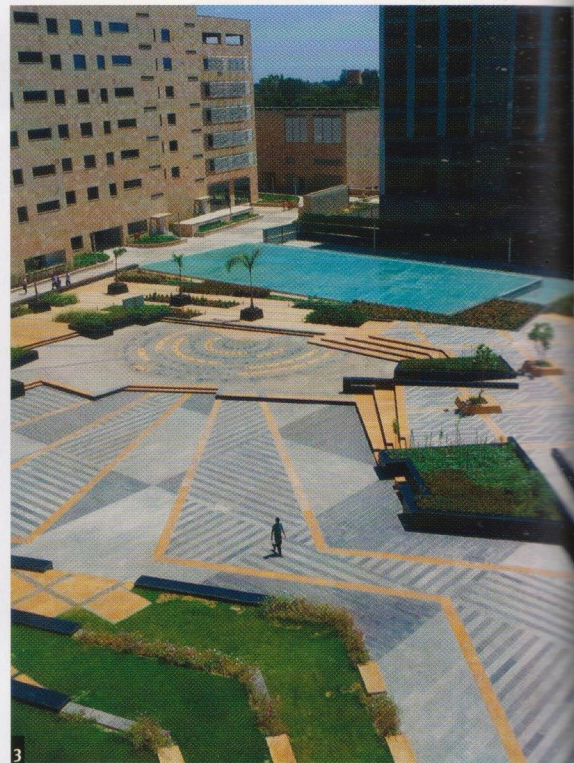
ant atmosphere for the users. Vehicular and pedestrian circulation, parking design, etc. comes under the purview of landscape architects, apart from public seating areas, entertainment areas, open-air theatres and other activity areas. Landscape architect Rajoo Pradhan of Rajoo and Padmaja Pradhan Landscape Design & Development, puts it simply, "As architecture sculpts space for indoor (and semi-indoor) use, landscape architecture sculpts the outdoor space."

Landscape architects plan and design parks, residential developments, campuses, gardens, cemeteries, commercial centres, resorts, transportation facilities, corporate and institutional centres and waterfront developments. They also design and plan the restoration of natural places disturbed by humans, such as wetlands, stream corridors, mined areas and forested land. Their appreciation for historic landscapes and cultural resources enables landscape architects to undertake preservation planning projects for national, regional and local historic sites and areas.

Nupur Prothi Khanna, founder and director, Beyond Built, and honorary secretary, Indian Society of Landscape Architects (ISOLA), Delhi chapter, believes that landscape architecture is an inherent part of a project and can help to preserve the essence of the site. "The very fact that landscape studies encompass the natural palette as well as human interventions, implies that we have to move responsibly in creating a symbiotic relationship. As landscape designers, we require to work as facilitators in addressing 'global' aspirations of a project brief within the parameters of the specific cultural context," maintains Khanna.

As the world moves on with its complex and ever-changing matrix of art, science and technology, a change in one field affects the other and there is a constant process of evolution. Pradhan says, "Research in ecology, use of technology in architecture, and the latest trends in the field of architecture are affecting the field of landscape architecture. However, there is one extremely strong and constant element in landscape architecture – which is nature itself. Nature should be able to accept the new philosophy being introduced in the creative part of landscape architecture."

Landscape architecture involves not only plants – but also paved, semi-paved, covered, semi-covered areas; pebble beds, water bodies, pergolas, gazebos, synthetic



lawns, lighting fixtures, LED trees, outdoor furniture, etc. Landscape architect Kalpak Bhawe says, "A good landscape is a combination of surfaces with various textures and degrees of covered areas. Along with the hard (built) elements, it has soft elements such as trees, shrubs, creepers, climbers, lawns, etc."

Bhawe observes that residential landscaping in India is becoming increasingly westernised. "The Indian community is very social – so any landscape to be designed for them must be interactive, and not just visual. I feel, instead of adopting a particular style of landscaping, one should address the needs of the landscape depending on the locality. The building style and geometry adopted must be considered, and the social aspects of each area, state and country be adhered to."

## JAGTAP HORTICULTURE, MAGARPATTA CITY, HADAPSAR, PUNE

Lansol, the projects division of Jagtap Horticulture Pvt Ltd, popularly known as Jagtap Nursery in Pune, provides complete landscape solutions for residential, institutional, commercial and industrial establishments. With in-house capabilities to design and build landscapes of varying sizes and complexity, it focuses on adherence to international standards while executing softscape and hardscape works. Recently, it has successfully completed landscaping of TCS Sahyadri Park Phase 1 at Hinjewadi, Pune. Currently, the company is carrying out softscape works at the Blue Ridge Project of Paranjape Schemes, Hinjewadi, Pune. Lansol deploys modern tools and machinery to enhance efficiency while curtailing labour costs. High quality plant material is produced at its nurseries to cater to the requirements of the project teams and garden centres at Pune and Kohlapur. These centres are a one-stop shop for all types of garden implements, accessories, containers and fertilizers.

2. Kalpak Bhawe aims to create a landscape that is not only visual, but also an interactive space.

3. Beyond Built' addresses global aspirations within a local context while creating an inspiring landscape.





## HOW TO CREATE A 'GREEN' LANDSCAPE

"There are various ways to make a sustainable landscape," says Bhawe. "At the design stage, one must do minimum cutting and filling, and maintain the natural terrain. Usage of drought-resistant species helps conserve water. Use of drip and sprinkler system is important. Use of recycled water is another alternative to save water. Organic pesticides can be used wherever possible. All trimmed foliage, sticks, branches of plants can be dumped into a compost pit for manure. All the trimmed foliage of palms, bulbous plants can be used in flower decorations. One can also create a pond/lake to collect rainwater, which will percolate and recharge the underground water table."

Interior landscaping is the practice of designing, arranging and caring for living plants in enclosed environments. Indoor environments contain plains, angles and horizons that are softened, accentuated or altered by the addition of plants and planters – thus 'landscaping' the interior. Spaces such as atria of malls, airports, vertical walls, terrace gardens, courtyards are now being landscaped. "Landscape architecture plays a vital role in transforming these spaces into interesting areas," says Jeyakumar. "Big trees, tall palms, all kinds of water features, swimming pools, indoor landscapes are possible – thanks to the latest materials and technologies available."

Interior landscaping is a relatively new trend in India, explains Khanna, adding that it is expected to become a vital part of our environment in the near future. "While associated with Terminal 3 at DIAL, we had an opportunity to do in-depth research on the approach towards landscap-

ing of interiors. We looked at various components that enrich the interior experience, viz, the use of art, artefacts such as planters, lighting decks, water, etc. The most significant contribution in interior landscaping is made by natural plant material. While enriching the atmosphere, the vibrancy and life brought by plants remains only partially tapped in the interior environments of today."

Modern materials like steel, wood, stone, glass are now being used in landscaping. "Vertical gardens and rooftop gardens are the upcoming concepts," adds Bhosekar. Aesthetics is eventually a value addition, believes Khanna. "Styles such as English gardens or Japanese gardens are not landscape architectural responses, but only 'beautification'. Landscape architecture has to be much more than that," she insists.

Sustainability is the key word today, and the latest trends in landscaping are towards sustainable materials. While there are varying definitions, 'sustainable landscaping', should include an attractive environment that is in balance with the local climate and requires minimal resource inputs – such as fertiliser, pesticides, time and water. Sustainable landscaping begins with an appropriate design that includes functional, cost efficient, visually pleasing, environment-friendly and maintainable areas.

Green walls, grass pavers that can take load of trucks, eco pavers that radiate less heat and absorb water to infiltrate into the ground, bamboo wood for decking, among other things, are some sustainable options. Khanna observes, "Landscape design is not about 'styles'. It is about essential responses to various factors like circulation through a site, ecological responses to paved areas to reduce heat island effect, creating micro-climate, about building communities and sociological implications of bringing

4. Creating spaces for people to come together, celebrate and play is a priority in landscape design, as seen in this design by Kalpak Bhawe.





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people outdoors, etc.”

The availability of water is a huge factor while designing landscapes, emphasises Jeyakumar. “Any landscape architectural design should consider the resources available. It should not become a burden or strain to the project. In certain locations, the water is available in plenty – which can take care of large areas of softscaping. But in water-scarce areas, the use of less water-consuming plants, reduction of soft areas, increased dry landscape areas will be preferred. Native and acclimatised plant species will survive better in local conditions, even in adverse conditions.”

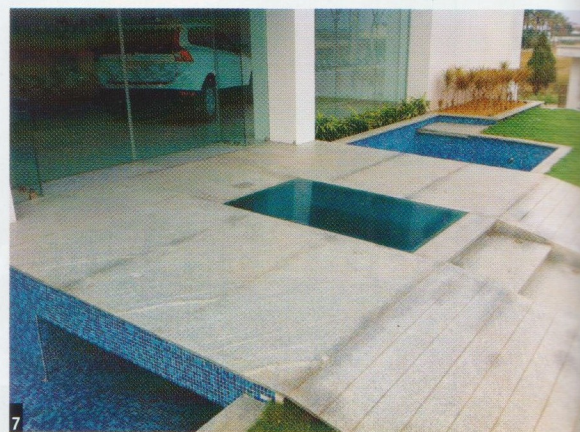
Another way to have a sustainable landscape is to use environment-friendly materials and indigenous trees. Bhosekar suggests the creation of a ‘minimalist landscape’ theme by creating landscaping with the use of minimum elements and plant materials. “When we design large areas, we try to incorporate local flora of that region, and consider topographical features such as existing trees and contours.”

Some of the new products that help in sustainability are grass grids and pavers, drainage cells, sub-soil irrigation products, water management gadgets, lightweight materials, fibre-reinforced plastic products, solar-powered outdoor lights, etc. “Present-day landscape architects make meticulous study and calculation of water requirements for their landscape projects,” adds Jeyakumar. “The idea is to provide the right amount of water to each variety of plant used and not do over-watering. Also, the dispersion of water is prolonged to give better absorption for the plants; and watering is done at a time when loss due to evaporation is minimal. Also, these days, subsurface and root zone watering techniques and products are available – which directly nourishes the plant roots and completely avoids evaporational losses.”

Pradhan believes that the increased awareness about landscape architecture has brought about growth in interior



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5&6. A minimalistic creation for a corporate office terrace by Jeyakumar Associates.

7. An inviting landscape design for a car showroom by Jeyakumar Associates.

landscaping, but it demands excessive maintenance. While the landscape architect is concerned with urban issues, Pradhan believes that the development of public areas has to be given 100 per cent cognisance. “This is more important than making the city appear beautiful. Creating spaces for people to come together, celebrate, protest and play gets top priority.” Hopefully, now that landscape architecture is coming into its own, our cities will become more livable. 