

# site

# Lines

february • 2000

## Landscape Architecture in Northern BC

By Dawn Brockington

If landscape architecture tends to flourish in a tertiary economy, it is safe to say that my colleagues and I in the North are pioneers, as we are practising in a primary resource economy. Up here, a tree has more value as timber or pulp, rather than as a thing of beauty.

First, I should define what I mean by "the North". Southern readers should drag out their maps, because I know that a lot of you, especially those of you who originated outside the province, had no idea that there was anything else up here but some fur trading posts, let alone where Vanderhoof or Dease Lake is. Roughly speaking, I term the North everything north of, and including 100 Mile House — about  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the whole province. In this whole area there are three landscape architects: Jay Lazzarin and myself here in Prince George, and Ren Settle in Masset on the Queen Charlottes. Yes, our Christmas parties are a little quiet.

The most significant difference between landscape architectural practice in the North and "down South" is that private development is not the bread and butter of the office. The increase in the population of BC, and its subsequent growth in housing and related services in the south, has not been seen here to nearly the same extent. There is private development,

but often the developer is just as happy to have his secretary or his delivery driver draw up a landscape plan as a landscape architect. There is no by-law stipulating that the developer must submit a plan prepared by a landscape architect. However, the City of Prince George is making strides in encouraging builders to develop their sites professionally. They must post a bond to the value of the landscape, and if it is not installed as promised, the City will finish the work using the bond. In all commercial, industrial and multi-family developments, developers must adhere to landscape screening requirements around parking lots and storage areas. In addition, Prince George is the only city in the North with a design panel, which like their southern counterparts, review projects in development permit zones. In recent years these efforts have paid off, with increased awareness and appreciation of properly developed sites. Consequently, there are more developers, particularly those who do commercial work, who are using landscape architects. Nevertheless, the majority of my practice consists of government work.

The provincial government, specifically BC Parks and the Ministry of Forests, will hire landscape architects occasionally,

mostly for site design for provincial campgrounds or forest recreation sites. Here in Prince George, there have been a significant number of large civic buildings developed in recent years, including a provincial courthouse, a civic centre, an aquatic centre, and a new regional district building. Projects in the design or construction phase include a middle school, an art gallery, and an RCMP Headquarters for Northern BC. While "outside expertise" (i.e. Vancouver) is often called for in at least the conceptual design stage of the building, strong pressure to hire locally translates into work for landscape architects.

Within the municipal realm, there are a wide variety of projects, including parks, trail systems, and streetscape development.

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## Letter from the Editor

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BCSLA

# sitelines

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Sitelines is published 6 times a year: February, April, June, August, October and December, by the British Columbia Society of Landscape Architects and is mailed to all BCSLA members; registered landscape architects, associates and affiliates.

The editorial deadline is the 8<sup>th</sup> and advertising deadline is the 16<sup>th</sup> day of the intervening months. Advertising rate information is available on request.

Inquiries regarding editorial, advertising or other issues should be addressed to the Sitelines Editor, c/o The BCSLA at the above address.

#### Sitelines Group

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The purpose of Sitelines is to provide an open forum for the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to the profession of Landscape Architecture. Individual opinions expressed are those of the writers and not necessarily those of the BCSLA.

As many of you may already know, February will be bringing a major adjustment to my life, as Mike and I are expecting our first child. Having been well warned about the level of commitment and participation that this new arrival will require, I feel it is best to pass on the responsibility for Sitelines to new hands.

I have enjoyed this experience immensely. The most exciting aspect of this work has been the enthusiasm of our membership to participate and communicate. I would like to thank Clive Justice in particular, for his regular voluntary contributions. In all other instances, whenever I have requested an article, every individual has risen to meet the challenge, and this gives me great hope for our membership to continue to become more involved.

I would like to thank the members of the board for their support

through the rough patches. I would also like to thank Klaudia for her support and patience, and Sue at Archetype for coping magnificently with the content and photos. I trust that Sitelines will continue to involve our members and evolve as a communication document, and I look forward to future issues.

As of this writing, a new Editor has not yet been found. If you are interested, and would like to know more about the time and energy that this position would require, please contact Klaudia, for my notes detailing a typical issue. It is certainly a job that could be shared among a few members, for 'many hands make light work'.

**Best wishes to you all.**

**Jean Kindratsky  
Interim Editor (retired)**

### November 1999 — New BCSLA Members

The Board of Directors of the BC Society of Landscape Architects are pleased to welcome 13 new registered members. Your dedication and commitment to the profession is greatly appreciated.

Congratulations and best of success in your professional career!

Brian Baker • Grace Fan

Jessica Gemella • Pawel Gradowski

Bronwen Jones • Clark Kavolinas

Erik Lees • Tiina Mack

Suzanne Pearson • Valoree Richmond

David Turner • David Wright • Jason Yee

**Landscape Architecture in Northern B.C.**  
... continued



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In fact, "Downtown Beautification" initiatives are one of the most significant areas of urban design employment for northern landscape architects. With virtually every town in the north based on primary resource extraction, and with that sector of the economy being severely depressed in recent years (the unemployment rate has been 18% in Prince George), there has been great pressure to diversify the economy. Sprucing up the downtown is seen as a way of keeping tourists in town and spending money. Very often these projects

are a co-operative effort of local merchants, service clubs and the municipality. Some of the towns that are undertaking improvements in their downtown include Quesnel, Burns Lake, Kitimat, Prince Rupert, Smithers, and Prince George.

At the site design level, universal design principals and processes apply. However, the northern climate effects site design in two key ways: **1) Snow Management** and **2) Plant Selection**. When developing a site design solution, one always has to address the issue of where to pile the white stuff, even if it's only temporarily until it is hauled away to a snow dump. Site amenities must be protected from snow clearing equipment and access and site use must be viewed in winter terms as well. Plant selection is limited to Zone 3 (at least in the central interior). There are no reliable broadleaf evergreens within this zone, so landscaping with terminal moraines and glacial outwash are common themes. One must learn to love pinus mugho and junipers, and avoid daydreams of magnolia, yew and english ivy. Of course, it makes it difficult for landscape architects to correct the mistakes of architects

and town planners by shrouding the built landscape in verdant growth as is common practice in the Lower Mainland. If one follows the modernist maxim of less is more, with an attention to the "bones" of the design, one can do quite well with the plant palette available.

In summary, landscape architectural practice in the North is challenging and fulfilling. One must learn to do everything, for there is not a large pool of skilled people to fall back on. Thus, in addition to my traditional landscape architectural skills, I am a cadd technician, office manager, marketer, and janitor. I have learned to drive in blizzards on the highway, because I have to get to a meeting 150 kilometres away. And I always make sure I comb my hair before I go to the mall, as it is a small place, and I may bump into a client. Perhaps, in time, more of us will come to the frontier, and they can take my place when I retire in Victoria.

GROUNDSP

**George Fraser,  
A Biography**

By Bill Dale

It was a long time coming, but George Fraser, first foreman of

Beacon Hill Park, has finally been recognized for his work. In our last issue, the laying of his commemorative stone was described in detail. However, George Fraser's work did not begin and end at Beacon Hill Park. Read on and

discover the life of a west coast plant pioneer.

In 1889, when John Blair, already recognized as a great landscape designer, won the competition to design and build

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**George Fraser, A Biography**  
... continued

Beacon Hill Park in Victoria, the first thing he did was to hire another Scot, George Fraser, to be his foreman. The result was this beautiful park, which has been a source of pride to the citizens of Victoria for the past 110 years.

George Fraser, always very modest, and Blair, were probably the two people most responsible for the great parks and gardens we have in British Columbia today. They were the first horticultural pioneers.

Fraser was born and trained in Scotland, and while still in his twenties, served as head gardener at several large estates in Scotland. Despite his position and reputation, he always wanted his own land. As this was not possible in his native Scotland, he struck out for Canada with his dream of owning and operating his own nursery.

After working in Winnipeg and Victoria, he settled in the remote village of Ucluelet on the isolated west coast of Vancouver Island. He found his 'rhododendron heaven' with a climate and soil suitable to grow his beloved rhododendrons and azaleas. He bought 256 acres of land there for \$256.00 in 1894, and spent the next fifty years of his life doing just what he wanted to do. He cleared enough land for a nursery and was in business.

Although rhododendrons were always his great love, he was interested in developing many new things. He crossed many domestic

varieties with the native species of the west coast in an effort to come up with plants that would combine the best features of both. He did this with cranberries, gooseberries, roses and honeysuckle, to mention only a few.

In 1897, he received a shipment of cranberries from Nova Scotia. In this shipment he noticed a weed, which he recognized as being a wild rhododendron from the East Coast — *R. canadense*. This he planted separately and 15 years later when it bloomed, in 1912, he promptly crossed it with *R. japonicum*. This hybrid bloomed in 1919 and later that year a budded plant was sent to Professor C.S. Sargent at the Arnold Arboretum, Boston. When Sargent failed to acknowledge receipt of the plant, Fraser sent another budded plant to Mr. William Watson, Curator at the Royal Botanic Garden, Kew. In 1920, Mr. Watson named the hybrid plant, *Rhododendron X Fraseri*. Quite independently, Fraser's hybrid was also named *R. X Fraseri* at the Arnold Arboretum.

About this time, a young man, Joseph Gable of Stewartstown, Pennsylvania, became interested in the growing of rhododendrons. The Arnold Arboretum suggested that he get in touch with a Mr. George Fraser of Ucluelet, BC. Fraser recommended Gable for membership in the Royal Horticultural Society (something that was required in those days). He introduced him, by mail, to Mr. EJP Magor of Cornwall and also suggested that he subscribe to the *Gardeners Chronicle*. The rest is history, as Gable went on to become the dean of all American rhododendron growers.

Gable and Fraser became fast friends and corresponded regularly until Fraser's death. Several years later, Gable wrote "Mr. Fraser helped me very much in my earlier years, and I owe much of what I have been able to accomplish to him. My first hybrids of *R. Fortunei*, *R. discolor* and perhaps too of *R. decorum* were obtained through the Magor-Fraser channel and my work has been basically built upon these crosses. So both I, and those who grow the varieties of rhododendrons I have concocted and disseminated, owe a debt we cannot figure out in dollars and cents to the kindly advice and generosity of my old friend, George Fraser."

Fraser's accomplishments as Canada's leading rhododendron grower and hybridizer are well known. In 1991 Fraser was posthumously awarded the rarely given Pioneer's Achievement Award by the American Rhododendron Society, and bronze plaques were placed at both Ucluelet and Scotland in his honour.

It was not until September 25, 1999 that the City of Victoria honoured this pioneer who had been responsible for planting many of the trees and shrubs in Beacon Hill Park over a hundred years ago. Mayor Bob Cross and Fraser's niece, Mrs. Irene Doirin, jointly unveiled an engraved stone at Beacon Hill Park near where some of his plantings still flourish. The ceremony was well attended and including the Gaelic choir singing in that ancient language, and the skirl of bagpipes contributed to a Scottish atmosphere in a very pleasant tribute to this Scottish pioneer who had done so much for his adopted country — Canada.



# HISTORY

# HISTORY

# Quiet Modernism and the West Coast Style

## Art and Design Mirrors the Values and Conscience of a Culture.



by  
Karen  
Myskiw

Associate  
Member

### Context: The International Style and Modernism

In the 1950's, in the spirit of the age, pursuit of modernism encouraged a discourse among modern design, architecture, and urban planning.<sup>1</sup> The approach to modern art at home was in response to the International style tempered through the eyes of Vancouver's *Avant Garde*. This group of aspiring young designers and artists had their beginnings during the 1950's, established their careers over the following decades and for the most part lived or still reside within the domain of Vancouver.

While notable artists of the International Style, such as Jackson Pollock, and Barnett Newman focussed upon urban subject matter in their work, the local *Avant Garde* concentrated their efforts on abstracted landscape motifs and metaphors. This vernacular disposition was in response to suburban lifestyles, access to nature and job security.

Single family residential housing comprised the land-use and zoning for a large part of Vancouver; the

towers of the West End were not yet on draughtsmen's tables. The Hotel Vancouver and Marine Building were landmarks of Vancouver's skyline. The Lions Gate Bridge was newly constructed, providing an accessible, tangible link to the North Shore.

### Modernism and the West Coast Spirit

Prior to the 1950's, the mainstream art being produced was of a realistic nature, fashioned after the Group of Seven. Lawren Harris, Jack Shadbolt and Gordon Smith painted during WWII, and while Harris had a mature style, the artistic temperaments of the latter two artists were influenced by the world around them and therefore subject to growth. The wave of modernism took hold.

Gordon Smith's *Wet Night* (1953) captures timelessness; the essence of a January night is evoked amongst the dark recesses of barren Horse Chestnut trees silhouetting an indigo twilight. What marks this painting as modern is its subdued colour palette, simplified or abstracted subject matter and the capturing of alienation that many Modern works evoke. (Munch's *Scream* is one example). The geometric patterning lends depth to the canvas and gives the illusion of a kaleidoscope. There is a sense of fragility as if the pieces might fall in. Like looking through a stained glass window, the reflections are both of water and contemplation, or planes of perception. This painting is a classic as it still communicates its message today with the same potency as when it was created.

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Bert Binning's *Mariner's Triptych: for Night Navigation* (1955), and the *Maquette for the Imperial Bank Mural* (1953), are examples of two dimensional works that feel a bit like a starched shirt: they are stiff and boxy, yet they attend to the Modern aesthetic of balance, proportion and harmony. The simplicity of the motifs capture the essence of the West Coast seaside and industrial themes. The flatness and crispness is owed in part to the technique of generating a linear and geometric distillation of the subject matter. The economic sector represented by automation, industry, commerce and the rich raw materials that comprise primary and secondary industries are distilled into symbols. The works are robust in scale, large enough in fact, that an original mosaic was incorporated into the exterior façade of the BC Hydro Building (1955) designed by Thompson Berwick Pratt.

E. J. Hughes' painting entitled *Comox Valley* (1953) captures the idealized landscape. An aloofness emerges from the painstakingly detailed rendering. Today it reads like a nostalgic postcard of an agrarian hamlet. Its tone is both friendly yet sombre. Its influence resides in its mesmerizing quality, of this autumn scene: forested mountainsides, working farms, and fallow fields of golden stubble. In evidence are the alterations to the land, a cleared field and the remnants of a felled forest. The recognizable iconography is

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**Quiet Modernism and the West Coast Style**  
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comfortable; the painting captures a romantic landscape. The colour palette chosen is jewel-like and saturated, and the brushstrokes applied with a fine hand.

Bruno Bobak's body of work chosen in this show curated by Cornelia Oberlander is expressive and passionate. His rendition of Landscape Okanagan (1951), in watercolour, shows a sepia and moss rendered hillside emulating the parched desert-like landscape predominant in the interior. Techniques of wet-in-wet, dry brush and scratching into the paper create a rich textural composition.

Vancouver Harbour (1959), a work Bobak produced in oil, renders the brilliant vastness of the harbour in cerulean and cobalt brushstrokes. Brushstrokes, random and generous in size give the perception of movement, and depth. Across the water, the North Shore is a tapestry of a bold patchwork of colour. The work effectively encapsulates the west coast spirit.

**Summary: Then and Now**

Each of the four artists mentioned above are distinct in their style of embracing the Modernist programme. They did well to document an era in which a distinctly modern style was created and to distill the philosophy of an age. Each work chooses a slightly different medium and method to communicate its message. The message is one of contentment, yet there might be some necessity to mark the passage of time. With the war ending, there is reason to reflect and relish the beauty of the world around us. Soon the exuberance of the Fifties would be overshadowed by the revolutionary Sixties.

Community building during the 1950's developed the vision and laid the groundwork for the next decades of art patronage. A debt of gratitude is owed to the *Avant Garde*, the group of artists and designers who had vision and quiet persistence to embrace Modernism. Modernism, taken under the wings of the *Avant Garde*, evolved into the distinct West Coast style of art and architecture.

Vancouver has grown with abandonment since the 1950's. Each decade has witnessed its growth. Today, instead of the scene from E.J. Hughes' Comox Valley, those

fields have become subdivisions and the hillsides have been clear-cut. Yet as the population has grown so has the strength of its voices. The rise of environmentalism has found allies in many professions, and artists continue to speak with their own visions.

The works of Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun or Attila Richard Lucacs redefine Vancouver as a centre poised on its axis, a diverse, multi-cultural metropolis. Yuxweluptun's Shaman Dancing in the Sunset (1989), also being shown currently, has a political and environmental message. Saturated tones of crimson depict a blood red sky; the parched ground is spare and devoid of vegetation. Token totem poles are without decoration as spirits clamber at the bases in longing. The water looks foreboding and toxic. There is an uneasy tension in the air. We see our reflection in the mirror: are we prepared to take the time to see, acknowledge and act?

<sup>1</sup> Scott Watson "Art in the Fifties: Design, Leisure, and Painting in the Age of Anxiety", Vancouver Art and Artists: 1931 - 1983 The Vancouver Art Gallery Exhibition Catalogue p.72

**Wanted: Editor**

To solicit, edit and proofread content for Sitelines. These tasks could be shared among a few people, or one person could carry on. Approximate time commitment for one person is about 3 working days per issue.

Please contact Klaudia for more information.



# Archives Update

By Julie Hicks

Last year, at the Annual General Meeting, Clive Justice challenged us to do something with our Society records. Rising to this challenge, a group of Board Members (Julie Hicks, Liz Watts, Adrienne Brown, and Pat Campbell) with Klaudia's assistance, began the task of investigating and recording the contents of the twenty-six boxes of Society records.

Upon investigation, it became clear some of the boxes would be needed on an ongoing basis by the Registrar and Administrator. The original plan to send all the boxes to the Provincial Archives in Victoria was cancelled. Starting in the Spring of last year, we compiled a list of contents for most of the boxes. Since the early fall we have undertaken a survey of the boxes previously labeled for discard. Currently we are continuing with this task and beginning to outline a plan for records management,

which should result in a Records Policy for future use by the BCSLA.

This gem was discovered in one of those twenty-six boxes. We thought the membership would enjoy Einer Ibsen Brodersen's contribution to the **January 10, 1968** Regular Meeting:

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### Clips of philosophical meditation from the Secretary-Treasurer:

"A lot of members are like Wheelbarrows — not good unless pushed. Some are like canoes — need to be paddled. Some are like kites — if a string isn't kept on them, they fly away. Some are like kittens — they are more contented when petted. Some are like footballs — you can't tell which way they will bounce next. Some are like balloons — full of wind and ready to blow up. Some are like trailers — they have to be pulled. Some are like neon lights — they keep going off and on. And many, thank God, are like the North Star — there when you need them, dependable, ever loyal and a guide to all people."

Einer Ibsen Brodersen (#005)

## BCSLA Committee Report Preview — 2000 AGM

### CONTINUING EDUCATION COMMITTEE



by  
Judy  
Walker

BCSLA

#### GOAL

To create a forum for continuing education for members and related professions and education of the general public in issues relevant to landscape architecture.

#### OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the value of continuing education programs for the profession.
2. To identify topics/ speakers relevant to the membership, to related professions and the general public. What regional topics are appropriate for various locations in BC?
3. To identify the format(s) and location(s) for presentation that

is (are) most appropriate for various issues i.e. regular weekday evenings, weekend workshops; Vancouver, Fraser Valley, Interior, Vancouver Island??

4. To identify the level of support that can be expected from members and related professionals and the interested public, through attendance, financial contribution and involvement.

#### ACTION

In February of 1999 a questionnaire (based on PIBC/SCARP's survey) was published in Sitelines requesting information on topics, location and suggested costs for

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**BCSLA Committee Report Preview**  
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continuing education programs. The topics and range of costs are compiled below.

During 1999, several contacts were made with the PIBC continuing education chair George Penfold and Cheryl Hall. PIBC was very open to sharing programs and suggested joint conferences.

In March the CSLA published a draft *Guidelines for Continuing Education* that included curriculum, resources, media and accreditation/monitoring programs and general recommendations.

At the BCSLA Board Retreat in November we debated the mandatory vs. voluntary question regarding continuing education for the profession. One of the most important small steps towards an active continuing education program is the use of our website to post and link to all other related professional workshops, lectures etc. The summary of this discussion is included with the Retreat Report.

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**CONTINUING EDUCATION SURVEY RESULTS (Sitelines February 1999)**

What areas should upcoming education and training courses focus on?  
(listed in general topics)

- Small business management
- Promotion and marketing
- Teamwork and office rapport
- Public consultation
- Risk management
- Project administration
- Project management
- Building code: as it relates to L.A.
- Professional practice and ethics
- Contract administration
- Design
- Urban design
- Ecological concerns concerning site and green architecture
- Urban ecology
- How to design integration with sustainability
- Land trusts
- Public art process (information session)
- Related professions
- Philosophical discussion on L.A. and expanding our influence
- Interrelationships with other professions i.e. planning, engineering
- Attitudes and how they shape our landscapes
- Workshops and field trips to interesting destinations (as a group?)
- Field trips
- Leading edge technologies such as stormwater management
- Biogeotechnical slope stabilization
- Designing biofiltration systems and daylighting streams
- Technical soils, stormwater management, erosion control
- Environmental assessment
- Wildlife management
- Hazard tree evaluation, wildlife trees
- DFO and MELP Fisheries design guidelines and opportunities
- Fisheries best practices
- Specifications
- Construction materials and detailing
- Construction methods
- Latest construction techniques and materials
- Development cost charges (parks)
- Opportunities and constraints of computers in L.A.
- Comparison of computer programs for L.A.
- Computers in the industry
- Introduction to new plant material
- Xeriscape
- Costs: one day: \$35 – \$200

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## JOB OPPORTUNITIES



**CSLA**  
Canadian Society of Landscape Architects

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

The CSLA is the national professional association for Landscape Architects in Canada.

**We are seeking Executive Director services to strategically manage the association.**

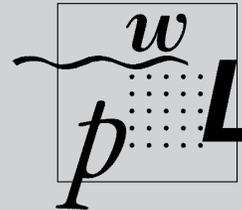
This contract position involves working closely with volunteers to carry out plans and policies on behalf of our governing board and our 1600 members.

Ability to communicate in French and English is desirable.

Send statement of interest and resume to:

**President-Elect**  
**P.O. Box 870**  
**Station B, Ottawa, Ontario**  
**K1P 5P9**

More detailed terms of reference are available on the CSLA Web Site: [www.csla.ca](http://www.csla.ca)



**Philips Wuori Long Inc.** has employment openings for individuals with the following experience and qualifications:

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### PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDARS . . .

**BCSLA — AGM 2000**  
**March 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup>, 2000**  
**at the**  
**Centennial Lodge & Arts Centre**  
**Queens Park, New Westminster**



# noticeboard

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## World Wide Web Watch

If you discover a site you'd like to share, please email [bcsla@direct.ca](mailto:bcsla@direct.ca) and we'll include your sites and site reviews in the next issue.

[www.agsci.ubc.ca](http://www.agsci.ubc.ca)

Portions of this site are under development.

The landscape architecture program site appears complete, and offers us insight into the varied areas of research and expertise of the faculty, in addition to general program and facility information.

The lectures and events page lists the speakers for the annual Webb, Oberlander and Quayle lectures.

As of this writing, information on lectures for the year 2000 had not yet been made available.

**Countdown to the launch date of our very own BCSLA Web site continues . . .**

will the URL (Universal Resource Locator, i.e. the address) be revealed at the AGM (Annual General Meeting)?

**Attend March 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, at the Centennial Lodge and Arts Centre,**  
(Queens Park, New Westminster) and find out!



noticeboard

## LECTURE

**'Artist Gardener' by Stephen Lacey**

On **Tuesday February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2000 @ 7:30 pm**, the West Vancouver Garden Club is sponsoring a lecture on the **Artist Gardener by Stephen Lacey**.

Mr. Lacey is a well know gardener from Great Britain who writes a regular column for The Daily Telegraph and is a correspondent for Country Homes and Interiors. He is a regular presenter on Great Britain's most popular garden television show "Gardener's World" and his books include "Scent of the Garden" and "Gardens of the National Trust".

The lecture is scheduled for **7:30 pm at St. David's United Church at 1525 Taylor Way in West Vancouver**. Tickets, at **\$10.00** each, are available through the **Avant Gardener in West Vancouver** or through the **West Vancouver Garden Club at 925-2172**.

## Coming Soon to Sitelines:

Clive Justice reviews *The Decline of the Pacific Madrone, Current Theory and Research Directions*.

This book contains the results of the Symposium held at the Centre for Urban Horticulture in April, 1995.

From Clive's review, the wait for publication was worthwhile!

Yolanda Leung introduces us to the basics of "Feng Shui", a three thousand year-old method of arranging our environment to be as beneficial as possible to us.