



# Landscape designer dedicated to protecting Mother Nature

Article by “Team” for Fine Homes of WNC

One of New England’s most sought-after landscape designers, Ted Carter, recently visited Asheville to tour the Biltmore Estate. In a career spanning 40 years, Ted has developed a deep appreciation for working in harmony with the land. His inspired landscapes not only fit the existing environment, but also look as though they have always been there. Out of Ted’s work has grown a passion for reconnecting with the natural

world. In books he has co-authored with Ellen Gunter, *Reunion, How We Heal Our Broken Connection to the Earth*, and *Earth Calling, A Climate Change Handbook for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, he explores pathways to reconnect with our natural world.

Carolyn Myss, five-time New York Times bestselling author and internationally renowned speaker in the fields of human consciousness, spirituality, mysticism, health, energy medicine, and the science of medical intuition, says, “Ted is a landscape architect by day. By night, Ted is a Nature-Mystic, a man devoted to protecting Mother Nature.” Myss believes Ted “knows how the earth works and how it speaks to us in countless ways.” As one of her advanced students, Ted has traveled the world studying with Myss.

Fine Homes of Western North Carolina had the opportunity to sit down with Ted and talk about his understanding of what constitutes a good landscape design and how he attunes to nature in his commercial and private home designs.

FHWNC: How did you first become interested in landscape design?

TC: It started in childhood, and I would have to thank my parents for the gift of being allowed to be myself. During my summers as a child I remember a large dump truck full of sand being delivered to our back yard, followed two hours later by a load of 500 bricks. I played with my brother and friends, creating entire neighborhoods with streets and landscaped yards.

We happily sculpted brick houses, walkways and driveways into the sand with our hands. Twigs and broken branches placed upright in the sand became village trees. With a garden hose, we made lakes and streams. It fascinated me to see the sand move and shift as water poured through our villages and undermined our structures. Houses were always giving away to an endless cycle of destruction and re-birth. This was how I began to see the earth from a different perspective.

FHWNC: Tell me about your creative process when evaluating a home prior to developing your design.

TC: I have spent more than 40 years working with land and landscape. It has been and continues to be my life's calling. As my work has evolved over the past four decades I have become increasingly aware of the subtle energies that have guided me through the landscape design and installation process.

If I am working with an existing home, my initial customer intake starts most often right at the kitchen sink. A great deal of time is spent looking out into the landscape, so it is important to understand which rooms and windows are a pivotal part of my client's daily life. Eventually all appointments lead outdoors, where I begin to quickly identify what negatively impacts the land and landscape.

Telephone poles, cell towers, public road systems all invade the sanctity of a private landscape arena. If possible, I try to sequester and isolate the utility aspect



of the property where you might find cars, garage doors, basketball hoops, trash, and disposal areas for instance. A landscape designer needs to be mindful of the intent of the architect of a home. If the front door is prominent, then give it some importance. Too many entrances into a home are confusing to a visitor. A well-designed landscape clearly defines which entrance should be used.

Fortunately I can draw on literally hundreds of installations, so the design process takes shape in my mind as I walk the site and intuit these spaces. After moving through some of these initial observations, invariably I will begin to dowse the property and identify the locations of some of the subtle energies that impact the site. This is really a general overview at this point. A client profile is completed, and I will then set up another appointment to meet at a future date.

Calen Rayne, a geomancer and dowser from Asheville who consults on sacred landscapes worldwide, works with me on site evaluations. Scientific discovery is still catching up to ancient wisdom, and Calen is standing at the crossroads of the two. Calen works with an internal mapping system he learned in the Himalayas,

called “genesis point vibrational radiesthesia.” This technique enables us to identify a particular point at a site where we can connect with energetics of the land. This process is important because it enables one to access information from the land itself, and better discern what a particular property truly needs when creating an integral design.

FHWNC: How important is it to enter into a direct conversation with a piece of land when creating your designs?

One of the most important things to do with land and landscape is to design in such a way that is sincere to the site. The goal is to make it look like it has been this way for many years. In essence, the work needs to really belong there. Part of achieving this goal comes from engaging these techniques of subtle communication with that particular piece of land.

FHWNC: Have you discovered any similarities between landscapes of Maine and North Carolina?



TC: Land and landscape speak to all of us, but we have to listen. The land informs us if we listen. For many years now I have been communicating with the land. As with any profession, we become a composite of our experiences as the years unfold. We bring this knowledge with us and are quick and nimble in response to working out complex issues as the design process unfolds. But really, the answers come to us twofold, because we are also able to receive direction from the invisible world.

TC: Like Maine, North Carolina has both mountain and ocean view properties. No matter the view you are trying to preserve, whether it is lake, ocean or mountain, the treatment is relatively the same. Our eye has what is called peripheral vision. In other words, we see a lot of what is out there. When you creatively place plant material or build structures in a way that obstructs the peripheral view, you magnify and actually frame the view of the intended landscape.

Another way to do this is to create a “ha ha”. This was done many times by the 18th century European landscape architect Capability Brown. Essentially you cleanly and neatly cut the grade with a retaining wall. This in effect creates an optical illusion, mysteriously bringing the visually intended landscape closer to you. A common and familiar application in our modern landscape is the “endless” swimming pool. The water appears to move off into infinity as it draws the vista beyond closer to you.

FHWNC: Having toured the Biltmore Estate and Asheville area to view various landscape designs, what do you make of plant materials available here?

TC: I am really impressed and astounded with the vast diversity of plant material available for use in the local landscape. In my 40 years of installing primarily residential landscaping, I have had the good fortune to work in several states from Maine to Florida to Texas.

As I surveyed the local landscape in Asheville, I noticed southern plant favorites such as nandina, Indian hawthorn and crepe myrtle growing right alongside some of our favorite northeast conifers. I owned and operated a landscaping company in Dallas Texas for five years, and never in my wildest dreams could I have grown any of my Maine plant favorites there. In all my travels I must say I have never come across such a vast array of plant material as that in the Asheville area. With such an abundance of diverse plant materials available, I look forward to possibly working with potential clients here in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

FHWNC: I understand you are working on a large commercial project in Maine that includes an orchard and hops fields for use in craft beers. Sounds like a project one might see here in Asheville.



TC: I live in an area near Portland, Maine that is also heavily dependent on the tourism industry. My commercial project involves a jointly owned collection of inns, restaurants and bars located in the Kennebunks (namely Kennebunk and Kennebunkport). Lucky Dog Farm is a 28 acre rural farmland setting where Tim Harrington, one of the principals of Kennebunkport Resort Collection, is setting up a place where the various restaurants they own can draw food from their very own farm.

The vision is to create a farm aesthetic that will attract people for special events and celebrations. This project will include an orchard in the round sporting a variety of apple and pear trees, a large labyrinth for weddings and special events, and one hops field with another in the making. The farm is evolving, and will soon have a



Lawns have always been quite boring in my world of ornamental horticulture. In working with clients, I try to design using minimal lawn. Native plant material is a favorite in the perimeter landscape. This intentional application of native plants attracts bees, butterflies, birds and a variety of wildlife.

From strictly an aesthetic point of view there seems to be a lack of sensitivity to elements that detract from a natural setting. The utility aspect of the landscape (driveway, cars, garbage cans, basketball hoops, etc.) needs to be minimized. Many times through creative thought and the use of plant material in the right locations, one can really help reduce the negative blemish in the suburban landscape. Often times I design the driveway, which greatly helps with these concerns.

There are subtle energies present in land and landscape that need to be honored and called out. Understanding the energetics of your landscape brings a whole new meaning to your understanding and connection to the natural world right outside your home. When you call out a space, it begins to be a destination in the landscape and take on a special presence it never had before. In a sense, your landscape has a re-birth – a new beginning as you see it through a different lens. This is where an ability to incorporate information derived from ancient disciplines such as geomancy and dowsing come in to play.

plethora of vegetables, herbs and fruits that will provide a locally grown food source for the Collection's restaurants.

FHWNC: What do you see as the future of landscape design?

TC: It is clear to me and to many others in this country that we can no longer develop land in the same manner we have been doing for the past hundred years. Our entire relationship to our land must change. At a time when climate change is so much on the forefront, we need a diverse polyculture to assist in moving through unfavorable weather conditions. A healthy ecoculture is one that supports abundant diversity.

FHWNC: One last question, Ted. How would you describe your creative intent?

TC: Having traveled the world extensively, I incorporate components from many cultures in my landscape designs. Above all my intent is to help create sacred space in people's homes and yards, and teach them how to see and hear how the earth speaks to them.

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*For more about Ted, or to inquire about a landscape design, visit: [tedcarterlandscapes.com](http://tedcarterlandscapes.com)*