

Rooted & Reimagined

September 10 – 14, 2026 | Columbus, Ohio

Association of Professional Landscape Designers

INTERNATIONAL LANDSCAPE DESIGN CONFERENCE

September 10 – 14, 2026 | Columbus, Ohio



Welcome to Columbus!

Join us in Columbus, a city defined by strong design culture, botanical depth, and a growing creative influence, as we explore the intersection of landscape design, horticulture, and professional practice.

Far from a flyover city, Columbus offers a rich mix of historic neighborhoods, public landscapes, and innovative institutions, making it an ideal place to get inspired and rethink about how meaningful landscape design is shaped by region, plants, and people.

At its heart, the 2026 International Landscape Design Conference is more than a gathering. It's a welcoming, energized community of designers and professionals who are genuinely excited to learn from one another. It's a place where conversations spill easily from sessions into hallways, garden tours, and shared meals; where ideas are shared freely, and where people show up ready to explore, connect, and grow together.

You'll be among peers who are generous with their knowledge, curious about new approaches and design trends, and eager to push the field forward—whether that's plant-forward design, resilient landscapes, or evolving business practices. Expect practical, real-world tools, from refined planting strategies to AI-supported workflows, that expand creativity, sharpen decision-making, and keep ecological values at the center.

And just as importantly, you'll feel the energy of being at an event where relationships form quickly, ideas take root, and inspiration builds through shared experience.

This is a conference where you don't just attend; you belong. We hope you will join us in Columbus.

From innovative planting strategies to more efficient design workflows, the 2026 APLD International Landscape Design Conference is helping shape a future rooted in nature and reimagined through practice.



Conference Schedule

The schedule is subject to change due to traffic delays or other unforeseeable circumstances.

Thursday, September 10, 2026

Breakfast on Your Own

8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.

Pre-Conference Registration

Pre-Conference Activities

Choose from three pre-conference activities. Space is limited.

8:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Offsite

Makers Tour (Limited to 50)

*(8:30 a.m. Meet in Lobby to Depart for Pre-Conference Makers Tour;
9:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. Tour; Lunch on Your Own at a Market)*

This series of maker visits invites landscape designers to step briefly outside their own discipline and into the creative processes of regional artisans. By engaging with makers working with reclaimed materials, flowers, and spirits, participants will have the opportunity to observe how others approach form, structure, sustainability, and storytelling through craft. Experiencing these practices firsthand, designers will see familiar materials in new ways, reflect on their own creative methods, and return to work refreshed with ideas that can provide design inspiration.

OR

1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Hands-on AI Workshop (Limited to 50)

Discover how artificial intelligence is transforming the landscape design industry in this practical, hands-on workshop. Tailored specifically for landscape designers, this session introduces easy-to-use AI tools that can enhance creativity, streamline workflows, and improve client communication. Participants will also learn best practices to build AI assistants customized to your design process and organization's needs. Whether you're new to AI or looking to deepen your skills, this workshop will equip you with practical techniques to save time, spark inspiration, and stay competitive in a rapidly evolving field. Recommended for any AI skill level.

OR

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Certification Workshop (Limited to 20)

This FREE workshop will provide attendees with a clear understanding of the requirements for APLD's certification program. Through real-world examples and interactive group discussion, participants will gain practical guidance to help prepare a successful portfolio submission.

- Gain a thorough knowledge of certification requirements and expectations
- Get direction on preparing required documentation and records
- Ask questions and connect with industry professionals and peers

1:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.	Conference Registration
5:45 p.m.	Pre-Conference Tour Arrives at Hotel
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	Opening Reception and International Landscape Design Awards Program <i>Hors d'oeuvres and Cash Bar</i>

Friday, September 11, 2026

7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.	Registration
8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	Breakfast Buffet
8:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.	Welcome and Introductions
8:45 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.	Keynote Session Chanticleer – A Pleasure Garden <i>Dan Benarcik, Horticulturist, Chanticleer Garden</i>

This session will provide a brief introduction to the Chanticleer Garden through the perspective of more than three decades of hands-on experience.

Drawing on lessons learned while navigating both climatic and institutional challenges, Dan Benarcik will explore the intersections between landscape design and public horticulture—fields that share the goal of creating meaningful and memorable experiences for their audiences.

Through examples from Chanticleer, attendees will gain insights into plant selection, design challenges, logistical considerations, and the practical realities of developing and maintaining exceptional gardens over time.

10:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	Break with Exhibitors
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	The Gravel Garden: Visionary, Drought-Defying, Naturalistic Designs <i>Jeff Epping, Epping Design & Consulting</i>

Join Jeff Epping as he delves into his new book, co-authored with award-winning garden writer Teresa Woodard, exploring the art of gravel gardening. This naturalistic movement offers beauty, resilience, and a promising future for ecological landscaping. The book features 20 stunningly photographed gardens by Bob Stefko, showcasing locations in the US and Europe, including Jeff's own gravel garden in Madison, Wisconsin.

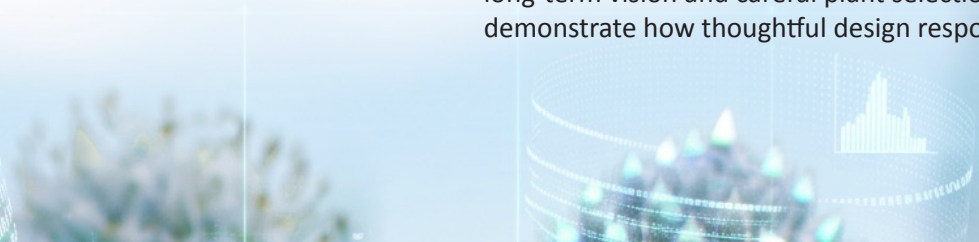
Jeff will share his insights and those of leading naturalistic designers, as well as practical techniques for various scales and applications, from intimate home settings to small and larger public and commercial spaces.

Whether your goal is to create striking, low-maintenance plantings, support pollinators and wildlife, or design more environmentally responsible landscapes, this session will inspire you to rethink what a garden can be.

12:00 p.m. – 12:15 p.m.	Break
12:15 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.	AI Foundations for Landscape Designers <i>Lori Robbins, HERizon AI</i> Discover how artificial intelligence is transforming the landscape design industry during this practical, hands-on workshop. Tailored specifically for landscape designers, this session introduces easy-to-use AI tools that can enhance creativity, streamline workflows, and improve client communication. Participants will also learn best practices for building AI assistants tailored to their design process and their organization's needs. Whether participants are new to AI or looking to deepen their skills, this workshop will equip them with practical techniques to save time, spark inspiration, and stay competitive in a rapidly evolving field. <i>Recommended for any AI skill level.</i>
1:15 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Lunch and Visit with Exhibitors
3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Best Perennials for Pollinators <i>Richard Hawke, Director of Ornamental Plant Research, Chicago Botanic Garden</i> Looking to create a landscape that buzzes with life? Discover the perennial plants that consistently attract bees, butterflies, and other beneficial pollinators. Drawing from years of research at the Chicago Botanic Garden, Richard Hawke will showcase top-performing native species, natives, and select exotic plants that have proven their value in pollinator trials. Attendees will leave with plant recommendations and design inspiration to create vibrant, pollinator-friendly gardens that thrive season after season.
4:00 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.	Break with Exhibitors
4:45 p.m. – 5:45 p.m.	The Future of Design Panel
6:15 p.m.	Meet in Lobby for Dine-Arounds/Evening on Your Own

Saturday, September 12, 2026

	Breakfast on Your Own
8:30 a.m.	Meet in Lobby to Depart for Garden Tours
9:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. <i>Offsite</i>	Garden Tours <i>Lunch included</i> Saturday's garden tours highlight the diversity of residential landscape design across Columbus, from compact urban gardens to expansive estate landscapes shaped by long-term vision and careful plant selection. Attendees will experience gardens that demonstrate how thoughtful design responds to scale, context, and place.



5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Offsite

Garden Party
Hors d'oeuvres and Cash Bar

The day concludes with an evening garden party at the personal garden of Nick and Allison McCullough. This relaxed gathering offers time to connect, reflect, and enjoy conversation within a living landscape that continues to evolve.

8:00 p.m.

Arrive at Hotel

Sunday, September 13, 2026

Breakfast on Your Own

8:30 a.m.

Meet in Lobby to Depart for Garden Tours

9:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Offsite

Garden Tours
Lunch included

Sunday's garden tours continue with a curated mix of residential gardens that emphasize maturity, stewardship, and the long view of landscape care. From small urban spaces to larger properties, the focus is on how planting strategies and design intent strengthen over time. A visit to the Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens is also in the works.

5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Offsite

Closing Reception
Hors d'oeuvres and Cash Bar

8:00 p.m.

Arrive at Hotel

Monday, September 14, 2026 – Post Conference Tour

Breakfast on Your Own

8:30 a.m.

Meet in Lobby to Depart for Post Conference Tour



9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Offsite

Post Conference Tour (Limited to 50)
Lunch included

Extend your conference experience with this unique tour that offers fresh perspectives on plant performance, sustainable design, emerging technologies, and creative landscape solutions while providing valuable opportunities to connect with fellow design professionals.

This exclusive tour will visit three of central Ohio's most remarkable landscape destinations. Explore the beauty and research-driven plant collections of The Ohio State University's Chadwick Arboretum, get a behind-the-scenes look at cutting-edge horticultural technology at the Controlled Environment Agriculture Research Complex (CEARC), and find design inspiration among the stunning gardens, woodlands, water features, and seasonal displays at Inniswood Metro Gardens.

6:30 p.m.

Arrive at Hotel

The schedule is subject to change due to traffic delays or other unforeseeable circumstances. Garden tour arrival and departure times are approximate.



Speakers



Dan Benarcik

Horticulturist, Chanticleer Garden

Dan Benarcik has spent more than three decades at Chanticleer Garden, where his work reflects a lifelong passion for horticulture, art, teaching, craftsmanship, and design. A graduate of the University of Delaware with a Bachelor of Science degree in Plant Science, Dan began his career at Mt. Cuba Center, an institution dedicated to the research and conservation of native plants.

He later worked as a sales representative for Imperial Nurseries before joining Chanticleer Garden in 1993, an institution known for its innovation and creative approach to horticulture. At Chanticleer, Dan has overseen the Courtyard Gardens and currently serves as Horticulturist of the Tennis Court Garden, a predominantly perennial garden, while also sharing responsibility for the Woodshop, coordinating the construction, repair, and restoration of garden furnishings.

Dan is an active member of GardenComm, where he has served as Regional Director and is a Fellow. His writing has been published in *Fine Gardening*, *Horticulture*, *Martha Stewart Living*, and *Rodale's Garden Books*, and he has appeared on QVC promoting plants for Cottage Farms Nursery. He lectures internationally, serves as a judge for the Philadelphia Flower Show, and has contributed to projects at Lotusland, Longue Vue House and Gardens, and Ayrilies Garden in New Zealand.



Jeff Epping

Epping Design & Consulting

Jeff's passion for plants and gardening is reflected in his 35-year career as an award-winning horticulturist and garden designer. During his 28 years as Director of Horticulture at Olbrich Botanical Gardens, he transformed a lawn-laden landscape into a nationally acclaimed public garden, known for its artistic and innovative, plant-driven designs and ecologically sound gardening techniques. Alongside that role, he also ran his own design and consulting business for 25 years and continues to do so today. Epping Design & Consulting specializes in eco-conscious gardening guidance and designs for projects ranging from small private gardens to large public landscapes and expansive business campuses.

Jeff shares his expertise through classes, workshops, tours, and lectures. His insightful writing has been featured in leading gardening publications like *Fine Gardening*, *Martha Stewart Living*, and *Better Homes and Gardens*, and his work has been recognized by The New York Times and The Washington Post, among others. Beyond print, he's also contributed to radio, television, online videos, and podcasts. He has received prestigious awards from both the American Public Gardens Association and the Perennial Plant Association, honoring his significant contributions to horticulture.

Jeff's new book, published by Timber Press, entitled *The Gravel Garden: Visionary, Drought-Defying, Naturalistic Designs*, was released June 2, 2026, and is available now from your favorite bookseller.

Speakers



Richard Hawke

BioSketch

Richard Hawke is Director of Ornamental Plant Research at the Chicago Botanic Garden and is responsible for the breeding, evaluation, and introduction programs, and has managed the plant evaluation program since 1985.

Richard has a horticulture degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is an author of *Plant Evaluation Notes* and is an author and contributing editor for *Fine Gardening*. Richard received the Perennial Plant Association's Academic Award for teaching excellence in 2005, and the Scott Medal and Award in 2023 from the Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College. The Plant Evaluation Program received the Award for Program Excellence from the American Public Garden Association in 2008. Richard currently serves as Past-President of the Perennial Plant Association.



Lori Robbins

HERizon AI

Lori Robbins is the founder of HERizon AI and Head of AI Strategy at Denison University in Granville, Ohio. She helps organizations build the foundation they need to adopt AI with clarity and confidence, through workshops, policy development, and governance sessions that start with values and end with a plan people can actually use.

A former international educator turned AI strategist, Lori brings the practitioner's perspective that comes from doing this work inside a real institution every day.





Hotel Information

Hilton Columbus Downtown

402 North High Street
Columbus, OH 43215
614-384-8600

APLD has secured a discounted room rate for conference attendees, available during the conference dates and up to three days before and after, based on availability.

Please note: rooms in the APLD block are extremely limited and are expected to sell out quickly.

Reservations are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, and the discounted rate is only available while rooms remain. Booking within the official hotel block ensures convenience and supports the event.

The reservation deadline is **Monday, August 10, 2026**. **Do not wait for the deadline to book** — the block may fill well before then. We strongly encourage you to reserve your room as soon as possible to guarantee availability and the discounted rate.

Room Rate:

Standard King or Standard Double Queens
\$219.00 (Single Occupancy) + applicable taxes and fees

[Click Here to Make Your Reservation](#)



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Registration and Cancellation Deadline: August 28, 2026

A separate form must be completed for each conference attendee.

Remit payment and form to: APLD, 2207 Forest Hills Drive, Harrisburg, PA 17112, fax this form with credit card payment to: (717) 238-9985 or register online at www.apld.org.

Attendee Name (as it should appear on badge): _____
Include CPLD or FAPLD if you are certified or a certified fellow.

Company: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Country: _____ Email: _____

Phone: _____ Cell: _____

Is this your first APLD Conference? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Dietary Requirement:

☐ Gluten Free ☐ Pescatarian ☐ Vegan ☐ Vegetarian ☐ I do not have a dietary requirement.

Emergency Contact Information:

Please provide the information of a person who is NOT attending the conference that should be contacted in case an emergency should arise.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Contact APLD Headquarters if you have any additional dietary needs or require specific accommodations in order to fully participate in the conference.

Members of organizations affiliated with APLD (America in Bloom, AILDM, CLNA, CNLA, ELA, GBC, GBCI, GRHC, Holden Arboretum, NALP, PCS, PPA and SGD) may register to attend the conference at the professional member rate. Please list the affiliated organization you are a member of:

Payment Information:

Total Due: _____

☐ Check (made payable to APLD) ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover ☐ AmEx ☐ Wire Transfer

Card Number: _____ Exp. Date: _____ Security Code: _____

Name on Card (please print): _____

Cardholder Signature: _____

Billing Address (if different from above): _____

*Cancellations must be made in writing by **August 28** to receive a refund, less a \$25 administrative service fee plus any processing fees. After this time, there will be no refunds.*

Non-Members – If you join APLD today, you will receive the professional member rate for the conference, which is a \$800 discount off of the non-member main conference registration fee.

Certified Designer/APLD Fellow

Main Conference	☐ \$1,465
Pre-Conference - Thursday, September 10	
- Makers Tour	☐ \$250
- Hands-on AI Workshop	☐ \$350
- Certification Workshop	☐ FREE
Post Conference - Monday, September 14	☐ \$300
Friday only	☐ \$600
Saturday only	☐ \$600
Sunday only	☐ \$600

Professional, Emerging Professional, Landscape Design Enthusiast & Retired Member

Main Conference	☐ \$1,600
Pre-Conference - Thursday, September 10	
- Makers Tour	☐ \$250
- Hands-on AI Workshop	☐ \$350
- Certification Workshop	☐ FREE
Post Conference - Monday, September 14	☐ \$300
Friday only	☐ \$600
Saturday only	☐ \$600
Sunday only	☐ \$600

Student/Educator Member

Main Conference	☐ \$1,175
Pre-Conference - Thursday, September 10	
- Makers Tour	☐ \$250
- Hands-on AI Workshop	☐ \$350
- Certification Workshop	☐ FREE
Post Conference - Monday, September 14	☐ \$300
Friday only	☐ \$600
Saturday only	☐ \$600
Sunday only	☐ \$600

Non-Member

Main Conference	☐ \$2,400
Pre-Conference - Thursday, September 10	
- Makers Tour	☐ \$375
- Hands-on AI Workshop	☐ \$500
- Certification Workshop	☐ FREE
Post Conference - Monday, September 14	☐ \$425
Friday only	☐ \$900
Saturday only	☐ \$900
Sunday only	☐ \$900

Spouse/Companion

The spouse/companion rate applies only to those who are not in the industry.

Main Conference	☐ \$1,600
Pre-Conference - Thursday, September 10	
- Makers Tour	☐ \$250
- Hands-on AI Workshop	☐ \$350
- Certification Workshop	☐ FREE
Post Conference - Monday, September 14	☐ \$300
Friday only	☐ \$600
Saturday only	☐ \$600
Sunday only	☐ \$600



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Attendee Name
(as it should appear on badge):

Company:

Registration Options:

Main Conference includes the opening reception on the evening of Thursday, September 10; breakfast, lunch and all sessions on Friday, September 11; lunch, garden tours and garden party on Saturday, September 12; lunch, garden tours and closing reception on Sunday, September 13.

Pre-Conference on Thursday, September 10 offers the choice of three options: Makers Tour, Hands-on AI Workshop, or Certification Workshop.

Post Conference on Monday, September 14 includes lunch and tours.

Please review carefully what is included in each registration option before making your selection.

If you have any questions, please contact events@apld.org.