

## THE LIST

## Where the Grass is Greener

BY CAITLIN BURKE, CBURKE@BIZJOURNALS.COM, @WBJBOOKOFLISTS

Mirror, mirror on the wall, whose landscaping is the best of all?

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder — and advanced horticultural specifications and standards. Keeping the latter in mind, we asked three local landscaping experts to weigh in on the which grounds in the Washington region were the most attractive, and which still needed considerable work.

Read on for their picks and overall thoughts on what makes these sites so distinct, for better or worse.

## ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

## THE HUBERT H. HUMPHREY BUILDING



Why, you ask? "It has the worst public plaza in Washington," Carmichael said. Devoid of a single plant and sporting protective barriers, it gives off a forbidding feeling. It's also lacking in human comforts, such as shade and comfortable seating. The plaza's one strong suit — a striking, blood-red sculpture at its center — was temporarily removed for restoration. But it needs a major renovation to render it less a plaza and more a garden.

## GATEWAY PARK



A Rosslyn park, built as a cover over Interstate 66, was a good idea at the time. But it's an example of a missed opportunity and orients itself away from the scenic views of the Key Bridge and Potomac River. You're surrounded by concrete and few opportunities for shade, making it a pretty brutal spot in the balmy months. Additionally, the park lacks connections to its nearby Rosslyn office buildings, making it very difficult to get to.

## FRANKLIN PARK



The unrelenting march of time and, ironically, an overabundance of greenery puts this Northwest D.C. site on the list. "It has a lot of huge and very beautiful trees and a nice central fountain area, but the park hasn't had much maintenance or attention in many, many years," Miller said. The park's needs haven't gone unnoticed. A D.C.-federal partnership is dedicated to its maintenance and plans to better utilize and beautify the space.

## 1150 K ST. NW



To create successful landscape flow, you need harmony between plantings and architecture. In the case of this building, both of those things seem to be working against one another. "Punched into the pavement are these curlicue squiggles. It's like a parking lot of forgotten curlicues," Birnbaum said. In addition, the landscape's ad hoc layout doesn't respond to the natural pedestrian circulation in the area, making it difficult to maneuver.

## FREEDOM PLAZA



The well-known Northwest D.C. plaza includes marble finishes and a huge pavement map of the city. It's a clever idea, but never should have been built at that scale. The experts say it's downright uncomfortable. With insufficient plantings and shade, it's hot in the summer and freezing in the winter. "The irony isn't for lack of money — it's beautiful, it's richly appointed — but it's very cold and aloof," Carmichael said.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOANNE S. LAWTON / STAFF

## OUR TEAM OF EXPERTS



**DENNIS CARMICHAEL**  
Principal, Parker Rodriguez Inc.;  
past president, American Society  
of Landscape Architects



**ELIZABETH MILLER**  
Director of physical planning,  
National Capital Planning  
Commission



**CHARLES BIRNBAUM**  
Founder and president,  
The Cultural Landscape  
Foundation

"It's a little jewel that surprises you..."

BEST IN SHOW  
THE TAPIES CONDOMINIUMS

COURTESY BONSTRA HARESIGN ARCHITECTS

Just south of Corcoran Street NW, you'll find a narrow wedge of a building that displays a Modernist insertion — the Tapes Condominiums, designed by Bonstra Haresign Architects, which also designed the walkway. The building itself is pleasing to the eye, but the landscaping matches its careful design. "There's a cobblestone path that leads you into the building that curves and goes into the sidewalk and announces its presence, like a little tongue curls out onto the street," Birnbaum said. Your eye is quickly drawn to a white fence, beyond which lies crushed stone and a grove of crapemyrtle trees with hints of purple, magenta and pinkish red. "It's a little jewel that surprises you," he said. "Just smart in terms of their restraint and is well-maintained and well designed."

See a slideshow of the sites highlighted here, [washingtonbusinessjournal.com](http://washingtonbusinessjournal.com)

## COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPING COMPANIES

RANKED BY 2013 METRO-AREA REVENUE

Name/Prior/URL	Address/Phone	2013 metro-area revenue	2013 total revenue	Metro-area employment	Total Employment	Number of metro-area clients	Headquarters	Senior local executive
1 <b>ValleyCrest Landscape Cos.</b> ① <a href="http://valleycrest.com">valleycrest.com</a>	14926 Willard Road Chantilly, Va. 20151 703-803-4400	\$47 million	\$992 million	595	11,200	n/a	Calabasas, Calif.	Wayne Shiveley Vice president, regional manager <a href="mailto:wshiveley@valleycrest.com">wshiveley@valleycrest.com</a>
2 <b>Ruppert Landscape Inc.</b> ② <a href="http://ruppertlandscape.com">ruppertlandscape.com</a>	23601 Laytonville Road Laytonville, Md. 20882 301-482-0300	\$41.91 million	\$82.41 million	367	850	1,135	Laytonville	Craig Ruppert CEO Robert Jones President of landscape construction division <a href="mailto:rjones@ruppertcompanies.com">rjones@ruppertcompanies.com</a> Phil Key President <a href="mailto:pkey@ruppertcompanies.com">pkey@ruppertcompanies.com</a>
3 <b>McFall &amp; Berry Landscape Management Inc.</b> ③ <a href="http://mcfallandberry.com">mcfallandberry.com</a>	5037 B Backlick Road Annandale, Va. 22003 703-642-0146	\$25.46 million	\$25.46 million	280	280	95	Annandale	Mike Angles President of operations
4 <b>Level Green Landscape LLC</b> ④ <a href="http://levelgreenlandscaping.com">levelgreenlandscaping.com</a>	139 12th St. SE Washington, D.C. 20003 202-544-0968	\$7.26 million	\$7.26 million	125	125	250	Washington	Douglass Delano Managing partner <a href="mailto:d.delano@levelgreenlandscaping.com">d.delano@levelgreenlandscaping.com</a> William Hardy Partner <a href="mailto:w.hardy@levelgreenlandscaping.com">w.hardy@levelgreenlandscaping.com</a>
5 <b>John Shorb Landscaping Inc.</b> ⑤ <a href="http://jsli.com">jsli.com</a>	10518 Warfield St. Kensington, Md. 20895 301-897-3503	\$6.7 million	\$6.7 million	80	80	350	Kensington	John Shorb President <a href="mailto:john@jsli.com">john@jsli.com</a>
6 <b>Potomac Garden Center</b> ⑥ <a href="http://potomacgardencenter.com">potomacgardencenter.com</a>	12024 Darnestown Road North Potomac, Md. 20878 301-874-5940	\$5.1 million	\$5.1 million	n/a	n/a	n/a	North Potomac	Robert Angell President David Angell CEO <a href="mailto:david@potomacgardencenter.com">david@potomacgardencenter.com</a>
7 <b>Lancaster Landscapes Inc.</b> ⑦ <a href="http://lancasterlandscapes.com">lancasterlandscapes.com</a>	8505 Lee Highway Fairfax, Va. 22031 703-846-0944	\$4.32 million	\$4.32 million	94	94	41	Fairfax	Joel Owen President of operations <a href="mailto:lancasterlandscapes@gmail.com">lancasterlandscapes@gmail.com</a>
8 <b>Inside Out Services LLC</b> ⑧ <a href="http://inoutservices.com">inoutservices.com</a>	2700 Garfield Ave. Silver Spring, Md. 20910 301-588-2002	\$3.5 million	\$3.5 million	55	55	125	Silver Spring	David Lindorfer President
9 <b>Sunrise Landscape &amp; Design</b> ⑨ <a href="http://sunriselandscapeanddesign.com">sunriselandscapeanddesign.com</a>	43813 Beaver Meadow Road Sterling, Va. 20166 703-544-0028	\$2.8 million	\$2.8 million	39	39	240	Sterling	Joseph Markell President and CEO <a href="mailto:jmarkell@sunriselandscapeanddesign.com">jmarkell@sunriselandscapeanddesign.com</a>

## THE GREAT OUTDOORS

In its 2014 survey of new residential landscaping trends, the American Society of Landscape Architects found out the most popular things to install in your yards.

98.3 percent

Popularity rating for lighting as a feature. Seating areas and fire pits came close behind.

86.1 percent

Popularity rating for water features as an outdoor amenity. Spas and pools were next.

## WINNING DESIGNS

## THE SCULPTURE GARDEN



COURTESY SMITHSONIAN

This one should come as no surprise. The garden on the National Mall includes new plantings of native species of canopy trees, flowering trees, shrubs, ground covers and perennials, all enclosed by a decorative metal fence with marble piers and plinths. Its design reflects the historic character of the National Gallery of Art's West Building. Carmichael describes it as a fun place that is loose and whimsical. "People want to stay there for a while," he said, "which is the mark of a good urban landscape."

## MARY LIVINGSTON RIPLEY GARDEN



COURTESY SMITHSONIAN

Located between the Hirshhorn Museum and Arts and Industry Building just north of Independence Avenue, this garden sits peacefully off of the National Mall. It quietly boasts a curvilinear design and lush plantings in raised garden beds. The design is well executed with beautiful brick work that provides a great framework for the park. A stroll in different times of year yields different experiences, thanks to the Smithsonian's seasonal plantings. The other bonus of the park? Its intimacy and low profile. "It's one of those you wouldn't know it was there unless you were told," Miller said. "It just brings delight." She's not kidding — we couldn't even get in to be able to take a photo of the property.

## THE YARDS PARK



JOANNE S. LAWTON / STAFF

Yards Park is not short on urban design accolades or awards, and parts of it may even come in feeling overstylized. But a birch grove with direct views of the Anacostia River stands out as sublime, in Carmichael's opinion. Wooden chaise lounges lie under the shade along the riverside that attracts people to that part of the park. "You feel like a king when you're in that space because of how comfortable it is," he said.

## D.C. WAR MEMORIAL



COURTESY NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

This memorial is an excellent example of what a little TLC can do to a landscape. Before major restoration began, the area was best described as "messy." In 2011, a \$3.6 million restoration revealed a memorial whose marble features had been preserved, treated and cleaned. The bluestone walks to the memorial were replaced and the landscape, restored to its original design intent. It has a clean and open feel to it now and proves that a great landscape need not have flowers or water features to be attractive.