



ASLA
COLORADO

BE CONNECTED. BE INFORMED. BE BETTER.

2011 ASLA Design Awards

The Bibby and Harold Alfond Children's Garden Honor Award AECOM – Fort Collins



Design over \$500,000 Construction Budget

Project Fact Sheet

Category of Entry: 1A – Design (over \$500,000 construction budget)

2011 ASLA Colorado Chapter Design Awards Program

Project Name: The Bibby and Harold Alfond Children’s Garden

Project Location, if applicable: Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens, Boothbay, Maine

3-5 Sentence Quick Project Summary: The Bibby and Harold Alfond Children’s Garden, located at the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens (CMBG) in Boothbay, Maine, is a beautiful and imaginative garden that artfully integrates sustainability, accessibility, quality of design and regional qualities to create a strong sense of place for children and families to connect with nature and gardening.

Purpose of Project: CMBG is the most significant public garden in the State of Maine and one of New England’s top visitor attractions. CMBG has a tremendous economic and social effect on the region. It also has a powerful influence on the attitude of the region’s population about outdoor education, design quality, horticulture, sustainability and conservation.

The Children’s Garden is an important destination for families both residing in and visiting the coastal region. It has increased visitation and membership by over 25%. Its purpose is to provide a garden setting for families to come together and provide early lifetime experiences that will condition children to love nature.

As Rachel Carson wrote: “I sincerely believe that for the child, and for the parent seeking to guide him, it is not half so important to know as to feel. It is more important to pave the way for the child to want to know than to put him on a diet of facts he is not ready to assimilate.”

Construction Budget Amount: \$1.5 million

Role of landscape architect / entrant vs. the role of other participants, including owner / client and collaborators. The Landscape Architect led the design team, was the principal designer, prepared all drawings and provided construction observation services.

Special Factors:

- **Collaboration** – The Landscape Architect conducted on-site workshops to thoroughly program each area and element in the design by creating the format for brainstorming themes, desired activities and experiences, perceptive senses and learning intelligences to be engaged; and led a collaborative design team composed of members of the Board of Directors, Garden staff, and members of the community.
- **Regional Character** – From the “coon cat” fence to the nautical compass rose, scaled-down traditional structures and field walls, whimsical garden elements and detailing were all carefully researched to capture the unique qualities of Coastal Maine.

Coastal Maine is the home of many famous childrens’ writers and artists, such as Robert McCloskey and Rachel Carson. Over 20 Maine children’s books are alluded to with garden elements like the bear sculpture on Blueberry Island in *Blueberries for Sal*; the clothesline with long johns and dress with rosebud print in *Rosebud & Red Flannel*; and the lupine meadow from *Miss Rumphius*, who scattered lupine seeds and teaches us “to make the world more beautiful.”

The Maine Backwoods introduces kids and families to pioneer and local Native American culture, including habitation structures, fire circle and a birch bark canoe built on site by local descendants of the Wabanaki Nation.

- **Families** – Interactive features, such as Veronica’s Maze, the Family of Whales Fountain Court, millstone reading garden, vegetable garden, craft area and boggy wetlands, invite the entire family to play and enjoy the outdoors together.

Benches and observation areas are strategically located for adults to sit with toddlers while older children explore nearby.

- **Site/Context/Sustainability** – The Children’s Garden is one of the primary “designed gardens” and is prominently nestled in a forest setting near the Visitor Center, Great Lawn and Burpee Kitchen Garden. The previously disturbed one-acre site is surrounded by other gardens, including existing mature trees and rock ledges at the edges. The site is depressed with over 6’ of grade change and consists of construction fill. The design challenge was to use the topography to advantage, minimize grading, expose and accentuate the natural boulders and ledges, save all existing trees, visually integrate with adjacent gardens and retain site runoff. The creation of an interior water feature provided the drainage detention, and spatial, visual, auditory and tactile elements needed to unify the garden. The strong use of natural stone walls and boulders in conjunction with natural ledges, a palette of adapted Maine plants such as blueberries and sweet fern, and the preservation of existing trees contextually blends the garden with its surroundings.

The use of a disturbed site, preservation of trees, minimal grading, drainage retention, permeable paving, use of appropriate plants and local materials and craftsmen, all demonstrate a sustainable approach to garden design.

Significance:

The Bibby and Harold Alfond Children’s Garden is a huge success, changing visitation demographics toward whole families and increasing visitation and membership by more than 25%. It is a model for public gardens everywhere. It demonstrates how the quality of design and artful integration of regional character create a strong sense of place and endear children and families to a lifetime of discovering the wonders of nature and the outdoors. The Garden blends seamlessly with its immediate and regional context and exemplifies sustainable thinking by the use of local materials, adapted plants and permeable paving.



