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Beautifying Chicago

By Andy Murray, Moore Landscapes, Inc.



The Washington Square Park is located just south of the historic Newberry Library near the Rush Street district in Chicago. At this fountain oasis garden, the contractor maintains 24 30-inch wire-hanging baskets in addition to the annual beds that surround the fountain. Moore Landscapes changes the plants on an annual basis. For the maintenance, Moore Landscapes maintains the baskets, while the city itself maintains the fountain.

Moore Landscapes, Inc. beautifies Chicago's municipal areas through environmentally friendly design and plant choices. Throughout Chicago, residents are treated to one stunning Moore Landscapes project after another. So what does it take to be a successful design build company that works with large cities?



At the Lincoln Park Conservatory's Great Gardens, the contractor planted annuals inter-planted with Bismarkia and Majesty Palms, Cannas and Crinum. 36 different kinds of plants were planted to create the design. Featured here is the famous historic radiant sun design. The planting area is 1/3 of an acre.

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Prepping, painting and planting took the company one week to complete.

According to Moore Landscapes, "Working with municipalities is no different than any other client we work with at Moore Landscapes. Each client poses unique challenges, but due to our experience and strong financial position, we are able to meet our client's needs. A challenge faced by all parties, both public and private today, are to use sustainable landscape practices.

Moore Landscapes works with municipalities to use perennial or woody plants in annual beds that can then be relocated or simply left in the beds for the following year. An example of this is the Queen's landing beds project, where Moore Landscapes planted a backdrop of Lilac shrubs. Similar practices were also used in our Village of Deerfield project."



The Logan Monument features four large planting beds, each of which encompasses 90 x 42-foot areas. The contractor planted 21,384 plants into the area, though only five different colors of Impatiens were used. The preparation, painting, and planting took the contractor four days to complete. Moore Landscape maintains the flowerbeds, while the lawn mowing is handled by the city. The contractor uses no chemical pesticides on the area and uses only water-soluble fertilizer.



The Congress Triangle features a metallic nymph statue by artist Desa Kirk, which overlooks one of the contractor's most horticulturally challenging sites to maintain. Salt from road trucks and exhaust fumes from cars challenge the plants here, but Moore's maintenance staff keeps the site looking lush through constant maintenance.

Advantages Of Big City Jobs

In the case of the City of Chicago Park District, Moore Landscapes has the advantage of the wonderful hot houses and conservatories which gives them access to more exotic species of plants at a cost that might otherwise be prohibitive for their gardens.

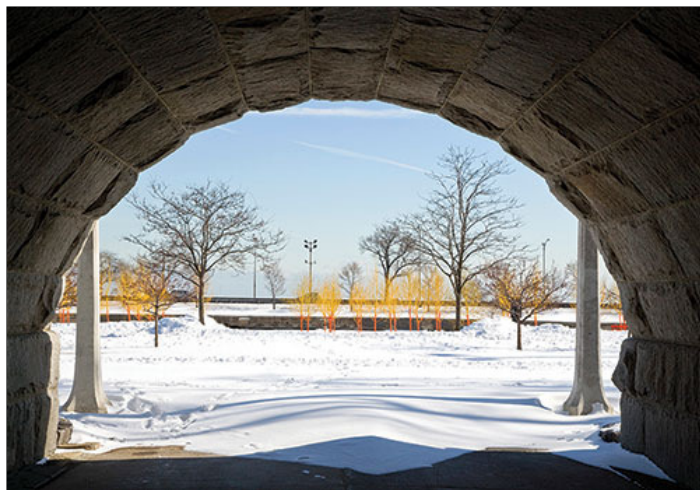
The Difference Between Municipal Work and Commercial Work

"The two major differences that separate commercial and public work are scheduling our maintenance around big city events like Bluesfest of Chicago or other events and always keeping in mind the public and flow of foot traffic.

"In these cases, we need to function within the constraints of the event coordinators and we need to pay attention to the ebb and flow of downtown traffic. Often our watering trucks are out in the early morning hours to avoid causing congestion at peak commuting times. Also, the scale of the projects is often vastly different from a regular commercial account.



For the North President's Court Potager Garden project, the contractor planted a spiral of the Japanese herb Shiso (also known as Perilla.) The maintenance for this area is shared between Moore Landscapes and volunteer groups, depending on the city's needs, but the CPD encourages as much volunteer involvement as possible. Photos: Andy Murray, Moore Landscapes, Inc.



The contractor planted dead orange-painted trees to use color that goes beyond leafy and flowery plant material to enhance the natural environment in seasons other than summer. Moore Landscapes painted the trees off-site and then installed them into the ground. The "Orange Painted Trees" are located by Chicago's Lincoln Park Rowing Lagoon.

One major difference when working with cities is, according to Morre Landscape, "There are no off hours. We have people available and on sites at all hours, morning, noon and night. We have both large and small crews available depending on the task at hand."

Another issue is the sheer scale of some of the project areas. The Logan Bed, for example, is as big as some people's home lots. It is no less than a 1/3 acre of solid flowers. The contractor planted more than 21,000 plants into this area alone.

Working With Talented Public Employees

"The big advantage of working for the Chicago Park District in particular is not only the exposure Moore Landscapes gains having its work in the public eye, but also the creative edge it gives the company to work with a client that looks at these gardens as an opportunity to make Chicago the cutting edge leader for public gardens," stated Murry. He continued, "Adam Schwerner, Director for The Department of Natural Resources (CDNR), came to the Chicago Park District from The New York Botanical Garden in the Bronx, and has been a trendsetter in the field of public gardens. Adam's talent for designs that off something new and surprising each year, keeps the tourists coming back. While the natural resources belong to the public, it sometimes slips out of the public's conscious awareness."



The contractor combined perennial and annual summer plantings for the Village of Deerfield project. The plants used for the project include redistributed naturally perennializing bulbs. This rotating technique keeps each season's designs fresh and new, while allowing for economical reuse. The plant material was placed in Frank Lloyd Wright Prairie style planters.



The highly visible Congress Median Flower beds lead up to the Buckingham Fountain in Grant Park, a crown Jewel of the Chicago landscape. The contractor planted Pentas, Alternanthera, Nicotiana, Salvia, Cannas, Elephant Ears, Caladium and Coleus. The contractor used recycled wood, painted it and placed it amongst the plant material to extend the sustainable landscape motif. In addition, the contractor maintains the planters throughout Grant Park and other areas of Chicago. The contractor handles all the maintenance for the area, which includes weeding, watering, and debris pick-up as well.

The Municipal Advantage

"There are many advantages to working with the Chicago Park District. One is that they have wonderful conservatories," said Murry. "Most notably, the Lincoln Park and Garfield Park Conservatories, where they have the ability to care for and propagate unique plant material at a cost that makes it possible to work with some more unusual and exotic plant material."

Cities also have the ability to partner with not-for-profit organizations. "Chicago partnered with the not-for-profit, Growing Power, which uses the highly visible forum of park's proximity to the entrance for The Taste of Chicago to help promote educating the public about the possibilities of urban agriculture."

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