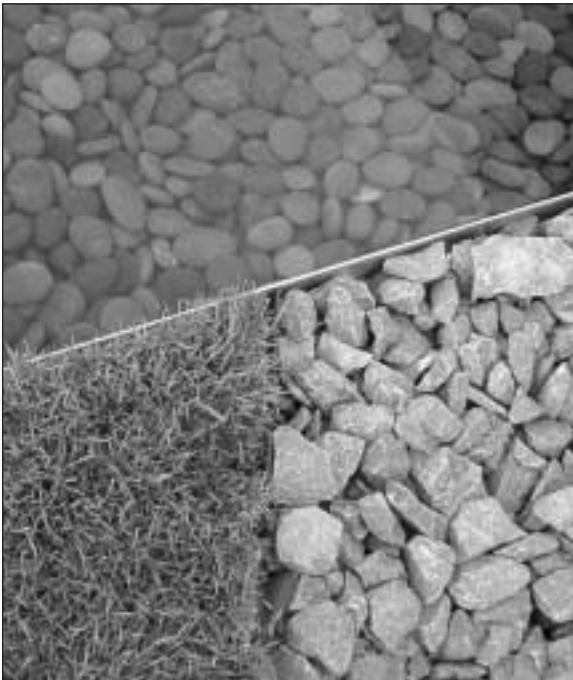


MEDTRONIC CORPORATION PATENT GARDEN

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

OSLUND AND ASSOCIATES



Individual courtyard spaces, conceived by the landscape architect when planning the corporate Master Plan, provide spaces of respite from the rigors of biomedical research and are featured throughout the Medtronic campus. One of these spaces is the Patent Garden. Medtronic was searching for a space that would not only provide an area of contemplation, celebration and inspiration - but would also commemorate the tireless efforts of the company's many scientists and engineers who have helped Medtronic to acquire an astounding 3,012 patents.

The surrounding context of the garden is typical of countless forgotten spaces across the country. The space is located between a parking facility, a pedestrian link and the walls of the corporate library and research center. A space like this had the potential to be mired in indifference; and had it been ignored, may have become an uninteresting and vacant space between buildings. The landscape architect was charged with lifting the space to a higher plane of aesthetic and intellectual integrity, where the elements of contemplation, celebration and inspiration could meld together in a harmonious, pure and powerful form.

By engaging simple design elements and materials, the landscape architect's philosophy for designing the garden became apparent in the solution of a Zen-like courtyard space. The space itself is a perfect square, 100' on each side, of crushed stone. Centered within the square is a 70' wide circle of lawn enclosed by a 1"-thick Corten steel wall. The historic symbolism inherent within the act of squaring the circle equates with the reconciliation of the heavenly and infinite with the earthly and man-made. This symbolism provides the perfect backdrop for a space designed for engaged contemplation on matters revolving around life and death. By focusing the simplicity of the base form into a square horizontal plane, the landscape architect was able to offer counterpoints with the vertical forms of a spiraling Corten steel wall, a specimen red maple, and deciduous and evergreen plantings.

The Corten wall spirals up from grade to a height of 10', representing the ever-increasing rate of innovation. This wall acts as an abstract gallery in which to display an array of patent buttons. Stainless steel buttons, each etched with the number of a currently held patent, are embedded in the wall according to decade. Individual brass buttons represent patents of distinction. This method of display was designed to help visitors visually measure the evolution of Medtronic's innovative ideas; it also offers employees a way to celebrate their accomplishments in a humble, quiet and beautiful manner.

The focal point of a single red maple tree brings a last surge of vitality to the space in the fall months. In the spring and summer the green canopy provides a cooling shade for the garden.

A rectangular reflecting pool filled with smooth river stones moves across a portion of the lawn. This pool becomes, with the additional buffer of deciduous and evergreen plantings, a gateway into the hushed and powerful space of the garden.

The simplicity and openness of the landscape architect's design allows for a multiplicity of uses and functionality. Individual contemplation and inspiration, as well as large group gatherings can be accomplished within this space without losing the feeling of subtlety and Zen-like calm.

The Patent Garden has become, in the short six months since its completion, a favored destination of employees and the first stop for visiting doctors and scientists from around the world. This quick endearment to the space reinforces the philosophy that the landscape architect's thoughtful attention was critical to the creation of a place that will endure. It also allows insight into the unique factors involved in the creation of this garden...

Medtronic Corporation's Vice Chair felt very strongly about the power of the landscape architect's design. He felt the garden would positively affect the attitudes of the company's employees - by being able to virtually inhabit the space as they pass by on the interior, or in reality as the employees move out into the space for a respite from the exacting duties of the day. With an understanding of the power inherent in the space imparted to him by the landscape architect, coupled with his own foresight and wisdom, the Vice Chair saw to it that the garden was fully funded and constructed.

This critical decision is a perfect example of how the passion of the landscape architect to create a meaningful and beautiful space was interpreted and understood to be essential in bettering the environment for the benefit of others. This will, in turn, assist the public perception of landscape architects and their vocation. As was mentioned above, the Patent Garden is the first stop for visitors to the new facility, offering an opportunity for explanation about its creation and ideology. As this cycle of visitor and employee use continues, the understanding and perception of the profession can only grow positively and exponentially.

