

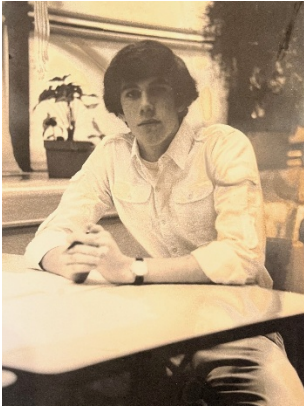


NOT JUST MULCH AND MOWERS: THE EVOLUTION OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

(2-minute read)

By: Michael Scarborough, RLA

It was 1986, and I had just graduated from Penn State with a degree in Landscape Architecture. My family threw a party to celebrate, and like any good gathering, it was full of laughter, congratulations – and a steady stream of jokes at my expense.



"All right, you can come mow my lawn now!"

"You dig the holes, I'll plant the flowers."

I smiled along, but as the night went on, I realized something. Whenever someone asked what I did, my answer was almost always followed by a pause... and then a longer explanation.

Unlike professions like teaching or law, "Landscape Architect" didn't land. It needed context. And even after I explained it, the response was usually the same: "Oh... okay."

By the end of the evening, it hit me. Most people had never heard of Landscape Architecture, let alone understood what it actually involved.

Back then, the closest thing we had to recognition was Arbor Day, usually sometime in the last week of April. It wasn't our day, but it was the nearest connection. It was a day about trees, planting, and the environment. If you were a Landscape Architect, you quietly claimed it as your own.

But things didn't stay that way.

Over the years, I've watched the profession grow and evolve in ways I couldn't have imagined at that graduation party in 1986. The question slowly shifted from "What is a Landscape Architect?" to something much more rewarding: "I can tell a Landscape Architect designed this."

Spaces that once felt empty or purely functional have been reimagined. Parks invite people in instead of pushing them through. Communities feel connected. Developments, whether residential, commercial, or even industrial, are designed with people in mind, not just cars. There's a focus now on sustainability, resilience, and creating places that actually improve how we live.



Looking back over more than 40 years and hundreds of projects, it's been incredible to witness that transformation firsthand. And today, the

recognition has finally caught up. Arbor Day has returned to its roots, and Landscape Architecture now has its own place on the calendar. Professional Landscape Architects Day is celebrated in early April, along with the entire month of April being recognized as World Landscape Architecture Month.

Not bad for a profession that once needed a full explanation at a family party.

Michael Scarborough has been part of NUTEC's Civil Department for 35 years and now serves as a Project Manager. Beyond his work at NUTEC, he remains active in the community as Vice Chairman of the East Manchester Township Planning Commission and through years of leadership and coaching with local youth sports programs in York. Married for 40 years, Mike enjoys spending time with his two children and six grandchildren (with two more arriving soon!) and loves being a grandparent, hunting, golfing, and cheering on Penn State.