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Lauring Const. and Ryan celebrate BSA Accessible Design award

February 21, 2020 - Construction Design & Engineering

Boylston, MA According to Lauring Construction and Ryan Associates their project for Tower Hill Botanic Garden was recognized with a 2019 William D. Smith Memorial Award for Accessible Design from the Boston Society of Architects (BSA). The Court: A Garden Within Reach was awarded a citation at the BSA Awards Gala during a ceremony at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.

Tower Hill Botanic Garden, is a non-profit organization dedicated to connecting plants and people. Its mission is to inspire the use and appreciation of horticulture to improve lives, enrich communities, and strengthen commitment to the natural world. The Tower Hill property of 171 acres includes 17 gardens, an historic apple orchard, a restaurant, gift shop, conservatories, library, and art galleries, as well as year-round programs for all ages.

Designed by landscape architects Ryan Assocs., The Court: A Garden Within Reach is an 11,000 s/f universally accessible garden where people of all ages and abilities can engage directly with the botanical experience. The Garden provides a myriad of opportunities for direct physical interaction with plants through the use of custom designed planters. Lauring Const. erected a serpentine fieldstone wall to form a raised planting bed and seating for the garden. A custom steel planter allows visitors to garden from a standing position and another planter with a gridded planting surface is designed specifically for visitors with visual impairments.

The sensorial experiences of sound, movement and touch are enhanced through the use of water. Lauring Construction installed a tiered fountain which provides an auditory backdrop while a circular water-table invites touch. Small bronze sculptures evoke a New England pond ecosystem. Thirteen plasma-cut weathering steel screens form a ceremonial entrance to the garden. A collaboration between Ryan Assocs., sculptor, illustrator, and local fabricator, these decorative screens, provide protection from the winds that routinely buffet the hilltop location.

The project was funded through private donations - led by Robert Courtemanche, for whom the space is named - and with financial support from the Mass. Cultural Council.

“Lauring Construction and Ryan Associates were true partners in the design and construction of The Court: A Garden Within Reach, taking great care that our new space was accessible and welcome to everyone,” said Grace Elton, CEO at Tower Hill. “The design achieves the often-elusive feat of creating a garden that is as universally beautiful as it is accessible. We look forward to sharing it with our visitors for years to come.”

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540