

# *The Developing Landscape:*

## *The Morton Arboretum Comes of Age*

*Anthony Tyznik*

*1953-1993*

Some 300,000 annual visitors to The Morton Arboretum enjoy both the broad sweep of O. C. Simonds's and Clarence Godshalk's vision and the intimate garden designs of Anthony "Tony" Tyznik. The designs of these artists reflect and complement the surrounding natural areas. During his 40-year tenure at the Arboretum, first as Superintendent and later as Landscape Architect, Tony Tyznik worked his design principles into the original naturalistic landscape plan by O. C. Simonds. He carried the plan forward, incorporating many new buildings, plant collections, and lakes into the landscape. In the process, he designed many smaller-scale landscape amenities that visitors enjoy daily.

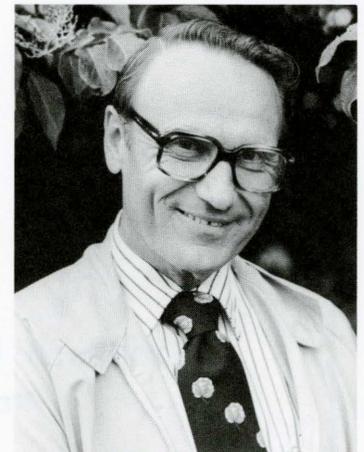
Because the Arboretum is located in a rapidly changing region, a great deal of the large-scale landscape work has been responsive. As Tony put it, he designed many landscapes through the years to "accommodate development." He was referring to both the urban development projects affecting the Arboretum from outside the gates and developments on the grounds. Projects like the construction of the East-West Tollway in 1958, the widening of Route 53 in 1959, and the North-South Tollway, completed in 1989, have had dramatic impacts upon the Arboretum and its landscapes. Accommodating and masking the harsh effects of these projects required creative landscaping solutions. Tony made ample use of "the curve" in designing the landscapes that ease the transition from high-speed highways to graceful roads and paved paths around buildings.

Tony's plans for plantings along the tollway and in the cloverleaf entrances have helped to adapt the Arboretum to the changing, urbanizing nature of the area. Until his retirement in 1993, Tony continued to work on design and planting plans for the berms along the tollways that border the Arboretum on the south. These plantings will help to mitigate the adverse impacts of high-speed highway traffic on the collections and natural areas.

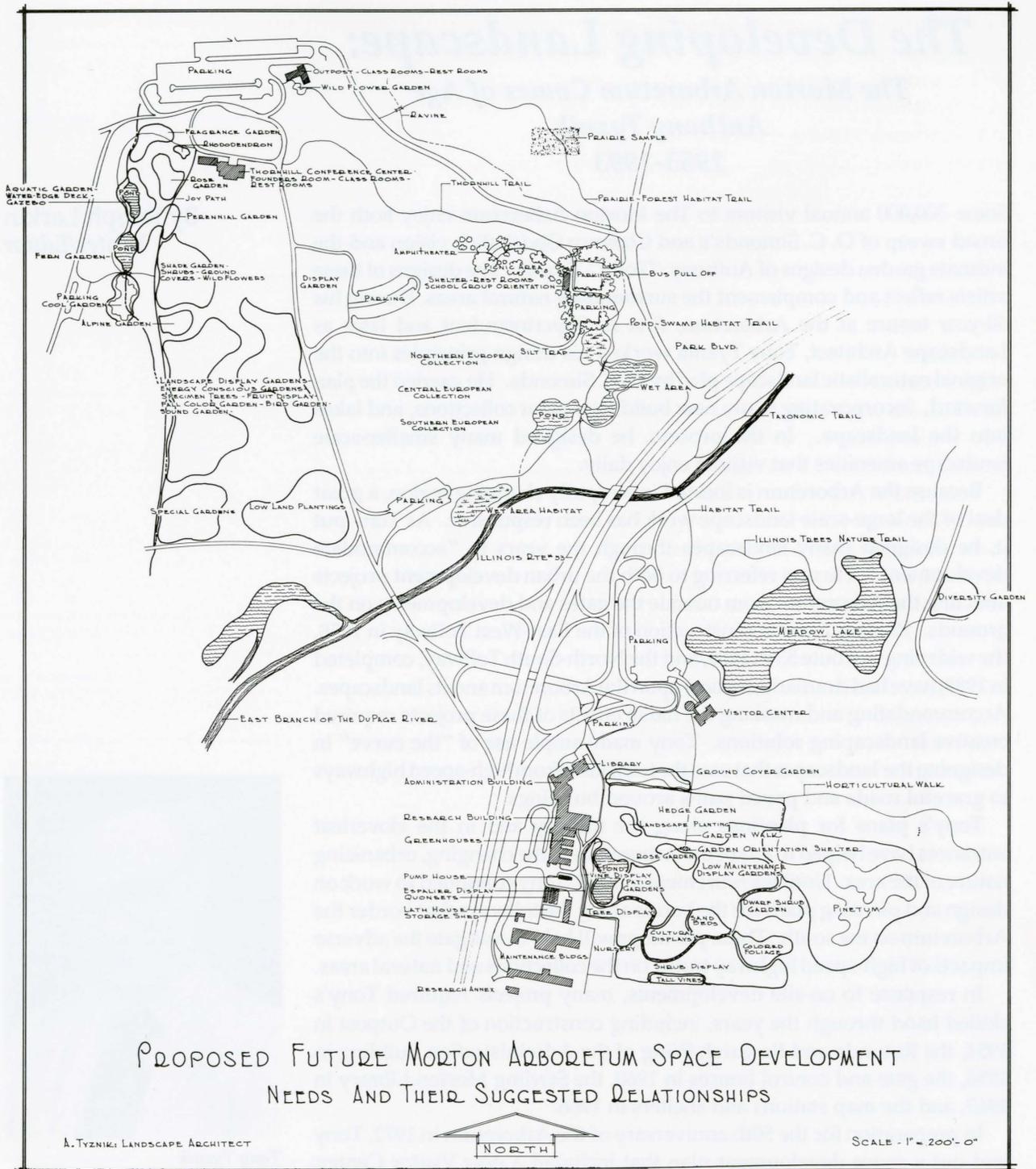
In response to on-site developments, many projects required Tony's skilled hand through the years, including construction of the Outpost in 1954, the Rotunda and Research Wing of the Administration Building in 1956, the gate and control houses in 1960, the Sterling Morton Library in 1963, and the map stations and shelters in 1966.

In preparation for the 50th anniversary of the Arboretum in 1972, Tony laid out a space development plan that included a new Visitor Center,

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*Tony Tyznik*

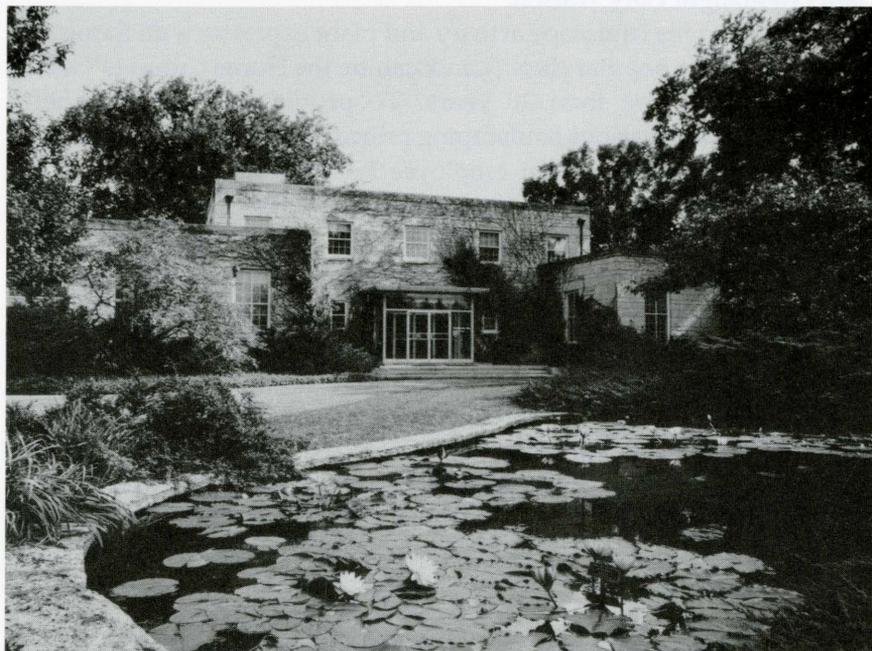


completed in 1972-73 and the Research Center built in 1982. As with all such plans, some projects did not come to full fruition. These new facilities, as well as projects that developed later, such as the upgraded maintenance facilities at South Farm in the late 1980s, tested his ingenuity as a landscaper and plantsman. Besides the masterful landscape designs he developed to accentuate these buildings, he also designed roads, parking lots, sidewalks, paved and wood-chipped paths, and other facilities. In fact, Tony personally participated in building many of the landscapes he designed. Whether operating a bulldozer or laying a brick walk, his exacting eye and practical abilities combined to help bring his beautiful designs to life.

Tony's special talent for more formal landscaping in small areas is evident in the Fragrance Garden at Thornhill, the Woody Herb Garden at the east end of the Research Center, and the Ground Cover Garden south of the Visitor Center, as well as the plantings around buildings and parking lots. He also configured many waterscapes through the years, including Crabapple Lake, Firefly Pond, and the lily ponds in front of the Administration Building and in the Fragrance Garden. These waterscapes enhance the visitor's experience immeasurably and provide attractive features around which Tony designed many beautiful and instructive collections and landscape plantings.

In 1975, a fundamental shift in the Arboretum collections policy prompted several landscape changes. Remote collections—many of which had

Page 40: *The space development plan drawn by Tony Tyznik projected a new Visitor Center and a Research Center.*



Left: *The lily pond in front of the Administration Building is just one of several waterscapes around which Tony placed interesting and informative landscape plantings.*

been established in the 1930s and 40s—were gradually duplicated nearer the Visitor Center for easier access. As the newer collections matured, the older ones were to be eliminated. Traces of these older collections still remain. In addition, a pronounced emphasis on wild-collected species purposely limited or eliminated some horticultural varieties from the Arboretum landscape. These shifts made the Landscape Architect and Curator of Collections partners in new collections developments.

Many of the woody plant collections reveal Tony's talent for recreating natural landscapes in small scale. In the Northern Illinois Collection, for example, he placed tall trees at the center of the composition, shrubs and ground covers at the periphery, and trellised vines in the midground (to approximate small trees) to create the illusion of a native forest composition. His mastery of plant materials, especially the use of small trees, is evident here and in the landscapes around buildings. A talented botanical artist, Tony produced a series of tree portraits for *The Morton Arboretum Quarterly*, with detailed views of the plant's reproductive parts. These drawings and his accompanying text attest to his mastery of the plant materials with which he worked.

In the early 1980s, a decision was made to use mulch to define plant beds and eliminate the need for constant weeding. Tony proved himself a master at designing with mulch. Before he retired in 1993, he wrote an article for this publication on "The Benefits and Beauty of Mulch," along with Arboretum Plant Physiologist Gary Watson.

Tony shared his landscape artistry and plant expertise with thousands of students in the popular class "Landscaping the Home Grounds" which he taught for more than 30 years. To provide his students with demonstrations of various landscaping principles, he designed residential landscapes at Arbordale, an employee housing area adjacent to the Arboretum grounds. He also provided many guided tours of the gardens and collections for amateur and professional groups through the years. His classes and tours were always booked to capacity. For many years his garden designs set the standard in the Chicago Flower and Garden Show at McCormick Place where he nearly always took home the top award for The Morton Arboretum.

Like his predecessors, O. C. Simonds and Clarence Godshalk, Tony Tyznik made a large and very special contribution to the landscape of The Morton Arboretum. The new Master Site Plan, now in progress (see page 48), continues to build upon this long tradition of excellence in landscaping. In Tony Tyznik's words, "The landscape of The Morton Arboretum calms the spirit and excites the senses of all who visit it."



**Pertinent articles by Anthony Tyznik**

"The Landscape of the Street," *The Morton Arboretum Quarterly* Vol. 19, No.4, 1983, pages 49-56.

"The Fragrance Garden," *The Morton Arboretum Quarterly* Vol. 20, No. 3, 1984, pages 33-37.

"The Benefits and Beauty of Mulch," with Gary Watson, *The Morton Arboretum Quarterly* Vol. 29, No. 2, 1993, pages 17-23.

"Tree Portraits" in nearly every issue of *The Morton Arboretum Quarterly* Vols. 1-12.

*These publications are available in the Sterling Morton Library.*

*The Fragrance Garden near the Thornhill Education Center, built in cooperation with the Garden Clubs of Illinois, illustrates Tony Tyznik's mastery of small space gardening.*