



Pansies at Showalter Fountain.

# spring

## THE IU CAMPUS IN

By **Moya Andrews** Photography by **Daniel Orr**



*"I hope that our alumni will always insist upon the retention of our precious islands of green and serenity—our most important physical asset, transcending even classrooms, libraries, and laboratories in their ability to inspire students to dream long dreams of future usefulness and achievement—dreams that are an important and essential part of the undergraduate college experience."*

—Herman B Wells in an address to IU alumni in 1963

Wells and the IU administrators who have been stewards of the campus since his time have espoused the philosophy that the landscape is not just an adornment but an essential ingredient of the university's mission. Terry Clapacs, vice president and chief administrative officer who oversees the physical aspects of all eight



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campuses, has preserved, built upon, and enlarged Wells’ vision. While the Bloomington campus has excellent architecture, it is the landscape design, he believes, that assists the human eye to tie the disparate parts together and harmonize the whole scene. The massive and deep-rooted trees, and the solidity of the hardscape (e.g. paths, walls, and other structures where the same materials and styles are repeated) unify the varied campus buildings and spaces and help create feelings of stability and permanence that are congruent with the traditions of the university.

The ambience of the campus, recognized as one of the five most beautiful in the country, adds to the reputation Bloomington has acquired nationally as a quintessential college town. In many ways the core campus, consisting of approximately 2,000 acres, is to Bloomington what Central Park is to



Sample Gates as seen from East Kirkwood, looking toward Dunn Woods.

Students studying in an idyllic setting.

New York City: both a centerpiece and an emblem. The campus serves Bloomington as a public park that provides a destination as well as recreational opportunities for locals and visitors. It is also an outdoor gallery of sculpture and landscape art where the necessity to provide spaces for a number of different functions plus aesthetic priorities coalesce.

Walls constructed from limestone field stone, and built at a convenient height for students to sit, provide a crisp edge for much of the campus. “There were stone walls like these all around the campus in the early part of the 20th century,” Clapacs says. “Hoagy Carmichael in his book *The Stardust Road* mentions sitting on one of these walls on Third Street, as he was composing music.” In 1976, with the original walls long gone, Clapacs began researching their construction in order to replace them. He made some adaptations, such as building



them higher so they could be used more comfortably for sitting, and he began using the walls as a unifying theme from then on, as various parts of the campus were developed or refurbished.

Mia Williams, director of landscape architecture, notes the importance of campus plantings that reflect an authentic sense of place. Williams believes that “the campus is an excellent example of how designed space can be made to appear natural when, in fact, a landscape is never an identical rendition of nature.” The Bloomington campus is designed to reflect the organic feel of southern Indiana. There is even a densely wooded area called Dunn Woods where the tree canopy provides cool shade all summer and a natural habitat for wildlife all through the year. Located right behind Bryan Hall, and a stone’s throw from the traffic on Indiana Avenue, Dunn Woods is listed on the

National Historic Register and is the center of the historic core of the campus. Climate also influences the selection and placement of plantings, as the design must look attractive, and be sustainable, in all seasons of the year.

#### Long walks and runs

Paths for students to travel from living areas to learning areas are carefully laid out, with both convenience and safety in mind. “As an accent to the natural, organic feel of the campus, focal points such as antique lampposts, benches, and arresting plant combinations are added intermittently along highly traveled routes to add interest,” notes Williams. In addition to wooded areas and paths, open green lawns are strategically placed so that students can sit or lie on the grass to study, and throw a ball or a Frisbee. Students love to persuade



Redbuds against limestone—a familiar textural pairing on the Bloomington campus.

A couple strolls along a brick path in Dunn Woods.



**“Even the seemingly mundane details—the signage, the trash bins, and the recycling containers—are carefully designed and placed so that coherence is maintained in the overall visual display.”**

Lilacs in bloom next to one of the campus' antique lampposts.

faculty to hold class sessions outdoors on the lawn to celebrate the first warm days of spring. As well, Dunn Meadow has been the platform for many student demonstrations and other politically charged activities over the years.

For those who want to go for long walks or runs, there is a network of interlocking routes, and universally accessible design techniques are employed to provide wheelchair access to as many parts of campus as possible. Massed plantings of colorful annuals appear in the growing seasons and are strategically placed as focal points in highly populated areas, such as near the Sample Gates, Indiana Memorial Union, and the IU Auditorium. Both annual and perennial plantings routinely showcase new varieties of plants that are suitable for growing in our geographic region.

Marshall Goss, nursery manager, is the person primarily responsible for researching and selecting new varieties and growing them from plugs in the IU greenhouses. When these plugs arrive at IU they are no bigger than a child's pinky finger. For example, dragon wing begonia, an annual that is a cross between a wax begonia (heat tolerance) and angel wing begonia (attractive wing-shaped leaves) is one of his high-performing introductions to the campus in recent years. It is not coincidental that Bloomington gardeners are planting more of these flowers in private gardens as the campus frequently sets trends for the local gardening community.

For the current stewards of the gardens on campus, their day-to-day work is all about balance: balancing form and function in the design aspects and balancing the coexisting variables of development, restoration, and maintenance of the many individual areas that contribute to the whole campus gestalt. Even the seemingly mundane details—the signage, the trash bins, and the recycling containers—are carefully designed and placed so that coherence is maintained in the overall visual display.



**“...the campus frequently sets trends for the local gardening community.”**



(clockwise from top left) Daffodils; crimson and cream tulips and cream crab apple blossoms, a familiar color pairing in flower beds at IU; vibrant laburnum flowers hang from a potted plant; one of the many beautiful pathways found throughout the campus.





“...no tree has ever been taken out without just cause, and every tree and open space has always been considered sacred.”

A stone bridge over the Jordan River, with a redbud in the foreground.



Redbud, white crab apple, and pink dogwood—a characteristic grouping of trees in Indiana.

#### Constant change

The landscape of the campus is always changing: hour by hour as the light and shadows fluctuate, day by day as different plants bloom, and season by season as the promise of spring moves to the fullness of summer and then to the vibrant coloration of fall. Yet the overarching themes remain and unify.

The Bloomington campus has recently been designated a Tree Campus USA by the Arbor Day Foundation. Mia Williams notes that “IU’s membership in the inaugural class of this program is only fitting since it has always been the case that no tree has ever been taken out without just cause, and every tree and open space has always been considered sacred.” She also notes that “the campus architecture has always been designed so that as much green space as possible could be retained.” However, management practices do change “as new information becomes available and new trends occur,” says Williams. For instance, now that it is routine for students to have cars, there are many more parking lots on campus than during Wells’ time. Thus, landscaping has been used to soften, for example, the Jordan Parking Garage.

Changes in the climate, perhaps as a result of global warming, and the administration’s commitment to be more sustainable have necessitated the use of more drought-tolerant plants, such as those in the island beds along the Bypass, according to Mike Crowe, director of facilities in the Office of the Vice President for Administration. As well, the recent flooding of the Jordan River corridor is necessitating the building of more permeable pathways and more suitable plantings for site conservation to avoid future erosion.

More attention is also being paid to sustainability best practices and this affects the balance and emphasis of individual elements within overall designs. Williams points to the now un-mowed area between Campus View and Tulip Tree Apartments that has recently been designated for experimentation. New maintenance practices there will create natural habitats that provide shelter to wildlife and showcase native species. Wells always stressed the need for the landscape to exemplify to students how to care for the environment.

### The greenhouses

According to Vice President Clapacs, “the university greenhouses in Bloomington grow approximately 80,000 annuals each year and they are supplied to Bradford Woods as well as to the Bloomington campus.” Trees that are started in the nursery are also used on all campuses except IU Northwest in Gary, which has sandy soil and a more extreme climate than Bloomington. Whereas there were once 67 full-time workers who maintained the campus here, there are now 44 full time, supplemented by approximately 30 students part time in the summer.

### Sculptures and motifs

There are many special sculptural and architectural motifs that enhance the beauty of the campus gardens. The most recent addition is the Hoagy Carmichael sculpture in the newly landscaped area between the Auditorium and the Wells Library parking lot. Another garden vignette is the statue of Wells on his bench surrounded by the Meidland Carefree roses near the Old Crescent. Nearby is the Rose Well House, so named because it covers an old well. Built in 1908, it preserves the limestone portal that had originally been on a building at the old Seminary Square site of the university, and the stained-glass roofs of the side bays are reminiscent of the turn of the century. A colorful Japanese maple planted next to the Well House provides a textural contrast to the limestone structure.

The campus landscape is full of visual echoes of generations past that have left their mark upon and among the plantings, and there are many lasting gifts, tangible as well as intangible, that have been bestowed upon it. The landscape, rooted in the past, yet responsive to the present, provides not only the university but also all of Bloomington with an enduring and defining asset. For all who study, work, or visit, it is a magnificent composite of vistas and vignettes that inspire the soul and stimulate the mind and senses. ✧

The sharp lines of the sculpture, *Peau Rouge* by Alexander Calder, in front of the Musical Arts Center juxtaposed with the fluffy clusters of crab apple flowers.



“The campus landscape is full of visual echoes of generations past....”

(top to bottom)  
A co-ed enjoys a quiet moment in the presence of Herman B Wells in the Old Crescent.

Adam and Eve, sculpted by the late Jean Paul Darriau, a faculty member at IU for many years.

Red tulips and grape hyacinth.

