

MAIN LINE SCHOOLS

Woodlynde School's gardens catch the eye

By DAVID ROBINSON

The entrance to Woodlynde School, on Upper Gulph Road, near the intersection with Old Eagle School Road has become a point where cars slow down long before the traffic light. The attraction for the drivers' eyes is the rich texture, movement of color and flow of plantings around the Woodlynde sign and along the slope of the ground.

The Woodlynde gardens have been developed over the past few years by Haverford's Laurie Humphreys, a former Woodlynde school parent and owner of Laurie Humphreys Landscape Design.

A fine arts major, who developed an interest in working with nature's palette, Humphreys received her master's in landscape

architecture from the University of Pennsylvania. She began taking classes at Longwood and working days in the crews of two well-known Main Line landscape designers, Sue Geylin and Liz Porter. "I learned a great deal from them, not just horticulture, but also how to deal with people," Humphreys said. "They recommended me for some of my first jobs, and they still send me clients. Landscape design on the Main Line is not a business that turns over. It is made up of relationships and the process of building relationships with clients and their gardens. The designers share information and pass on information to one another. Sometimes, we pass along clients to one another because of the site location, type of garden, or personalities."

Humphreys crews are made up of Temple, Haverford and Bryn Mawr students. Some of the crew are still in school; others have graduated and are taking time to make decisions.



In Laurie Humphreys design, there are blocks of single species *Amsonia hubrecteii* and subsequent plant blocks of *Dedum spirium 'Fuldaglut'* with *Thymus praecox* "Woolly Thyme."

"After working on the crew, some of our crew members have gone into green industry jobs, and some are considering graduate studies in landscape architecture or horticulture," Humphreys said. "One crew member has stayed on and assumed a managerial role."

Lately, she has been focusing on displaying plants and creating plant arrangements in uncommon containers such as metal file drawers. "I'm experimenting with stretching the zone limits on plants. They are outside of their zone, but they are not 'rare' plants," she added. Some of the interesting choices of plants are *Dickia leptostacha*, *Crypthansis* and *Chondropetalum*.

"I want to encourage conversation between the plant and its container, between the house and the garden. Maybe it's a line from the architecture followed into the landscape or a connection between the inside and the outside of a house. Not

just when you looking at the total from the outside, but also when you're inside, looking out."

Humphreys pays special attention to views. "Every landscape has its own character for the viewer. Some places you stand and look, while others are walk-throughs. Woodlynde is a drive by and a drive into. Woodlynde is saying through their garden, 'We want to share this with you.' They want people to slow down and take in the beauty. As people drive by the hillside garden, repeating plants make the garden easy to read and create a rhythm. I was told that one particular plant, *Amsonia hubrecteii*, has received so much attention from the garden that Waterloo can't keep them in stock." Color photos of the Woodlynde garden and other examples of her work can be seen on the Web site <http://www.lauriehumphreys.com/gardens.html>.



In metal file drawers used as planting boxes, Humphreys stretched our plant zone limit with *Dyckia leptostacha* and *Pedilanthus macrocarpus* from a Texas nursery.