



# Educator PROfile

## Mary Haque

*By Ellen Vincent, Clemson University Environmental Landscape Specialist*

After earning her bachelor's degree in English (1973) from Sweet Briar College, Virginia, Mary Haque attended Clemson's post graduate studio where she took horticulture and city and regional planning classes, and worked in the botanical garden. She then earned a Masters in Landscape Architecture (MLA, 1978) at NC State and became a registered landscape architect in 1980. Her first job took her back to Clemson University as Assistant Professor for the Department Horticulture. She held 100% teaching responsibilities and recently retired from Clemson after 31 successful years.

Mary Haque always has been and always shall be a strong advocate for sustainable landscape design. Sustainable design, according to Haque, "Is designing to ensure that future generations can live as comfortably as we do today. It entails managing resources for our children, grandchildren, and beyond." Mary Haque lives by the same standards she teaches. Long before I met her, I heard stories of how she would sometimes travel from Clemson to Columbia by bus, even when it involved lengthy waits in bus depots, because she believed that public transportation was more energy efficient than motorizing about in one's own vehicle. She also took to riding her bicycle to work when gas prices escalated. She is co-author of *Landscape Design for Energy Efficiency and Xeriscape*, practical guides for professionals and students.

Sustainable design in the classroom starts with the site analysis. Students

are encouraged to understand, appreciate, and fully experience the site they're working on. On location, Haque encourages students to listen to the birds and to identify the species. They may even visit during a rain event to experience the effects of water at the site. The drawing they produce for the site analysis phase includes detailing existing vegetation, hydrology, differing sun patterns, wind patterns, and soil types. Their purpose, according to Haque, "Is to notice what is there, to enhance, not destroy the site."

Students in Haque's classes learn to identify, evaluate, and integrate energy efficiency, water conservation, wildlife habitat, and efficient maintenance into their designs. Improper pruning and planting are huge issues she attempts to correct in the classroom. "The lack of understanding of good pruning techniques leads to things like 'crape murder'. Old magnificent trees that take years to grow can be destroyed by one ignorant person." Student's planting schemes must show that above ground and below ground utilities were noted and the correct sized tree at maturity is called for. They are marked off if they select a plant for use that is known to succumb to pest infestations or if they recommend installing a plant under a window that would require annual pruning to keep it within bounds.

Haque notes that the term "sustainable" is used in many different ways these days. Sustainable design principles and practices weren't always readily accepted in her early years. She finds

they are now more accepted, though not necessarily practiced. 'If I wasn't retired', she reports, "I'd be LEED certified. These are the people who will be needed in the future. And that's exciting!"

Haque's commitment to service learning, also known as experiential learning, in the classroom is legendary. She notes, "Real life projects with clients is much more motivating for students than just working with one professor alone." Her class projects have included City of Georgetown Streetscape restoration project, many schoolyards, residences, and several churches. She and her classes also find value in serving clients who perhaps could not otherwise afford the services of a professional design company.

Service learning is a vehicle for Haque to introduce students to interdisciplinary processes and the links between teaching and research. First, the students are guided to research a topic that pertains to their landscape as well as to conduct a thorough site analysis. Then they develop presentation skills that include graphics, written text, and oral delivery. Essential teamwork skills develop when her design students partner with students from other disciplines to create a finished product. These interdisciplinary opportunities occurred when English students created a landscape maintenance manual for the client under the direction of the horticulture students. In another in-

***Continued on page 40***

## **Continued from page 39**

stance Parks Recreation and Management students organized a celebratory groundbreaking event for a new garden installation.

Haque utilizes a variety of strategies of instruction to reach as many students as possible. She understands that listening to a professor talking on and on in a classroom setting can be less than productive. "To be a really good teacher you need to try to reach all the different students. They have different learning styles. Experiences stay with students." The experiences Haque is referring to include fieldtrips, guest practitioners, and a unique approach to the critique.

Design critiques, also known as crits, occur during different phases of the design process. Students traditionally pin their drawings to burlap covered walls and hold their breath while a group of esteemed professionals gaze at their work, question them publically, and render judgments. In Haque's classes critiques take a more positive tone as good points as well as constructive criticism is delivered. Susannah Horton studied with Mary Haque and recalls the process, "Mary will always find something positive about a design. For me, that is such an important trait since it helps to build confidence and that confidence is what may help you toward a final design solution instead of bogging you down."

Haque attempts to create a spirit of cooperation and civility in her classes that she feels elevates the entire classroom. This results in students asking other students to critique or evaluate their work. Next, she's noticed that her students willingly ask the visiting guests and professors questions to help them better understand the field of landscape design in general and their own project in particular. The participatory classroom emerges in Haque's classes as

students are encouraged to voice their ideas and beliefs and to reflect on the information learned.

What inspires Mary Haque are the students and the landscape sites. "Students inspire me. They bring such a fresh eye and uninhibited approach to a project. Seeing all the different ideas and approaches emerge is exciting." Haque has guided many students to new scholastic levels. She coaches them to deliver presentations at major conferences such as Southern Region ASHS (American Society of Horticultural Science); to publish papers; and to engage in cutting edge installation projects such as green walls. Even though she retired this year Haque is mentoring several creative inquiry students who are striving to meet the needs of the world around them.

Renee Byrd, horticulture major and now a Ph.D. student, has studied with Mary Haque for seven years. Byrd teaches the classes Haque used to teach and describes her mentor as "Absolutely fantastic! As a teacher and a mentor she is always encouraging, looking out for the future of her students. She is always encouraging us to become better designers. Her holistic approach to design, details, and sustainability attracted me to her classes. She is always concerned with connecting clients to the site. In children's gardens she is always looking for ways to bring the children back outdoors."

Mary Haque's impact on students is voiced in the classes now taught by Byrd. "She made an impact on so many students" reports Byrd. "They say over and over again how much they enjoyed her and her classes and that they ended up taking more classes in the horticulture department because of her."

Susannah Horton is one of the many satisfied students who flourished un-

der Haque's direction. Horton, now an MLA (master's in landscape architecture) student, describes the experience: "She emphasizes a holistic approach to the design, and I'd say that's due to her background... writing succinct narratives to describe and explain the designs reflect her English background; coming up with creative, successful designs reflect her background as a landscape architect; and making sure the plans have appropriate plant material in the appropriate places reflect the years that she's spent teaching in the horticulture department. She expected each of her students to consider all three aspects when approaching a project, and again, would focus on the individual students' strengths in each of the areas."

Mary Haque's entire family seems to be attracted to environmental responsibility. Her father has already established conservation easements on his land in Columbia and Mary is helping him now with a stream restoration project. Her husband Imtiaz, professor in Clemson's mechanical engineering department is also the executive director of ICAR, the Center for Automotive Research; as well as a principal investigator for Clemson's new wind energy project. Daughter Mariana is a landscape architecture student at Clemson, and son Omar is working on his MBA (master's in business administration) at Clemson.

Future plans include staying involved with the creative inquiry students and contributing more to the South Carolina Chapter of the National Wildlife Federation. She is also planning a return to playing league tennis and horseback riding. This means more frequent trips to Virginia where her family owns a horse farm with 70 polo ponies. She has also begun to dabble in the arts, specifically drawing and pottery.