

THE NEW AESTHETICS OF NATURE: COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING PERSPECTIVES ON THE TREND OF WILD AND NATURALISTIC GARDENS

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***Abstract:** In recent years, landscape design has witnessed a growing shift towards the creation of wild and naturalistic gardens that prioritize ecological authenticity and minimal human intervention. This trend, often referred to as "the new aesthetics of nature," reflects not only a change in design philosophy but also an evolution in environmental communication and green marketing. The study explores how the aesthetics of wilderness are used as tools for promoting sustainable lifestyles and reconnecting people with nature. By combining design theory, visual communication, and marketing analysis, the research investigates how natural garden concepts are represented in media, branding, and public discourse. The paper argues that wild gardens have become a powerful medium of environmental storytelling conveying messages of balance, biodiversity, and ecological awareness. Through the use of visual metaphors, sensory experience, and emotional engagement, landscape architects and brands alike are reshaping public perception of beauty and responsibility in the contemporary natural environment.*

Key words: communication, environmental storytelling, landscape, marketing.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the global perception of nature, landscape design, and outdoor environments has undergone a significant cultural shift [10]. From meticulously trimmed lawns and symmetrical flowerbeds to untamed meadows, spontaneous vegetation, and irregular plant compositions, the rise of wild and naturalistic gardens marks a transformation not only in aesthetic preferences, but also in how societies understand their relationship with the natural world [4]. What was once considered "messy," "uncontrolled," or "unprofessional" in landscape design is gradually being reinterpreted as authentic, ecological, and emotionally meaningful. The naturalistic garden defined by irregular plant groupings, native species, raw materials, and a visual impression of spontaneity has become a powerful symbol of a broader movement toward sustainability, biodiversity, and a return to ecological roots [2,8].

This trend is more than a design choice; it reflects a profound cultural reaction to urban rigidity, environmental degradation, and the psychological pressures of modern life. As cities grow increasingly artificial and technologically mediated, people seek spaces that offer tranquility, emotional grounding, and a sense of belonging [9]. Naturalistic landscapes evoke imperfection, evolution, and life qualities that contrast sharply with controlled architectural forms. These spaces are perceived as more restorative and more aligned with nature's rhythms, offering balance between order and freedom [3]. The appeal lies not in chaos, but in what landscape scholars call "controlled naturalness" a purposeful design that appears wild while remaining thoughtfully planned [1]. Contemporary studies describe this aesthetic as a conscious return to ecological values, emphasizing native vegetation, local materials, and minimal intervention, a perspective also reflected in recent analyses of naturalistic garden design in Romania.

At the same time, the new aesthetics of nature has opened an unexpected arena: communication and marketing. Wild gardens have become cultural products featured in magazine campaigns, tourism branding, real estate development, public policy messaging,

and corporate sustainability strategies [6] They communicate identity [5]. A naturalistic park signals environmental responsibility; a wild garden hotel promotes wellness and authenticity; a brand aligned with rewilding positions itself as modern, ethical, and future oriented. In this context, landscape design becomes a form of storytelling. The garden is no longer only a physical space it is a message. It conveys ecological awareness, community values, and psychological well being. From social media imagery to public communication campaigns, the visual language of wildness has become a persuasive tool for shaping public perception [7].

Moreover, the rise of naturalistic gardens aligns with economic and marketing logic. As consumers increasingly value sustainability, brands and institutions strategically integrate natural aesthetics into their image to build trust, differentiate themselves, and respond to shifting expectations [1,15]. Green spaces designed in a wild, nature forward style are now used to attract visitors, enhance urban reputation, and fuel local development demonstrating that natural aesthetics carries both symbolic and commercial power. Public parks, for instance, are promoted not only as recreational spaces but also as markers of modern urban identity, innovation, and environmental resilience. This dual role ecological and communicative positions wild gardens at the crossroads of environmental design, social psychology, and marketing strategy [12].

Therefore, the trend toward wild and naturalistic landscaping cannot be understood solely through horticulture or ecology. It is simultaneously a cultural narrative, a communication phenomenon, and an emerging marketing asset. The present research paper explores this intersection, examining how the new aesthetics of nature reshape public perception, influence environmental communication, and redefine the way institutions, cities, and brands position themselves in the contemporary world [11]. By analyzing naturalistic gardens not only as ecological systems but also as social messages and strategic tools, the study offers an interdisciplinary perspective on one of the most significant landscape trends of the 21st century.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory research design aimed at understanding how wild and naturalistic gardens function not only as ecological landscapes, but also as communication symbols and marketing tools in contemporary society. Because the trend is culturally and perceptually driven, a qualitative approach allows for a deeper examination of meanings, interpretations, and social narratives associated with naturalistic aesthetics. The study draws on Academic and Theoretical Literature: books, journal articles, institutional publications, and professional reports on naturalistic landscape design, environmental psychology, green marketing and sustainability communication and urban ecological planning.

RESEARCH RESULTS

For centuries, garden design was dominated by formal aesthetics geometric shapes, symmetry, trimmed hedges, and strict control over vegetation. European aristocratic landscapes, such as the French Baroque gardens of the 17th and 18th centuries, viewed nature as something to be disciplined and perfected. The garden functioned as a symbol of human dominance over the natural world, reflecting power, order, and rationality. However, beginning in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, ecological science, Romantic philosophy, and the Arts and Crafts movement introduced a new sensibility: nature as a living, evolving system rather than a static ornament [13]. This shift laid the foundation for contemporary naturalistic design, which values spontaneity, biodiversity, and visual

irregularity. Modern research emphasizes that naturalistic gardens are not “abandoned spaces” but carefully orchestrated environments that imitate ecological processes while maintaining aesthetic coherence [1].

An important concept in recent literature is the aesthetic value of imperfection. The Japanese notion of “*wabi sabi*” and contemporary environmental psychology highlight that people feel more emotionally connected to landscapes that appear organic, imperfect, and evolving [15]. Research shows that naturalistic environments foster a sense of authenticity and nostalgia and enhance psychological well-being compared to rigid, ornamental gardens. This idea is echoed in Romanian landscape studies, which describe the naturalistic garden as a reaction against excessive urbanization and artificial design, emphasizing respect for native vegetation, soil, and natural materials. The “controlled wildness” approach allows designers to create spaces that feel spontaneous while being intentionally planned, blending emotional engagement with ecological function.

A central theme in the literature is the ecological benefit of naturalistic planting. Scholars argue that native species, perennial grasses, and meadow style vegetation support pollinators, improve soil health, and reduce maintenance requirements. Studies emphasize that landscapes designed with ecological principles contribute to climate resilience, water retention, and species diversity. Unlike traditional lawns that demand irrigation, fertilizers, and frequent mowing, naturalistic gardens prioritize sustainability, seasonal succession, and minimal intervention [14]. The uploaded material reinforces the importance of combining native and exotic species to achieve both visual richness and ecological balance, highlighting the role of substrate quality, soil health, and natural materials such as stone and wood in supporting sustainable design.

Environmental psychology literature consistently reports that naturalistic environments enhance mental restoration, reduce stress, and strengthen emotional well-being. Informal, organic landscapes are perceived as more relaxing and more “alive” than formal ones [12]. They stimulate curiosity, creativity, and a sense of belonging, and contribute to community cohesion by fostering social interaction in shared public spaces. The idea that imperfect landscapes promote emotional connection is also found in Romanian case studies, which claim that naturalistic spaces evoke feelings of authenticity and continuity, helping people identify more deeply with their environment.

In contemporary research, landscapes are increasingly viewed not only as physical environments but also as visual communication systems. Naturalistic gardens communicate ideas, values, and identities through their appearance, materials, and ecological structure. They act as symbolic statements in both public and private contexts:

1. Public Sector Communication

Cities, municipalities, and governmental institutions use naturalistic parks and rewilded spaces to publicly signal their commitment to sustainability, climate adaptation, and community well-being. The design itself becomes a message communicating modern governance, ecological responsibility, and innovation. A naturalistic park suggests that a city is forward-thinking, environmentally aware, and aligned with global sustainability agendas. These spaces often become part of branding strategies for urban regeneration, tourism promotion, and civic identity. For example, the Romanian case of naturalistic park design highlights how such spaces are presented not only as ecological interventions but also as symbols of a new urban vision and social progress.

2. Private Sector Communication

Companies, hotels, cultural institutions, and real estate developers increasingly adopt wild style landscapes to shape their public image. A naturalistic garden positioned at a corporate headquarters or commercial complex communicates authenticity, ethical responsibility,

wellness orientation, and a connection to nature. In the private sector, landscape becomes part of corporate storytelling. The choice of native vegetation, raw materials, and low intervention design visually reinforces claims of sustainability, transparency, or eco friendly business practices. The garden becomes a communicative asset something that speaks on behalf of the organization without words.

3. Landscapes as Cultural Symbols

Figure 1. can be interpreted as a general design framework for the modernization of any urban park. It captures the essential components of a contemporary naturalistic approach and can be used as a universal guideline in park redevelopment.

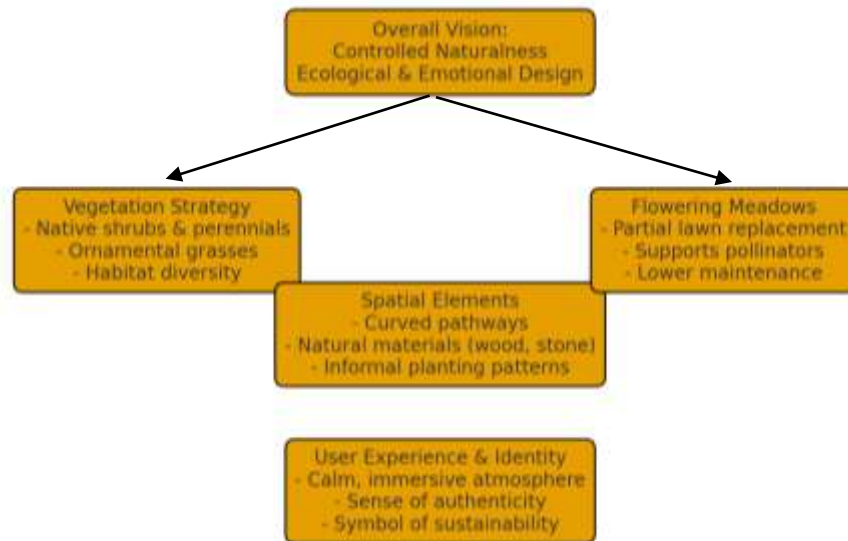


Figure 1. Conceptual Naturalistic design vision

Source: own vision after [2,4,12]

At its core, Figure 1 it proposes that a renewed urban park should strive for “controlled naturalness,” meaning a space that appears spontaneous and closely connected to nature, yet remains carefully planned and functional. This central idea reflects the broader shift in landscape design away from rigid geometry and highly manicured layouts toward more fluid, organic compositions [2]. The diagram highlights how vegetation plays a crucial role in this transformation: the use of native shrubs, perennials, and ornamental grasses encourages ecological diversity and creates a living, dynamic environment rather than a static decorative one [4]. The inclusion of flowering meadows suggests a move away from traditional lawn-dominated parks, reducing maintenance while supporting pollinators and enhancing seasonal interest.

In addition, the figure emphasizes the importance of spatial elements such as curved pathways and natural materials, which help create a more immersive and relaxed atmosphere. These design elements soften the park’s structure and invite exploration, making the landscape feel more like a natural ecosystem than a formal public garden. Finally, the focus on user experience underscores that modernization is not only about ecological or visual updates; it is also about shaping how visitors feel in the space. A modern park should offer calmness, authenticity, and a sense of connection to nature, ultimately becoming a symbol of sustainability and contemporary urban identity [11].

Naturalistic gardens also communicate broader cultural narratives: a return to nature, rejection of artificial order, and respect for ecological processes. Their irregular forms and spontaneous aesthetics symbolize freedom, resilience, and adaptability. Thus, the garden functions as a cultural metaphor for contemporary values fluidity, diversity, and coexistence. As the literature argues, the appeal of “controlled wildness” reflects a shift in how society interprets beauty, authenticity, and human nature relationships [3].

In this sense, natural landscapes act as public messages signaling who we are, what we value, and how we envision the future. The growing presence of naturalistic gardens in marketing and branding strategies is widely discussed in recent scholarship. Their commercial relevance stems from several interconnected dynamics [2, 3]:

- Modern consumers increasingly favor brands that demonstrate environmental responsibility. Research in green marketing shows that visual cues associated with nature wild meadows, native plants, unprocessed materials enhance perceptions of trust, authenticity, and ethical practice. Naturalistic landscapes therefore function as implicit evidence of sustainability, making them valuable marketing tools.
- Wild gardens evoke calmness, nostalgia, and emotional restoration qualities that positively influence consumer decision making. Businesses in tourism, hospitality, wellness, and real estate use naturalistic design to create immersive experiences that differentiate their offerings. A hotel surrounded by wild native vegetation communicates relaxation and natural luxury; an eco resort uses naturalistic design to justify premium pricing; a residential development markets itself as healthy, serene, and nature integrated.
- In crowded markets, companies seek distinctiveness. Naturalistic design provides a unique visual identity linked to innovation and environmental ethics. It allows brands to position themselves as modern, conscious, and future oriented. Cities, too, leverage these landscapes to improve their competitive profile attracting investors, tourists, and residents by promoting an image of a green, livable, forward thinking urban environment. The uploaded material illustrates this through the strategic presentation of naturalistic urban spaces as symbols of modern development and local advancement
- Businesses increasingly integrate sustainability into ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) frameworks. Naturalistic landscapes support these claims visually and operationally reducing maintenance costs, lowering chemical use, and supporting biodiversity. This alignment strengthens corporate credibility and enhances marketing narratives based on responsibility, resilience, and long term value.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this research demonstrate that the rise of wild and naturalistic gardens represents far more than a stylistic preference in landscape design. It reflects a profound cultural, ecological, and communicative shift in how contemporary society understands and engages with nature. Naturalistic gardens signal a departure from highly controlled, ornamental aesthetics toward an approach that values spontaneity, diversity, and ecological authenticity.

By prioritizing native species, organic materials, and minimal intervention, the landscapes enhance biodiversity, improve soil and water health, and reduce long-term maintenance demands. The irregularity, texture, and dynamic character foster emotional restoration, reduce stress, and create a sense of belonging. Imperfection and organic structure provide a feeling of authenticity, making these spaces more engaging and

personally meaningful. The study concludes that naturalistic gardens now function as powerful communication symbols. In public settings, they visually communicate modern urban identity, environmental responsibility, and forward thinking governance. In private settings, naturalistic landscapes communicate authenticity, ethical values, and ecological awareness, allowing organizations to express identity without verbal messaging.

In essence, the trend toward wild and naturalistic gardens represents a redefined human nature relationship: one rooted in respect, coexistence, and authenticity. As ecological concerns, psychological needs, and sustainability driven communication continue to evolve, naturalistic design is poised to remain a central and influential direction in both public policy and private development.

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