

# James Lane

— Design & Style —

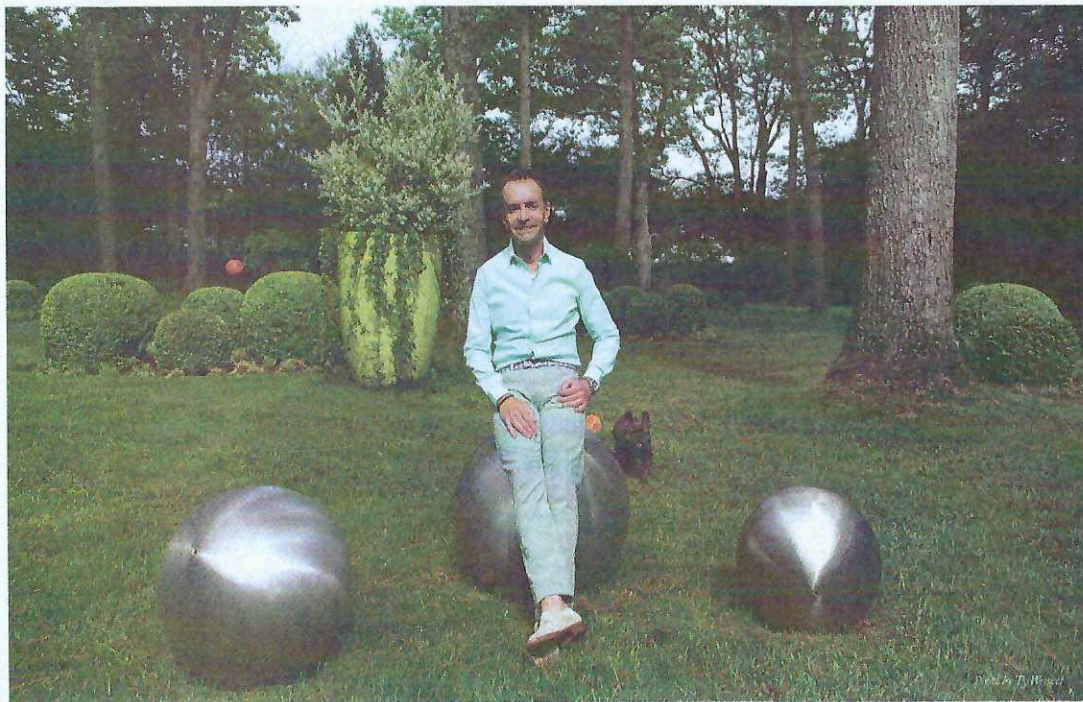
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FREDERICO AZEVEDO





# Frederico Azevedo

## The Gentle Mastery Of Intentional Landscape Design

By Ty Wenzel

**F**rederico Azevedo points to a large sculpture on the grounds of a rabbit standing on a big red ball and says, "It's the year of the rabbit!" The lunar Year Of The Rabbit is known as a good time to slow down, reflect, and strive for balance around work and life, and it represents the cultivating of peace. It is something that he strives for.

Azevedo established Unlimited Earth Care in 1993, exactly 30 years ago. He is an expat of Brazil, known as a pillar of our community who champions sustainable horticulture while growing one of the largest award-winning landscaping firms on the East End. He is also a member of the Association of Professional Landscape Designers, the American Horticultural Society, and the Horticultural Alliance of the Hamptons. Experiencing the vast natural vista of his own home in North Haven, the naturalistic space is sprinkled with sculptures throughout. The spring-time lushness of his handwork hints at color explosions to come in a few short weeks — he is well-known for his palettes of planted color. And why not? He knows that every season comes with its own gifts for the beholder.

**Frederico, you are celebrating 30 years this year!**

It feels incredible to be celebrating 30 years of Unlimited Earth Care. I founded my firm in 1993, and I am so proud of all that we have grown. At the core of the Unlimited Earth Care vision is healthy, colorful gardens, and this has also expanded to other forms over the years, like the Garden Concept Store, the Garden Market, and my book, "Bloom: The Luminous Gardens of Frederico Azevedo." As I built my career designing and maintaining sustainable gardens and landscapes, it began to also be

important to me to share my ideas about natural design and the way I approach creating space outdoors and using color. I am also so grateful for my clients, many of whom have become friends. My aim is always to elevate their experience of life at home, and bring joy with colorful flowers and pollinator guests, like butterflies and hummingbirds. The accomplishments of Unlimited Earth Care's 30 years are the many lush gardens full of healthy plants and flowers that came from my careful planning and custom color palettes.

**You are originally from Brazil. How did you find yourself in the Hamptons, which seems like a world away from your homeland?**

Yes, I am from Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, where I came of age surrounded by some incredible design vistas, and I saw the transformative effects of intentional landscape design. I grew up surrounded by nature, and I always understood the emotional power of plants and flowers, and of course of color. I studied garden design in England and the US, and when I first experienced the Hamptons, I knew that was where I wanted to design. I saw farmland, shore, woods, and fields, and I knew that it was a good place to grow things. It is also a fragile, special place, and I quickly came to love the challenge of designing across its different environments and seasons. The Hamptons is where I have grown countless flowers and trees, where I founded my firm and saw it grow and expand to success, and it is also where I raised my family.

**Your work is famous for its sustainability and your care for the environment is well known. Can you explain why this is so important to you and**

**how are you implementing sustainability exactly?**

It is important to me to design gardens that are as healthy as they are beautiful. I believe a healthy garden is designed with native and well-adapted plants and flowers that thrive in the specific soil and climate of the site, that naturally resist deer and rabbits, and welcome and support pollinators. There is a kind of quality to a garden when the plants are healthy and the butterflies are visiting — it is difficult to explain but I can feel it when I walk through my gardens — the colors are brighter and the greens are richer. I am always considering and balancing the needs of the plants as a holistic part of my design process. I compose arrangements of plants that complement and support one another. Some plants provide needed shade to certain flowers, others taste bitter to deer and dissuade them from eating young blooms. After 30 years I am so familiar with these elements that now they're a part of even my first outlines for a project, as I'm walking through a property and envisioning where to begin. Of course the environment is always changing and new technologies and sustainable materials are developed every year, and I love that what I do means that I must always continue to learn and pay attention to innovations in design.

**Do you cringe when you see huge green lawns when you know that pesticides are the main reason they look that way? If it is, then how does one accomplish this holy grail of Hamptons home landscapes with big green lawns?**

There is always a way to create the right space. Some of my clients have become more interested in gravel and stone areas inspired by formal European gardens; the right materials and design can make hard-scaped areas very elegant. I also design meadows, which are very low maintenance as it is only the wheat that needs to be reseeded every year, the annuals are maintained by birds and butterflies. I use soft textures to design a meadow, which I interrupt with vibrant color and clustered blooms in spiked and spherical forms to draw the eye and break up the appearance of the wheat, which provides a golden foundation. My meadows are about experimenting with movement and texture and finding ways to create an enticing view — when the wind blows, it is almost like watching the ocean.

**Your use of color is renowned. Is this a style you brought with you from Brazil? Tell us about Brazil and how it has influenced your work.**

My sense of color was influenced by both Brazilian and English garden design, but it has come into a unique form in the Hamptons because of the plants and flowers that thrive here. When I was first designing, it was very trendy to have an all-white garden, and it just wasn't me at all. I was committed to my color palettes. I was so lucky that clients were excited to try something different, and I went for oranges, reds, soft purples and pinks, vibrant fuchsias, and glowing yellows — and people loved it. Even today when I design subtle moss gardens or all-green areas, I use variations in hue, because of course there is not one green but many greens, and even working in "one" color I can create a richer feeling atmosphere.

**What are some of your favorite native plantings to the East End?**

Oak trees, flowering dogwoods, Carex grasses, achillea, rudbeckia, and echinacea are just a few of the beautiful native plants, flowers, and trees I use in my designs. I also sell many of them at the Garden Market adjacent to the Unlimited Earth Care headquarters at 2249 Scuttle Hole Road, Bridgehampton. The Garden Market carries a curated selection that includes many of the plants I use in my designs, and I love to see the creative ways that people incorporate them into their gardens.

**Do you work with the homeowner, builder, or the architect more? How much of their vision do you take into consideration when designing a landscape for the client?**

I work mostly with the homeowner, but I am always aware of the surrounding structures, the design of the home, and the situation of the property. For a project to be successful, everyone has to be on the same page. I always speak to my clients and get to know them so that I can learn what kind of garden they are hoping to have: do they entertain a lot? Do they have children? Love to exercise? Need a quiet place to read outside? Do they love cooking? I collaborate with them in that their lifestyles really shape how I design for them. After a design is finished, we enter another phase of collaborating that I really enjoy, where clients come to the store and look for art or interesting outdoor furniture to enhance their space and interpret their own sense of style into the outdoors.

**You have won so many awards! Is there one or two that you are particularly proud of?**

Thank you, it is wonderful to be recog-

nized for your work, so I do treasure all of them and each one represents a different stage of my career. Unlimited Earth Care has made Dan's Papers Best of the Best list for many years now, and recently I was awarded the Dan's Out East Impact Award by New York State Assembly member Rebecca Seawright, which I am proud of.

**Are there any trends in landscape design you can share with your fans and our readers?**

I have always found that trends can lead good design astray, but I will say that the overall shift towards sustainability is very exciting to me. I love that more and more clients ask me for pollinator gardens or want to discuss sustainable options. I wouldn't want to call it a trend though because I think that this change in how people think about garden design is here to stay.

**Do you believe in the famous 'Hamptons Light'?**

Absolutely, I've seen it. There is an ethereal beauty to that light in the Hamptons that accompanies bright summer mornings and cool fall afternoons alike. I see how it lays across my gardens and filters through the leaves of the trees — that is the final touch to my designs.

**What is it about the East End that you love so much?**

As I mentioned earlier, there is something special about the Hamptons, where oceans lead into fields, farms, and woods. It's a beautiful place in the summer, but every season has a unique beauty to it and a new group of plants and flowers to express it in. That is why I always design gardens that move through the seasons. I love the challenge of creating atmospheres and maintaining color through winter, and the performance of introducing a new cycle in the spring.

**What do you do for fun when you have downtime? Do you ever have downtime?**

I certainly work a lot, but as a designer I think it is important to see art, travel, eat good food, and have experiences. I love to visit my favorite restaurants with my family, visit shows and museums, and connect with the wider community of designers and artists in New York and internationally. I am really looking forward to celebrating 30 years of Unlimited Earth Care this summer on Saturday, June 17. There's going to be cocktails, music, and hors d'oeuvres among the flowers, and everyone is invited. 2249 Scuttle Hole Road, Bridgehampton, 4 to 7 PM.