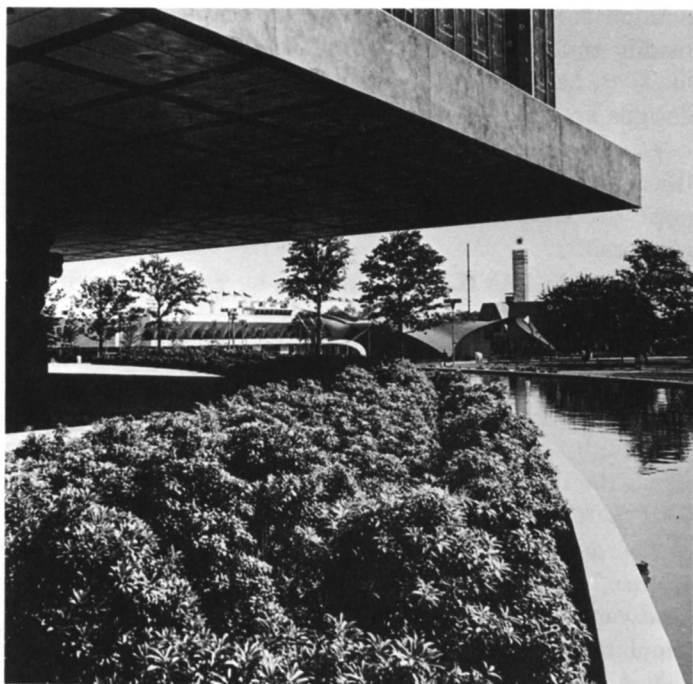
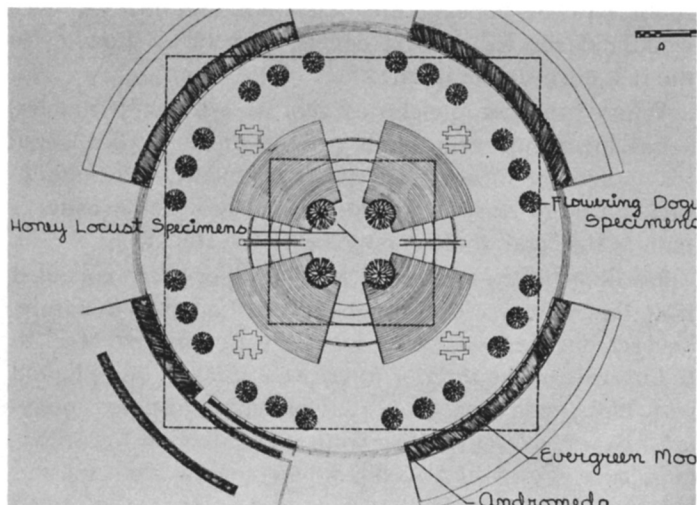


# WORLD'S FAIR CHALLENGE TO DESIGN

by Robert L. Zion



*Water to the right, Andromeda in the foreground: a combination of two elements to form a moat around the United States Pavilion.*



\* U. S. Pavilion, New York State Pavilion, IBM Pavilion, Christian Science Pavilion, three Garden Restaurants (Brass Rail), Better Living Pavilion, and Parker Pen Pavilion.

The most devastating fact about designing for a world's fair is the obvious one: all projects have the same deadline. Time, then—or the lack of it—becomes an overriding design consideration: time to create a design and time to execute it.

There is never enough time. And this is ever likely to be so, for it is typical of world's fairs and similar exhibitions that exhibitors and their architects seldom think of selecting a landscape architect until the pavilion and exhibit design are almost complete. And, because sites are usually cramped and crammed, the plantsman must wait until the pavilion is finished before he can begin. And once he begins planting, he is squeezed again, for he cannot interfere with the installation of the exhibit.

Lack of time assumes great importance in the early stages—when the crucial planning is done—and again in the final days before opening. Most of our nine contracts\* for the exhibits at the 1964-65 World's Fair were signed in 1963; designs were presented in 1963; planting in most cases could not begin until March or April, 1964. Eight projects were completed April 21, 1964; and one, four days later.

Equally important in influencing design are *people*—how they behave, walk, and observe; how they can be restrained and guided. We learned much about people's behavior at fairs from our experience as site planning and landscape architects at the American National Exhibition in Moscow. The arrival of Mr. Khrushchev at the Moscow Fair in 1959, and of Mr. Johnson at the New York Fair in 1964 caused predictable, but quite dissimilar behavior. In Russia we could hear above the crowd a futile cry, "Gazon, gazon"—warning that grass was being trampled. When President Johnson arrived at our freshly-planted Parker Pen Pavilion, there were no cries of "Pachysandra, pachysandra!" and 10,000 pachysandra bit the dust, together with several tender young birch trees which in 10 minutes aged 50 years in every way but caliper.

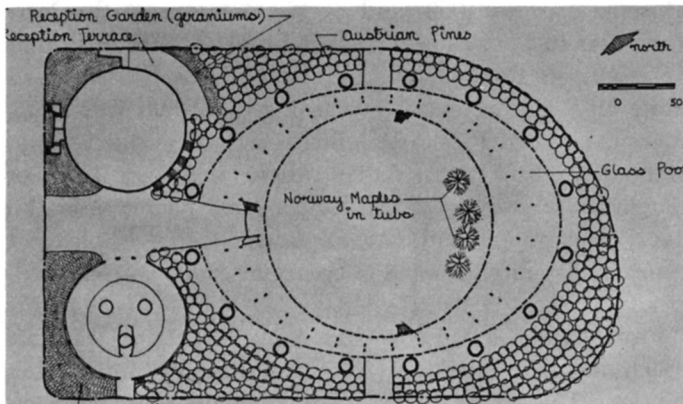
From both the Moscow and New York fairs, we have concluded that fair-goers were captured by impact, not subtlety. The strong, bold design statement wins the com-



*Dappled shade and yellow-red canvas sails distinguish this Brass Rail restaurant. Designer coordinated all elements.*



*New York State Pavilion viewed from reception terrace below street level. Entire bank in foreground is planted in geraniums.*



petition for spectator interest. The simple design—most readily understood, least taxing to the intellect—is most likely to be used as its originator intended. Such simple designs are also the most easily and quickly installed.

Two exceptions to these “rules,” however, proved to be the most satisfying, challenging and successful of our projects: the IBM exhibit and the three Brass Rail garden restaurants.

THE IBM PAVILION, designed by Eero Saarinen and Associates, and Charles and Ray Eames.

The architects designed the area for planting: boxes of 1½' to 9' wide, and 1½' to 4' deep. Most were raised 3 to 4' above ground, affording almost foolproof protection (although some younger visitors were athletic enough to sit on the edges.) This permitted us to use tender woodland material knowing it would be properly treated.

The architects termed their pavilion design “un-architecture,” and our planting design was treated as “un-landscape”—a schematic forest, its plants selected to simulate the woodlands.

Just as a real forest has its hierarchy of plant materials, here the steel “trees” supporting the glass canopy represented the giants of a real forest. Springing up in small sunlit patches beneath are dogwoods and locusts, with woodland shrubs, ground covers, and ferns growing in the rich profusion of nature.

Where sunlight penetrates the steel forest perimeter, honey locust and gray birch grow in thickets, all selected for anonymity rather than specimen quality. One exception is a large Norway maple appearing on the architect's plan as the “real” tree, as opposed to the steel trees.

Seedling honey locusts 2" to 6" caliper were collected from the countryside and spaced 3' to 5' apart as in nature. Several hundred bare-root locusts were planted at 2' to 3' intervals in the interior to create a thicket, interplanted with moss and ferns. Hundreds of native azaleas, euonymus, leucothoe, laurel, etc. were planted as on the woodland floor. Ferns and woodland perennials were massed below to create pools of texture and color in the mulch of dried leaves and tanbark. Interior trees are large white

flowering dogwood underplanted with sedum and other perennials.

Dynamic splashes of color were provided by massed tulips at the opening, bright geraniums (1,500) through summer, and chrysanthemums in fall. Specifications call for three sets of geraniums. As one set passes its peak it retires to the greenhouse for reconditioning.

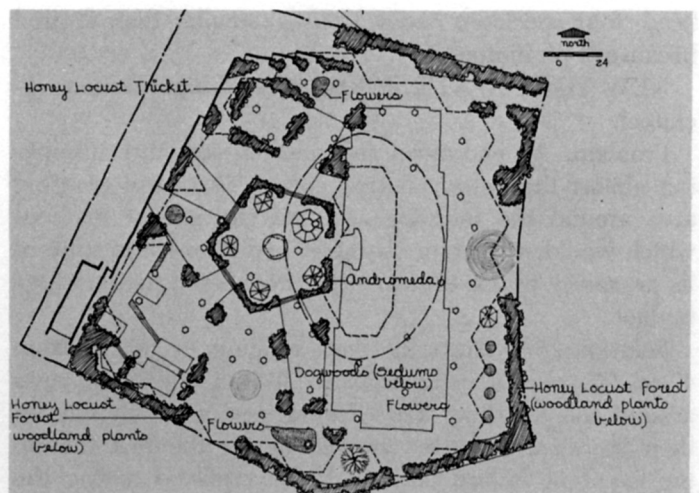
Only one tree has died, but its appearance is so natural to the woodland setting that it was left as is. Weeds, too, seem natural here as in the woods, and they are welcome. Maintenance is restricted to watering.

The three **GARDEN RESTAURANTS** for the Brass Rail Company also deviated from typical Fair projects in one vital respect: with logical but rare perception, the client concluded that the design of a garden restaurant or outdoor cafe was basically a landscape architectural problem, and Zion-Breen was placed in charge of the entire project. We retained the services of a young firm of architects, Samton Associates, and embarked upon an extremely pleasant and satisfying collaboration to which landscape architect, architect, and owner contributed heavily. The restaurants consist of a group of canvas sails in orange-red and yellow placed in a grove of closely planted plane trees 8' apart. The floor consists of pea gravel bound with asphalt; control is maintained by a hedge of *Euonymus alata compacta* in rectangular wooden tubs. The closeness of the collaboration evidences itself in the total unity of the design in which there is recall of color or material in every detail, from napery, glassware, and menus to furniture, plant tubs, and service building.

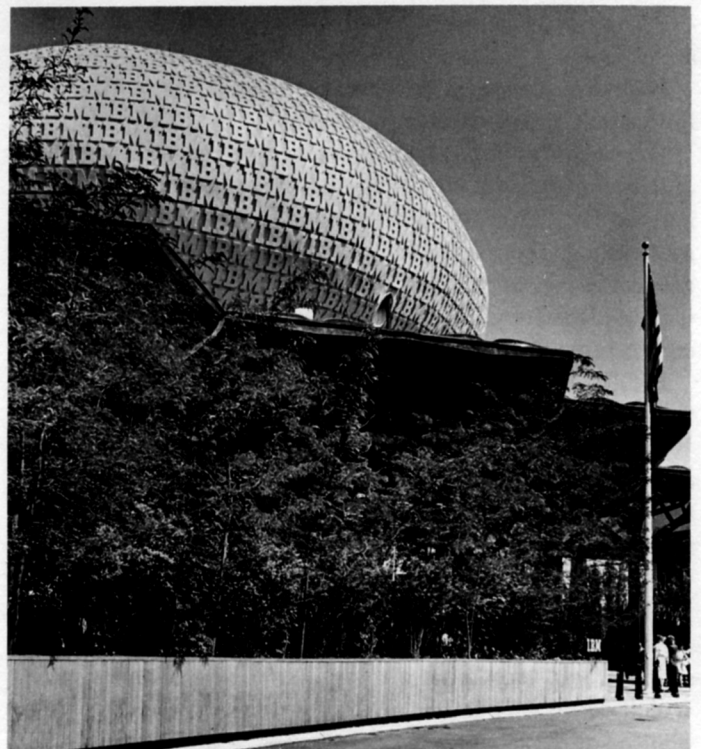
**UNITED STATES PAVILION**—Charles Luckman, architect.

**Problem:** A large building occupying the entire allotted site. The architect's design included plant beds and tree pits. The landscape architect's task was to select plant material in keeping with the dignity of a federal pavilion.

**Solution:** Planting of one material—*Pieris japonica* (2,800 plants) of graded sizes to create a green moat around the lower terrace; twenty-eight specimen dogwoods were located in the shade of the building over-



Screen of thickly-planted slender trees forms lacy wall for IBM Pavilion. Inside, more trees. The roof structure repeats tree forms.





head; four specimen honey locusts (smaller than desired because of pit limitations).

**NEW YORK STATE PAVILION**—Philip Johnson, architect.

**Problem:** An enormous and unusual structure occupying almost the entire allotted space. The small planting area around the building required the use of material which would still retain character and strength in spite of its proximity to this immense pavilion. Small maintenance budget.

**Solution:** 800 Austrian pines ranging in height from 4' to 12', placed concentrically and in staggered rows around the building. These evergreens were chosen for their sturdy appearance as well as for the fact that in the event of failure they could be replaced during the summer season. 6,300 *Santolina* (grey) were used as ground cover at the entrance in lieu of grass. 2,100 geraniums in tubs provide areas of color.

**PARKER PEN PAVILION**—John J. Flad & Associates, architects.

**Problem:** A modest building on a small site, with a very low planting and maintenance budget.

**Solution:** Paper birch were massed on one side to screen out an unpleasant view. On the other side an attractive and costly planting of a neighbor was "borrowed" by minimizing the separation between plots. *Pachysandra* ground cover, badly trampled during the President's visit, was replaced by Pfitzer juniper, more visible and less comfortable to walk on.

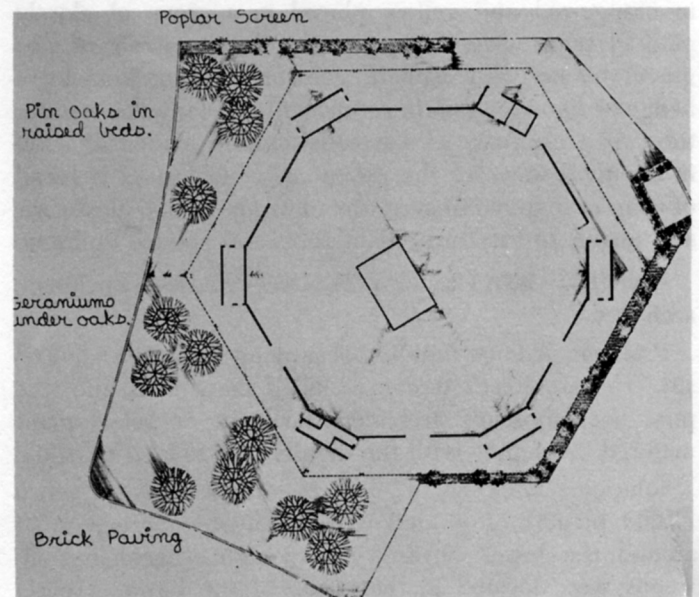
**BETTER LIVING PAVILION**—John LoPinto, Architect.

**Problem:** The largest building at the fair, a commercial enterprise renting space to individual exhibitors, including a large rooftop restaurant. Limited planting and maintenance budget.

**Solution:** Crowds and the building design necessitated paving the entire site (the same brick paving blocks as on the interior lobby floor). Punctuating the outdoor space are 13 large shade trees (14" cal.) in raised boxes which serve as benches and preserve ivy and geraniums planted at their base.

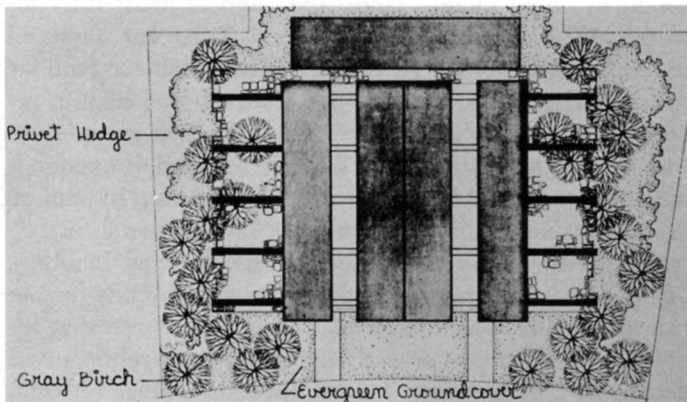


*Pin oaks and geraniums planted in front of Better Living Pavilion. Below: site plan shows the tight lot dimensions.*





*Serene, almost Spartan, the Christian Science resting-garden exhibits a calm regularity: trees, building, an almost level site.*



*Parker Pen Pavilion: Pfitzer juniper replaced Pachysandra trampled during President Johnson's visit. Below: site plan.*



**CHRISTIAN SCIENCE PAVILION**—Edward D. Stone, architect.

**Problem:** This religious pavilion with low planting and maintenance budgets required a dignified and simple setting demanding absolute minimum maintenance and permitting as little crowd damage as possible. Also required: a place of rest, permitting a pleasing view of the building for visitors not easily accessible to those who do not view the exhibit.

**Solution:** Pin oaks closely planted in a radial pattern reflecting the architecture, underplanted with compact Pfitzer juniper as a ground cover and barrier. Sitting area beneath oaks paved with gravel bound with asphalt.

Such a fair inevitably causes a local shortage of specimen plant material. Prices rise with no relation to value; "reserved" tags begin to appear, as early as two years prior to opening, on almost every plant of distinctive size or conformation. It was for this reason as well as for our earlier decision to favor mass planting that we passed over these over-priced specimens, and had no difficulty locating materials specified.

One lesson, which was surely "learned the hard way," is the absolute urgency of convincing the client that only carefully screened contractors be allowed to bid on World's Fair work. No matter how good the intentions or how honest and sincere the individuals, nothing but trouble is ahead for landscape architects forced to work with inadequate and inexperienced personnel of a contractor whose bid did not reflect adequately the inevitable contingencies. Here, more than in any other branch of professional work, the importance of nursery contractor to landscape architect is made distressingly clear.

Work on the World's Fair engendered a rare spirit within the office. Competition developed among exhibitors and professional offices; the excitement of the last 24 hours, in which almost everyone worked through the night, was reminiscent of the school "charette"—always enjoyable (in retrospect.)



*Photography by Peter N. Pruyn, New York*