

Kurisu and Sustainability

From the day we began building gardens in 1972, Kurisu has addressed a unique social purpose. Our mission: to create *restorative experiences* by reinforcing the quality of humanity which our speed- and wealth-obsessed society often elides. Three decades of encounters in the garden have succeeded in some ways at slowing our world down, and enlisting nature to restore peace of mind, physical health, and strong and compassionate communities.

As we have matured as an organization, we have also come to realize the ways in which our activity can work against its own purpose— conservation efforts consume in the process of conserving, and the impulse to restore one area can sometimes damage another. As long as we live in cities and suburbs, we believe that well-designed green space is necessary for human well-being, but we also recognize the necessity to account for the global consequence of local action. Here are some of the things we are doing at Kurisu to ensure our work supports sustainability:

Ephemerization: Healing gardens themselves are helping the healthcare industry to save millions of dollars a year by conserving material, energy, and human resources. At the same time, Kurisu itself is becoming fanatical about doing more with less. Between 2001 and 2005, we reduced overhead by nearly half: gas and oil expense is down 45%, utilities expense is down 66%, and paper use has been reduced by 67%. It is now our challenge to find the higher-hanging fruit and encourage both our suppliers and our clients to undertake similar efforts in resource efficiency.

Material: Of the resources we must consume, renewable and recycled content is being maximized: **Paper** is 100% post-consumer content, a percentage of Portland **cement** in concrete is replaced by fly ash, a waste product of coal-fired power plants, **water** use is minimized by specifying locally-adapted vegetation and by the application of **mycorrhizae** fungi during planting, **topsoil** is stockpiled and conserved during construction, and all **traditional fuel** vehicles are being phased out in favor of hybrid-electric and renewable fuel vehicles.

Headquarters: As an example of sustainable urban development, Kurisu is building a mixed-use structure in a transitional Portland neighborhood. The design aspires to achieve the US Green Building Council's (USGBC) most aggressive LEED Platinum rating, and plans call for over 50% of land area to be reserved for a healing garden open to the public.

Kurisu has a long way to go, still, to become a truly sustainable business, but we have pictured a future in which biodiversity increases with every new development, petroleum-fueled machinery sits idle while employment and quality of work rises, and stress, burnout and fatigue fall with each point of productivity increase. With relationships with organizations like the USGBC and the Natural Step, and with imagination and resolve, we are embarking on the journey towards this future, one stepping stone at a time.