



*Landscape Architecture Graduate Core Studio Fall 2019*

*16:550:535*

*Kathleen John-Alder, ASLA*

## **After Life: The Future of Burial in the United States**

Kathleen John-Alder  
(16:550:535)

This second year landscape architecture graduate design studio, conducted at Rutgers University in the fall of 2019, examines green burial practices. Impetus for the studio came from a law passed in Washington State on May 21, 2020, which allows for natural organic reduction or “the contained conversion of human remains to soil” as an alternative to traditional burials and cremation. Proponents of the bill claim organic reduction is an environmentally friendly alternative to normative practices that provides a greater range of choice in how people choose to dispose of their remains. In this process, the body is covered with natural materials, like straw, alfalfa, and wood chips. Over the course of three to seven weeks, microbial activity breaks it down into approximately two wheel-barrels of soil. The family then determines how they use the soil, whether it is to plant a tree, nurture a meadow, or spread it in a specific place important in the life of the deceased, just as they might for cremated ashes.

New Jersey is a densely populated, multicultural state, represented by numerous religions and burial practices, and thus an intriguing venue to explore the future of burial practices in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Accordingly, the studio explored burial practices in different cultures, countries, and religions; the historical change in burial practices over time including new high-tech alternatives; and the transport and preparation of the body following death. Students subsequently used this information to create a proposal for a green cemetery, or body decomposition facility. The proposals honor both life and death, and critically examine how this done in the United States and throughout the world.



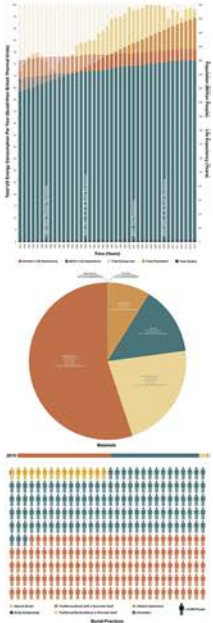
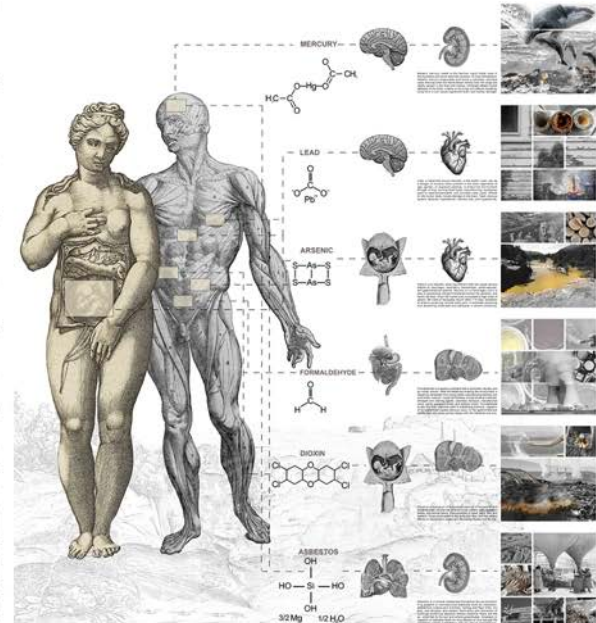
Regional Context + Water



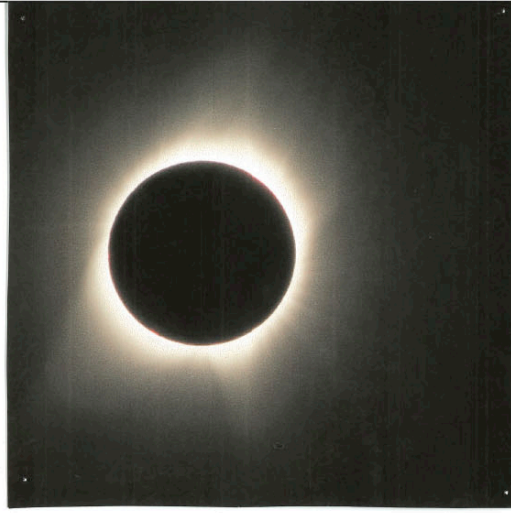
Topography + Water + Buildings



Group Research  
Site Analysis



Group Research  
 Exercise 2: Religious Practices \_ Treatment of Body After Death \_ Body Toxins\_ Demographics of Death





Homeward Bound Cemetery Plan View  
Scale: 1:100



50 Year Plan  
Scale: 1:500



100 Year Plan  
Scale: 1:100



1. The dark dressed wood panel, set through the composting facility, acts as a bridge to the building, while the trees in adjacent areas up and through the building.
2. Rooms of reflection are placed through the center of the building and are required to bring nature into the facility.
3. The composting room offers a place for the final goodbye before the body is prepared for the next world.
4. The room of reflection offers an opportunity of Homeward Bound Cemetery. With nature the last breath of the earth.

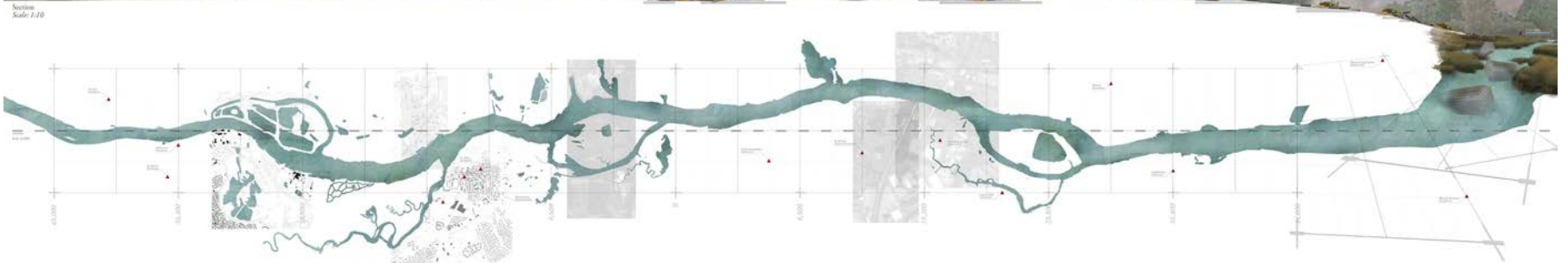
Section of Composting Facility/Place of Remembrance  
Scale: 1:10



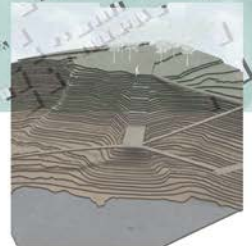
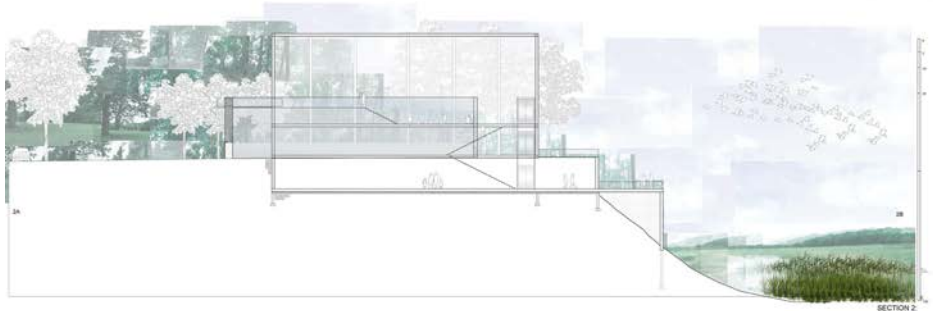
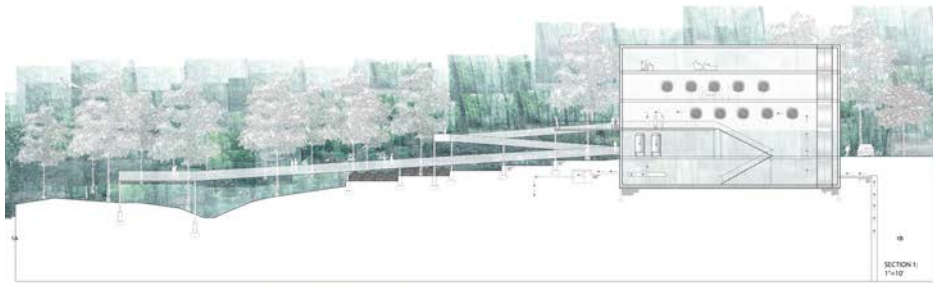
Perspective through Remembrance Window.  
Photo: awarded the 2017/18/19 award for residential and temporary offices



Section  
Scale: 1:10



FLUID AFTERLIFE  
NINA PETRACCA



Nina Petracca

# THE EPILOGUE



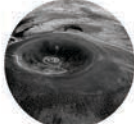
PERSPECTIVE FROM AFTERLIFE



PERSPECTIVE FROM THOSE WHO REMEMBER



INSPIRATION



RODEN CRATER



MIT CHAPEL

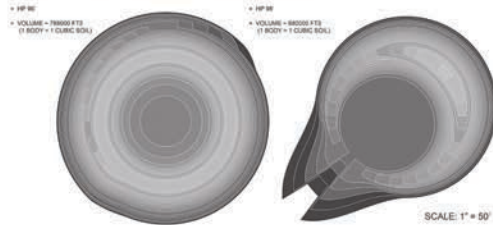


NEWTON'S CENOTAPH



ECUMENICAL CHAPEL

ENLARGEMENT PLANS OF MOUND MADE WITH COMPOSTING SOILS



- ~70,000 NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS DIE EACH YEAR
- IF EVERY 1ST NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS CHOOSE TO COMPOST THEIR BODY AT THE SITE, THE SITE WOULD HAVE TO HANDLE 15,000 BODIES ANNUALLY
- (788000 ÷ 882000) / 10000 = 148.8, WHICH MEANS IT TAKES AROUND 148.8 YEARS FOR THE SITE TO BE DONE

BUILDING DIAGRAMS

COMPOSTING FACILITY



SECTION



SECTION



GROUND FLOOR



FLOOR B1



FLOOR B2

PLACE OF REMEMBRANCE



SECTION



CEILING



GLASS WALLS



GROUND

- ACCESS FROM VALCANO-LIKE MOUND TO COMPOSTING FACILITY THROUGH TUNNEL
- CATWALK LEADS TO OVERLOOK
- ELEVATOR (ADA ACCESSIBLE)
- COMPOSTING BURIAL PRACTICE
- PROVIDES NATURAL SUNLIGHT FOR BUILDING FEATURE
- REUSES RAINWATER FOR WATER FEATURES
- ENGRAVED "LAST WORDS" FROM LOVED ONES TO LOVED ONES
- RAINWATER FLOWING TO THE LOW POINT ALONG TOPS

SECTION A



SCALE: 1" = 20'

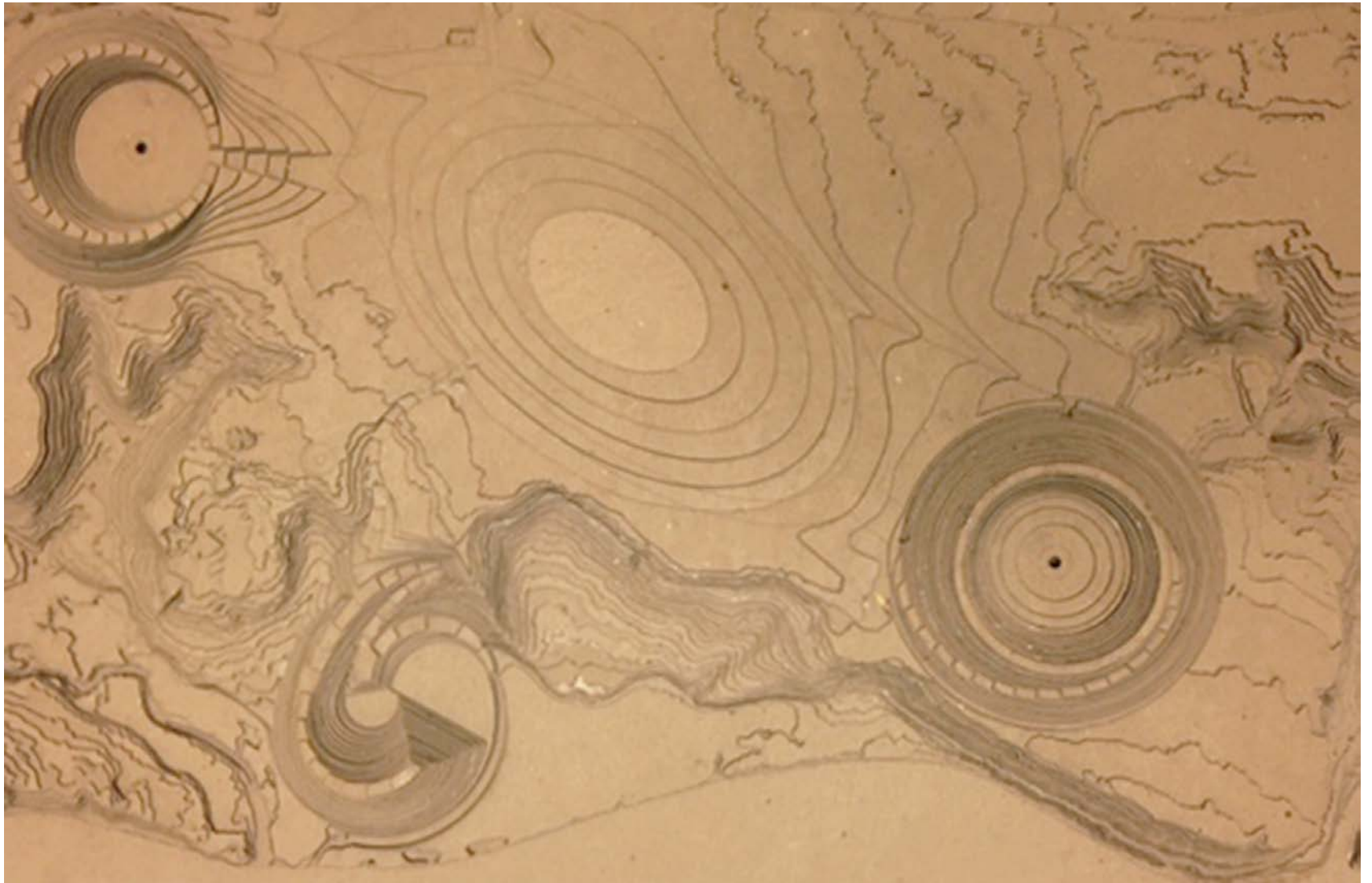
SECTION B



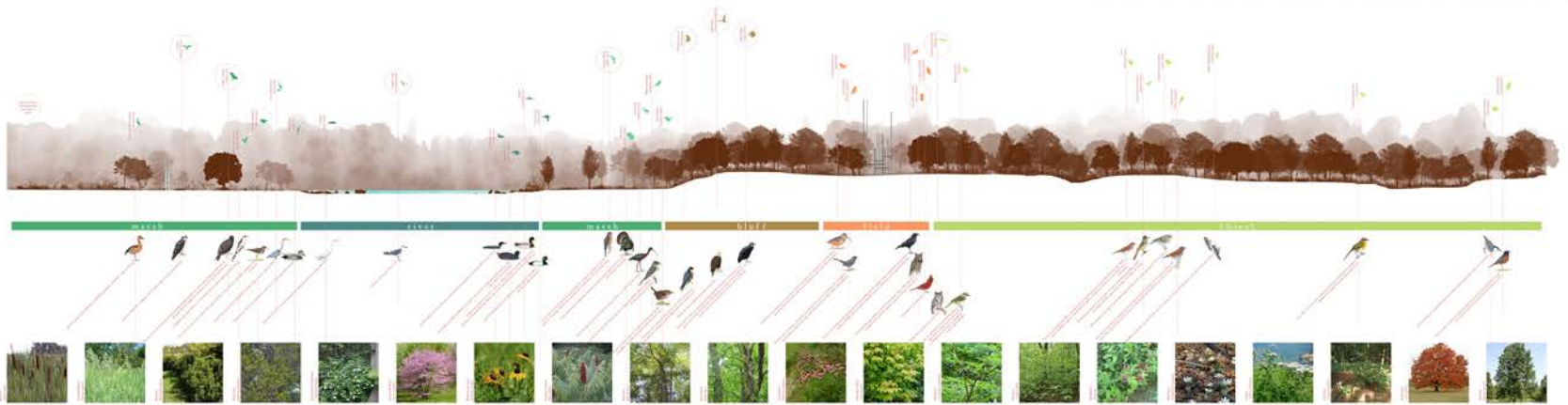
SCALE: 1" = 40'

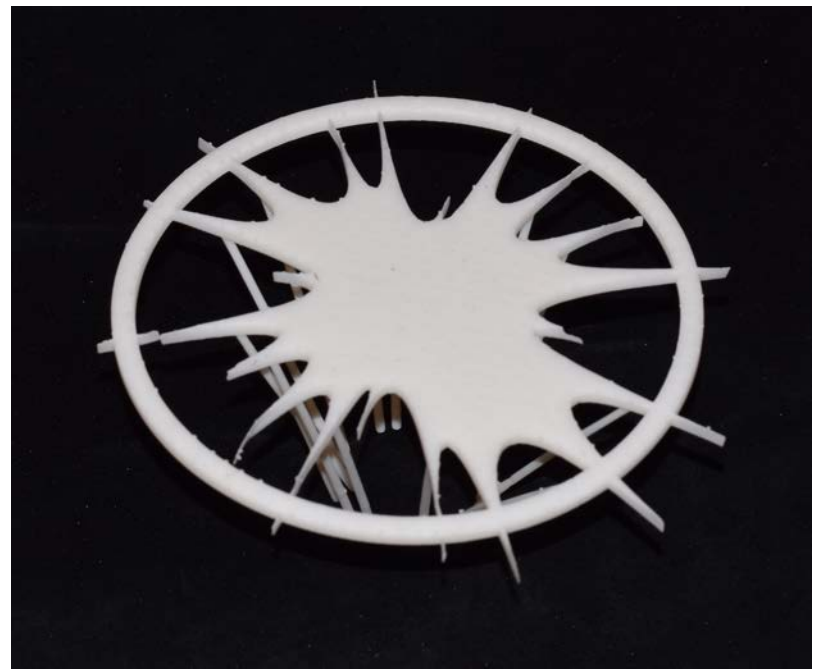
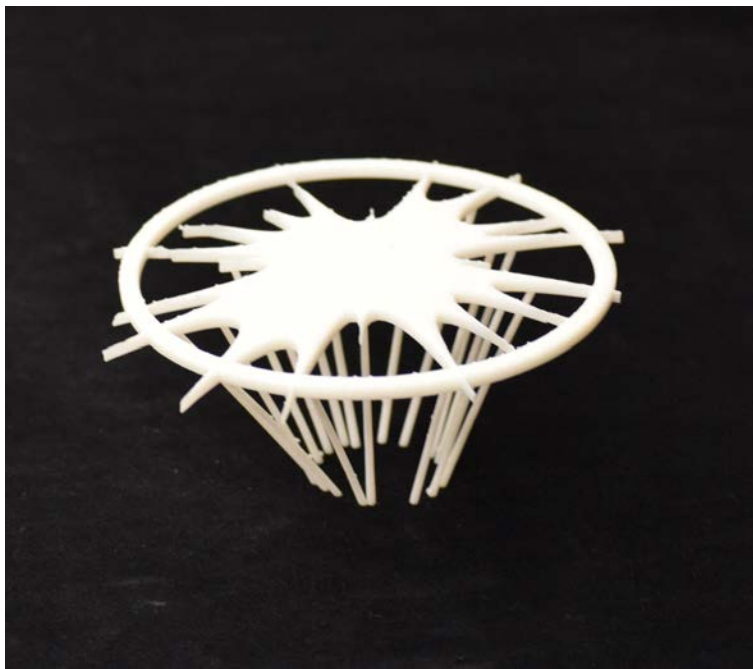
MIT Open



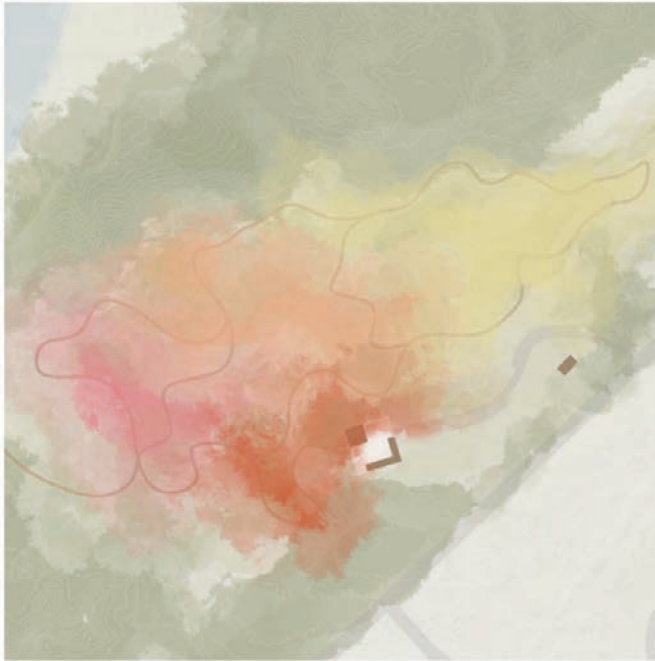


Yat Chan

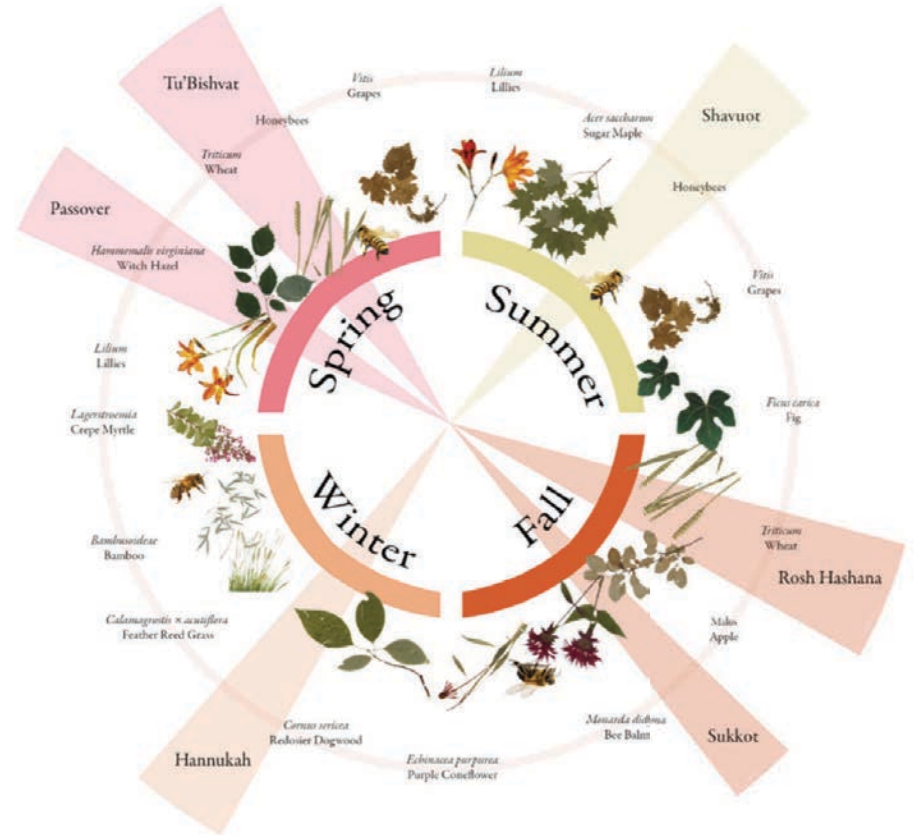




Jessica Thorning



Planting plan and diagram illustrating the Jewish holidays in alignment with meadow seasonality



## Jewish Holidays and Seasonality

One can meander along pathways throughout four meadows, each one pertaining to a different season and having a planting palette that corresponds to the Jewish holidays within that holiday season.



Topographic study of the landscape





A historical timeline of the different plants and animals from the Lenape, Colonial, Bonaparte, and modern day eras, culminating with funerary flowers. Graphic completed in collaboration with Jessica Thorning, Joleen London, and Daniel Ilkow