

FUTURESCAPING: Ancient Wisdom Meets Tomorrow's Gardens

With Erica Browne Grivas

Futurescaping is an approach to gardening and landscape design that brings long-established land knowledge together with modern ecological science and technology. Many strategies now described as innovative are rooted in traditional practices shaped by observation of water, soil, and seasons. New tools allow these ideas to be understood and applied with greater clarity.

Rather than choosing between tradition and innovation, Futurescaping works with both.

Shared Patterns Across Time

Across ancient and modern examples, several recurring patterns appear:

- Attention to soil as a living system
- Slowing and storing water rather than moving it away
- Planting in communities rather than as isolated specimens
- Designing for insects, birds, and microorganisms
- Allowing disturbance and succession to shape landscapes
- Using observation and measurement together
- Working at multiple scales, from gardens to regions

Selected Examples

- [Siskiyou Seeds](#) (Oregon) – rain-irrigated seed production
- [Burke Museum Prairie Restoration](#) (Seattle) – native plants, succession, and fire ecology
- [SUOT Farm](#) (Washington) – hugel-powered flower farming
- [Waterfront Park](#) (Seattle) – native and ornamental plantings, rainwater management
- [Aurora Bridge](#) (Seattle) – rainwater filtration protecting salmon
- [Loess Plateau Restoration \(China\)](#) – watershed restoration using terracing and revegetation
- [Great Green Wall](#) (Africa) – regional land restoration through planting and community stewardship

Modern Tools Supporting These Systems

- Soil moisture and nutrient sensors
- Satellite and drone mapping
- Plant breeding for climate and disease tolerance, including native plants and natives
- Phytoremediation using plants and mycoremediation using fungi to remove toxins
- Citizen science projects

These tools help reveal processes that were previously difficult to observe and quantify and can inform our choices.

Futurescaping treats the garden as a conversation across time. Going forward, It invites us to draw from experience while making use of new knowledge and technology, shaping landscapes that can adapt and endure.

Erica Browne Grivas is an award-winning journalist and landscape design-trained educator. Her work appears in publications including the Seattle Times, Better Homes and Gardens, Horticulture and American Gardener. She trained as a Tilth Alliance Master Composter/Sustainability Steward in 2024.



Follow her at www.ericagrivas.com

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You'll find eye candy, inspiration and cutting-edge techniques for a garden you'll love.

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