



# Bob Chaplin

Environmental Art Installations

*1-Park Foundation, Inc.*

Artists-in-Residence Program

## Introduction, I-Park Co-Founder

I-Park is pleased to be hosting Bob Chaplin's garden installations in our front field. Since 2012, Bob has been master-planning, planting, documenting and – meticulously, religiously – tending to the upkeep of these evocative works. We have enjoyed watching them fill out and evolve over the years. The installations are an essential stop along the orientation walk that each newly arriving artist experiences – and readily viewable during public events at I-Park.

Bob's is the first serious effort to engage the I-Park landscape in this way. His long-term commitment to these pieces is reminiscent of Mie Preckler's devotion to Mie's Trail and the Gravel Pit Preserve. We are hopeful that this iconic project will pave the way for future creative endeavors at I-Park in the field of landscape/garden/ecological design.



Ralph Crispino, Jr.

## The I-Park Mission

Nurturing artists and the creative process – in the fine arts and in nature.

I-Park is both an open-air and a closed-studio laboratory for individual artistic pursuits in the fields of music composition/sound art, the visual arts, architecture, moving image, creative writing and landscape/ecological design.

I-Park supports these individual and collaborative investigations through its international artists-in-residence program, the aesthetic engagement of its natural and built environments and with on-site exhibitions, performances and collegial exchanges.

Since its founding in 2001, I-Park has sponsored over 850 fully-funded artists' residencies.

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428 Hopyard Road | East Haddam, CT | USA



## Three environmental art installations at I-Park

Bob Chaplin completed two residencies at I-Park. The first, in the Fall of 2012 for two weeks, resulted in the creation of 'Invasives: Topiary: Parterre.' During his second residency of four weeks, in June 2014, he created 'Hortus Conclusus: Enclosed Turf Garden' and 'Hortus Conclusus: The Forbidden Garden.' He continues to maintain these growing and evolving installations.

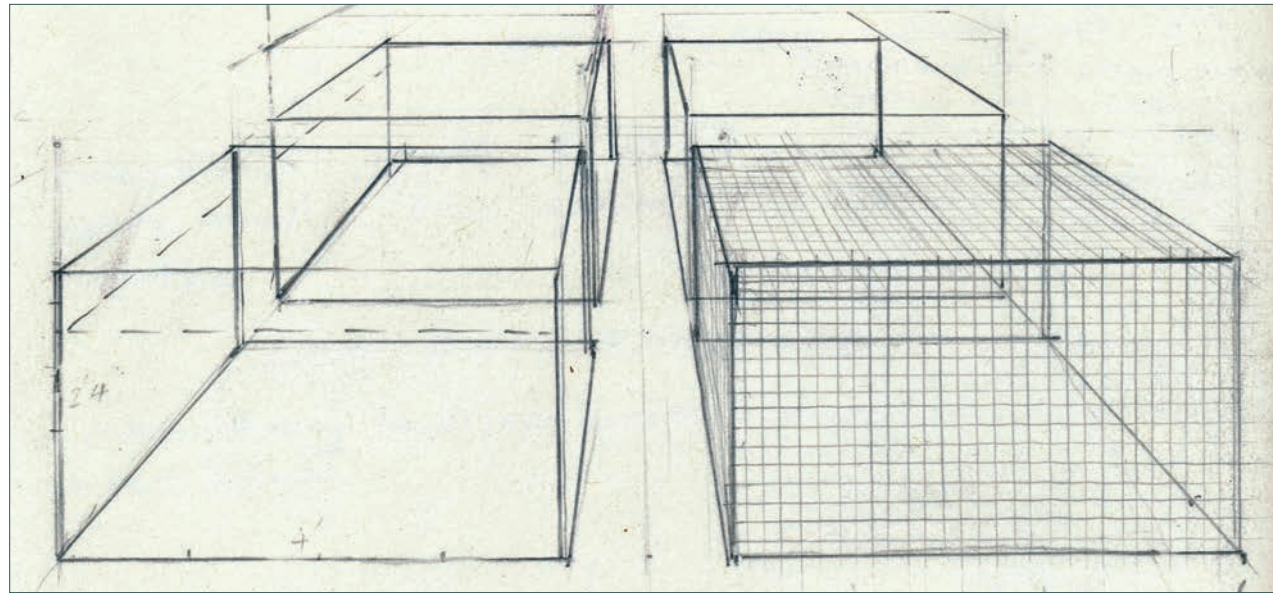
The installations are works in progress. There were plans and an expectation of how the pieces might evolve, but the vagaries of time, weather and the elements have modified their direction. It will take years for the installations to reach a semblance of completeness. Seasonal interplay of the planted elements is integral to the installation experience, as is documentation of the evolving works.

Four related works – 'MOW,' 'Leaf Parterre,' 'BrushLine: Deer Portal' and 'Deer Topiary,' made on Bob's property in Avon, Connecticut – are also included here.

# INVASIVES: TOPIARY: PARTERRE

As in much of the eastern United States, the landscape at East Haddam would have looked dramatically different a hundred and fifty years ago. One reason is that exotic species introduced from Europe and Japan escaped from the gardens they were planted in. Being more adaptable than the indigenous species, these beautiful exotics inundated the landscape, forever changing the land and our perception of how it should look.

The formal garden concepts of the Parterre and Topiary date to medieval times. Gardens, like those found first in monasteries and later on in palaces and manor houses, were orderly, practical and geometric. Control meant Godliness. This garden structure consists of four units, four feet square and two and a half feet high, made in a formal setting. The parterre units are a symbolic, and ultimately futile, containment of invasive species found in the area. The plantings are controlled by a weed barrier, mulch and wire cages. Protruding foliage is manually sheared and, sometimes, trimmed by the local deer. The grass pathways amongst the cages are mowed and manicured. Each cage contains an invasive species - Multiflora Rose, Autumn Olive, Japanese Barberry and Winged Euonymous.



Planted October 2012

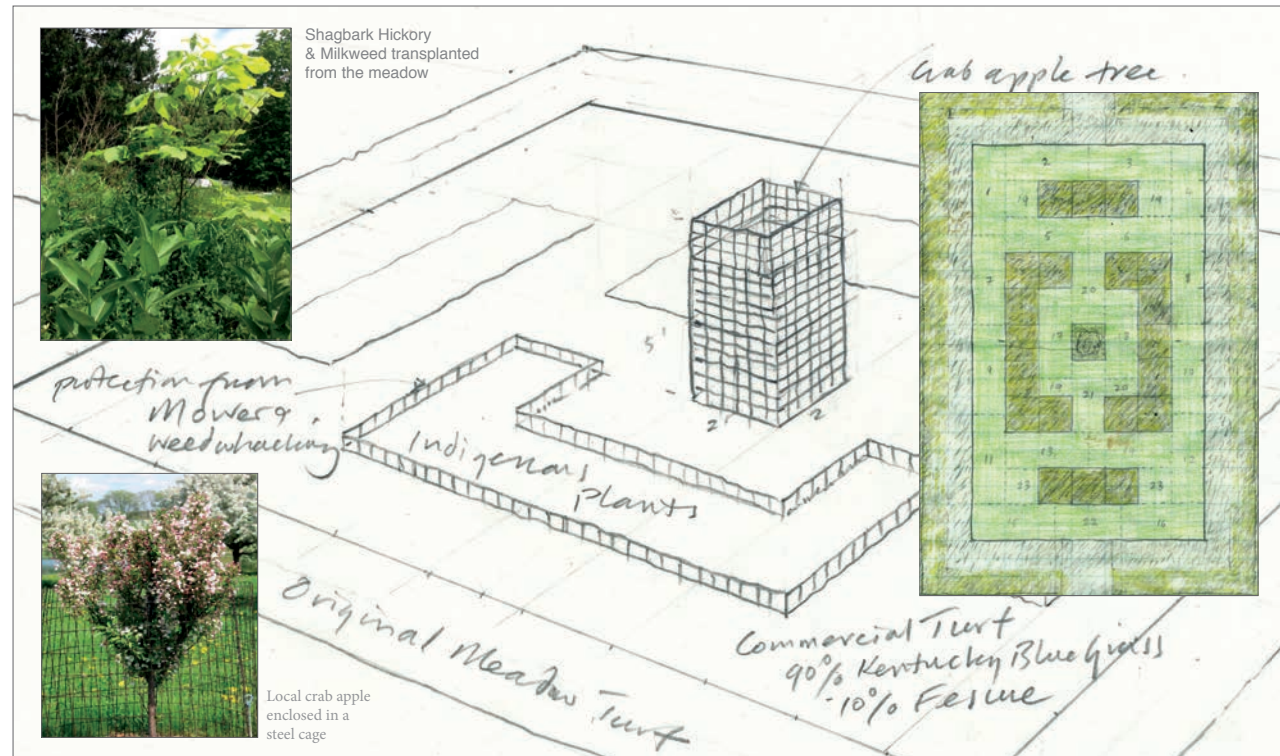
*Bob Chaplin*



# HORTUS CONCLUSUS: ENCLOSED TURF GARDEN

We have the propensity to tame, shape and sometimes destroy wilderness. A primal drive in making gardens is creating reassuring enclosures. The Enclosed Garden, Hortus Conclusus, symbolically protects us from the wildness outside. The quiet center of the garden is entered circuitously. The virginal enclosure protects a special object, such as a specimen plant, for contemplation. Early Christianity viewed the Enclosed Garden as a symbol of the womb of the Virgin Mary.

Commercial turf in 5' x 2' rolls, consisting of 90% Kentucky Bluegrass and 10% Fescue, replaces meadow turf in an enclosed garden format. The pure turf is the garden pathway. It protects sections planted with indigenous plants found at I-Park. In the center is a local crab apple tree, protected and contained by a 5-foot high steel cage. Over time, the commercial turf will be absorbed back into the meadow and indigenous plants, including various Hickory and Milkweed, will be encouraged to form the barrier structure of the enclosed garden.



Planted May 2014

Bob Chaplin

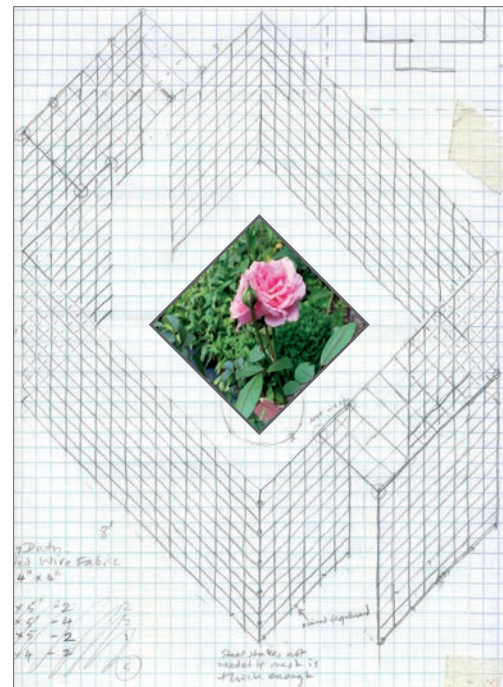


Bob Chaplin - Environmental Art Installations

# HORTUS CONCLUSUS: THE FORBIDDEN GARDEN

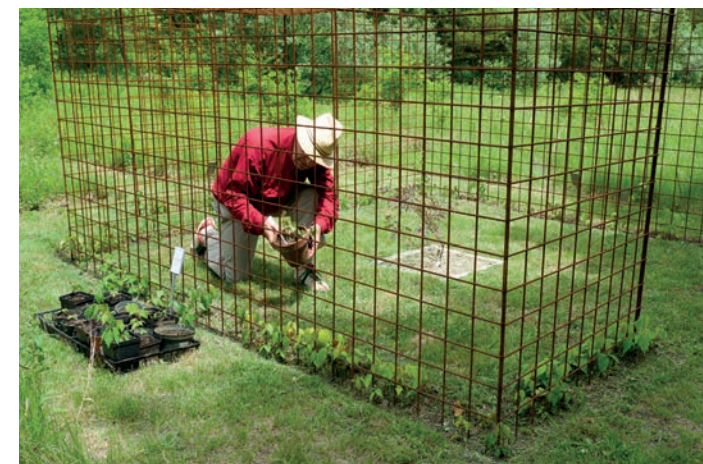
The creation of a garden enclosure protected from wilderness is a persistent concept in landscape and garden design. The center of the enclosed garden often protects a special object, such as a sculpture or a rare plant. The enclosed garden cannot be entered directly. One must discover the special object within.

This particular enclosed garden is not enticing to enter. The five-foot high steel trellised structure, expanding approximately ten feet square, is situated in an open meadow. Transplanted Poison Ivy has been encouraged to festoon the trellis. There is just enough room to enter the enclosed garden, but there is always the risk of touching the poisonous plant. In the center is a particularly beautiful David Austin English Rose.



Planted May 2014

*Bob Chaplin*



# Mow

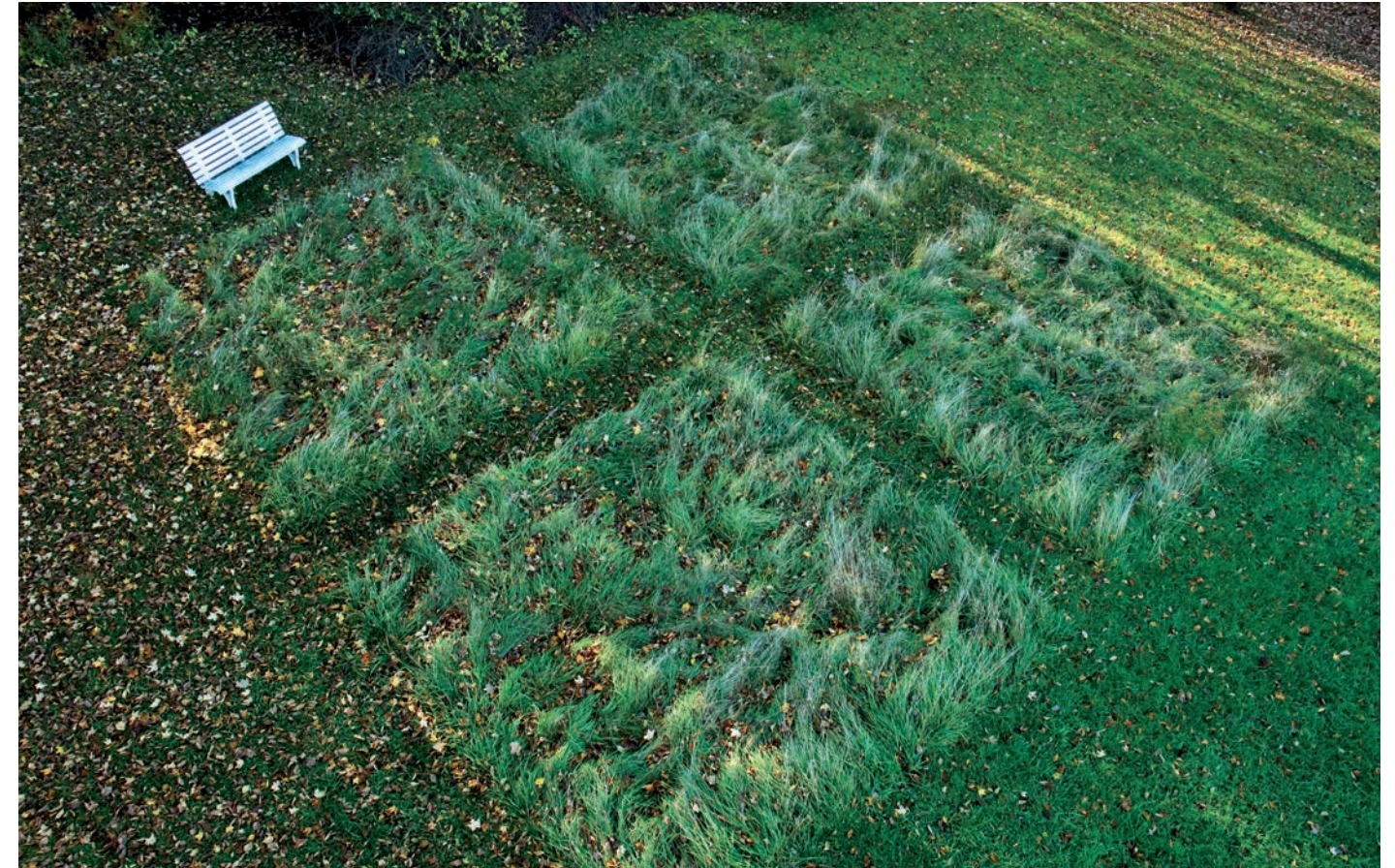
The mowed lawn is a historically recent garden feature. In the contemporary garden, the mowed lawn represents the formal and the meadow. As Michael Pollan explains in his book *Second Nature*, '... nature in America has often been regarded as divine. Think of nature as Spirit, the collective suburban lawn as the Church and lawn mowing as a kind of sacrament.'

From late 2007, I allowed four areas of my lawn in Avon, Connecticut to grow wild. Each section is thirteen feet square and there are three-foot pathways among the squares. Throughout the growing season, I mow the pathways and surrounding lawn. I record the plants that grow in the squares. I note which plants are taking over and which are disappearing.

'July/August 2013 - The various grasses, once so persistent, Plantains and Dandelions, are fighting a losing battle. In the northern and western quadrants, the Multiflora Rose is making great strides. The thistle that was prominent in 2012 has surprisingly returned. Where is the St. John's Wort that was so dominant two years ago? Poison Ivy, Wild Grape, Virginia Creeper and Bittersweet continue to invade and entwine, quietly taking over real estate. This year, it's the year of the Golden Rod. There are also small stands of Pine, Bittersweet and Thistle.'

'July 2015 - The Multiflora Rose is continuing to dominate the northern quadrant and is also making inroads into the other squares. Small pockets of St. John's Wort are coming back and are striving to push through along with Black Eyed Susans, Wild Aster, Wild Grape and Oriental Bittersweet. The Golden Rod is persistent and late summer will see an explosion of yellow. Thistles continue to make a statement in the east quadrant. Perennials have all but taken over the grasses now. Small trees are now appearing - Hickory, White Oak, American Elm and Maple seedlings are taking root. I suspect they will begin to slowly and insidiously take hold over the next few years.'

'September 2017 - Sections of Multiflora Rose are dying off. The north and west sections are developing copses of American Elm. One tree is over twelve feet tall. Golden Rod and Poison Ivy still persist. Wild grape (*Vitis Riparia*) is beginning to festoon the small trees and shrubs. Rabbits, chipmunks, frogs and birds are using the growth for cover.'



# Leaf Parterre

Raked leaves were kept in place by plastic netting in the fall of 2012. Netting and leaves were removed the following spring to reveal yellowing and dead grass. I took note of the plants that grew back. After three years, the squares are still discernable, more so at certain times of the year.

'July 2013 - rabbits and groundhogs seem to like the exposed areas as there are more broadleaf greens for them to nibble at. A corner of one square is developing a growth of bright vertical grass. I'm not sure of the species. None of the other quadrants have this. This same square has less regular grass, but more Plantains and Dandelions. An area of Nut Sedge (*Cyperus esculentus*) is now established on the western quadrant, along with an extensive development of Sheep's Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*). It's also known as Red Sorrel, Sour Weed or Field Sorrel.'

'September 2017 - after five years, the squares are barely discernable. Plants, mainly grasses, have spread back and are being integrated. During dry spells, the dominant broad leafed plants, such as Dandelions and Plantains, still define the square blocks.'

Based on a work using a raked line of leaves created in 1993, this work pays homage to the British land artist Richard Long.



# Brush Line: Deer Portal

Using garden debris, such as bamboo cuttings, ornamental grasses, fallen tree limbs and other detritus, I created a structure on my land that divided the inner garden from the outer, more wilder garden. The barrier extends one hundred and sixteen feet, and is aligned approximately south to north.

As the materials compost, the line of brush fluctuates in volume over the seasons. Over time the mass has increased and it is now a substantial barrier. It has become a haven for chipmunks, a woodchuck and various woodland birds, including Carolina wrens, Chickadees, Phoebes, Dark-eyed Juncos, and various warblers and sparrows.

Observing the movement of deer, I became aware that the structure was diverting the herd coming down from the mountain preventing them from passing through this section of the woods.

During the spring of 2016 I made a gap, a portal, in the brush barrier for the deer to pass through.





# Deer Topiary

During harsh winters and in the early spring, deer eat almost anything up on Avon mountain. A prized rhododendron was a constant casualty. By cloud-pruning the shrub, I hoped to keep the delectable elements out of the deer's reach. This approach did not work. The plant was left decimated and almost dead. I cut the rhododendron back and built a metal structure around what was left of the plant. Casual pruning maintains the boxed hedge shape, while the actions of feeding deer help to create a self-sustaining topiary.





Bob Chaplin moved from England to America in 1986. An adjunct professor at Uconn/Storrs, and the Hartford Art School, University of Hartford in Connecticut, he has lectured at the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven and was Artist-in-Residence at the Visual Studies Workshop in Rochester, New York and Weir Farm in Wilton, Connecticut. As well as several printmaking awards, he received two Polaroid Corporation Bursaries and a Connecticut Commission of the Arts Bursary.

His work is represented in many collections including The Tate Gallery, London; Art Institute of Chicago, U.S.A.; Stedelijk Museum, Holland; National Museum, Warsaw, Poland; Museum of Modern Art Library, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art Library, New York; Getty Research Institute Library, California; The British Museum, London; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; The Arts Council of Great Britain; The British Council; The National Gallery Library, Washington, D.C.; New York Public Library; Yale Center for British Art, New Haven; Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje, Yugoslavia; Stavanger Faste Galleri Permanent Collection, Norway and Nordnorske Kunstnersenter, Lofoten, Norway.

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500 copies printed

in memory of my mother and gardening muse  
Barbara Annie Chaplin (1927-2017)



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