



Meet J'Nell Bryson

J'Nell Bryson Landscape Architecture,
Charlotte, North Carolina

Education:

Master's degree in landscape architecture,
N.C. State University

Publications/Media:

North Carolina Design Online
"Charlotte Landscape Architect Explains the Three Essential Elements
in Creating a Landscape That Lasts"

Country Living

"9 Ways to Use Plants to Create Privacy in Your Yard"

The Charlotte Observer

"Backyard Bliss"

J'Nell Bryson established J'Nell Bryson Landscape Architecture in Charlotte, North Carolina in 2001. With over 25 years of experience in the business and a deep understanding of southern horticulture, Bryson goes beyond basic landscape design to offer innovative, artful designs for her projects. Bryson has worked extensively on the East Coast and in northern California, including San Francisco and Napa Valley.

In addition to holding a Master's degree in landscape architecture from N.C. State University, Bryson obtained a degree from the acclaimed California Culinary Academy, and interned with renowned chef Alice Waters at the groundbreaking Edible Schoolyard program in Berkeley, California.

The passion of J'Nell Bryson is simply the artistic and creative transformation of space, guided by client wishes and the environmental context of the property. She interprets, analyzes and adds the viewpoint that "less is more," to sensitively explore the relationship between modern architecture and landscape. This approach leads to lasting beauty and a memorable sense of place.

Q & A

1. What was the pivotal or motivating factor(s) that made you choose a career in landscape architecture?

I grew up in a rural place where my entertainment was being outside and creating my own adventures in nature. I was designing and building outdoor rooms before I knew what it was. I had already started a different career when I met a landscape architect and realized that this was really who I am. I loved the idea of creating beautiful spaces for people. The feeling was so strong that I quit my job in insurance, went back to school, and got my master's in landscape architecture.

2. If you had not become a landscape architect, what profession might you have pursued?

I would have become an architect. I love the structural part of my work and would love to create beautiful buildings and homes. I have such an appreciation for the discipline of architecture.

3. What do you most enjoy about being a landscape architect?

I love meeting people. I love working with my clients and contractors and sharing a common vision to create a beautiful landscape. I also love creating beautiful and peaceful places for my clients to enjoy for years and years. I really believe that I can help people cope with the stresses of life, when they can come home to an outdoor space that helps transport them to good place. It's my goal to create something that will live on, after I'm gone.



Home Renovation, *Davidson, North Carolina*

A series of outdoor rooms are woven around this renovated landscape for a traditionally styled home. The homeowner is a knowledgeable horticulturalist who wanted extensive use of color, texture and seasonality in the garden. Gravel becomes the unifying material throughout the courtyards.

4. Do you think women landscape architects generally get the same respect as their male counterparts?

It is my hope that people choose to work with me because I bring a level of feeling and soul to the work that they might not get from a male landscape architect. Respect comes to anyone when they earn it and I am constantly working to earn respect, whether it is from a homeowner or from the landscaper who is installing my design.

5. Have you experienced any discrimination because of your gender within the profession or by clients?

My philosophy within the profession has always been that there is enough work for all of us, and the more we collaborate and share ideas, the better off we all will be. So, I haven't felt gender discrimination from my peers. That being said, as a woman in this profession, running my own business, I have to have a strong backbone, operate my business with confidence, and stand up for my designs and my creativity. That hasn't always been easy, but has gotten easier as I've gotten older and more comfortable with myself and the breadth and depth of my experience.

6. When you first meet people not affiliated with the profession and explain that you are a landscape architect, how do you describe what you do?

This has been an incredible challenge throughout my career. People always ask if I come home from work sweaty and dirty, thinking that I plant things all day! And while sometimes I do come home sweaty and dirty, I enjoy the opportunity to tell them that what a landscape architect does is take an undefined outdoor space and give it life and meaning. I tell them that these outdoor spaces can be public spaces, like parks and sculpture gardens and also residential spaces. My father-in-law is an architect and he put it well: he said that an architect has it easy, because they can create a design on a blank sheet of paper, while a landscape architect must take what nature gives them and creatively expand their living space into the outdoors. The biggest revelation to many people is in hardscaping, when they realize we can create a topography that nature didn't give

us. I tell them my work can include more than just plants – it can create rooms, outdoor kitchens, swimming pools, art installations – the sky is literally the limit.

7. What in particular do you attribute your success to?

I attribute my success to a couple of things. I have always had an ability to see the potential in even the smallest spaces. I have a very open mind about the possibilities for spaces and that has helped me. I am constantly inspired by my peers. I draw so much inspiration from other landscape architects, which fuels me. Finally, every job presents a challenge to be creative with the space and do something special for my client.

8. What is (are) the most important contribution(s) made by landscape architects in the field of design today?

Landscape architecture is everywhere now – it's not just seen in large public places like Central Park. In new construction of all kinds, there is a greater appreciation for considering the design of the outside space with equally as much interest and effort as has been given to the inside space.

9. How has the landscape architecture profession changed since you first began working in the field?

I've been a landscape architect for over 30 years. Space has become more valuable, especially in cities. People are much more savvy about the development of available spaces. This has expanded opportunities for landscape architects and our work is more recognized and appreciated. Social media has made pictures of the beautiful work of landscape architects more accessible, which has helped more people gain an appreciation for our work.

10. What career advice would you give to recently graduated landscape architectural students as they enter the profession?

You are an artist first – be true to your creative self. The rest will follow.