

## Designing With the Mount's Natural Beauty

By Jim Sherman as told to Sarah Scopio

I am continually in awe of the two beautiful campuses at Mount St. Mary's College. As landscape manager at the Mount, it is my privilege to care for and nurture both campus environments.

When I first saw the Mount's Doheny Campus back in 2002, I fell in love. I thought if there was ever an opportunity to work there, I would jump at the chance. A year and a half later, a position opened, and I was fortunate enough to be hired. I have been onboard now for six years.

Each campus is unique, and has its own character and set of challenges. Chalon, for example, was surrounded by chaparral and enclosed by large eucalyptus trees, which blocked wonderful views. If students were at The Circle, they couldn't see the ocean or downtown area. To further beautify the campus and showcase the amazing scenery, we opened up view corridors while maintaining the original feel of the campus.

On the Doheny Campus, we expanded the plant palette. The plants chosen for the areas around the Adams Art Walk and Hannon Hall demonstrate how our ongoing planting programs continue to diversify the types of plants found on campus while keeping with the integrity of the historic landscape. Doheny is a turf-dominated landscape, with about nine acres of lawn. To be environmentally friendly, we have been reducing areas of turf and incorporating a landscape that is healthier for trees and uses less water.

I enjoy designing and creating outdoor spaces. The most recent example is the redesign of The Circle and the installation of a fountain as a focal point. This multiuse space will provide a gathering place where students can sit in dappled shade and enjoy the background sound of falling water. To make the space even more inviting, we will soon add sweet olive shrubs that provide a pleasant fragrance.

When designing environments with trees, shrubs and flowers, the work constantly evolves. In architecture, when a building is finished, the project is complete. However, in *landscape* architecture, the project is just beginning when the landscape is first planted. The intended landscape vision takes shape as the different kinds of plant life grow together. I get a kick out of watching things grow and change. It may take five or 10 years to realize the original vision.

One of the many appealing aspects about working in a college environment is the permanence of the landscape. In residential landscape work, a new owner could readily alter the landscape design or remove plant material altogether. At a college, the trees we plant today will likely grow to full maturity. It makes me happy to know that our work has a lasting impact at Mount St. Mary's College. ✦

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*Jim Sherman has a degree in landscape architecture, is a certified arborist and has worked at six Southern California colleges and universities.*





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—Jim Sherman,  
MSMC’s landscape manager