

A special letter led to my first Aha Moment

by Anaya (Jean Webb)

Master Landscape Designer
& Horticulturist

It was when the letter appeared that I had my first Aha Moment.

It felt as though I'd suddenly come home. There've been other Aha Moments since but it was the first that sealed my fate.

Back then, when the letter appeared, I had been working my way through an undergraduate Degree in Horticulture. I was grateful that my part time job was in the University Plant Sciences Research Greenhouse. It didn't matter that most of the job involved washing and sterilizing an endless stream of clay flowerpots. I was amid horticultural research and the knowledge of all the people involved, so I was in heaven. I was awestruck by the beauty and wonder of all plants.

By the time the letter appeared, I was finishing the last year of my degree and my part time job at the greenhouse had expanded into helping care for research plants and the tropical plant collection. Our academic studies focused on commercial production of ornamental plants, fruits and vegetables. Associated biology and physiology courses taught us the inner world of plants, down to their sub-cellular level.

Academic requirements also included studies in Landscape Architecture. We were routinely marched all over, examining not only all kinds of outdoor plants, but also how they were used in the landscape. For us, Landscape Architecture was a 3-D experience. We observed how dramatically outdoor spaces could be altered by their design.

Landscape design affects the way an outdoor space functions. It affects wind, light, sound movement and a myriad of other conditions. Design can change what we see and sense. It can change how we feel when we are in it and it always affects our personal connection or disconnectedness. As students, we became aware of how some landscape designs integrate indoor and outdoor spaces. Some designs can harmonize our relationship with the natural world and, for that matter, our relationship with ourselves.



During that time I came to understand plants as living beings with important messages for us. I discovered that plants respond to human compassion in remarkable ways. I realized in my second Aha Moment, that human beings also respond in remarkable ways to plants, plant communities and to good landscape designs.

The letter had been in a years old file of my boss and mentor, the University Greenhouse Supervisor. He brought it to me and said: "Jean, I found something you might be interested in." It was a long forgotten letter I'd written to him when I was 13 years old, asking him about plants and where I could learn more about them. Inspired by a Venus Fly Trap, at 13, I secretly imagined starting a business growing plants.

In his kind and thorough way, he had written back and I was thrilled, but somehow my little Venus Fly Trap business never got off the ground. When he handed me the letter I remembered it and realized what my

soul and spirit had known all along - this is where I belonged. I was home.

In the decades since then my business and life's work has surrounded helping people connect, in a beautiful way, with nature and themselves. Be it permaculture or meditation gardens, sustainable yard scapes or green community scapes, it boils down to the enriching, integration of people and their outdoor spaces.

Amitola is an ancient word meaning *rainbow*. Rainbow has all the colors of the human chakras. She is the messenger of joy and hope. Our Amitola Design Concepts company logo contains a spiral and a tree. Every single green thing we do spirals out into the natural world. Nature spirals in through our chakras to our souls.

In the logo the spiral itself was the product of an Aha Moment too ... but that's another story for another time.

Anaya is a Master Landscape Designer and Horticulturist who specializes in Outdoor Spaces, Healing and Meditation Gardens. Contact her at 780-440-4859 or visit her website AmitolaDesignConcepts.com