

- HOME
- ABOUT
- CALENDAR
- EDUCATION
- ACCREDITATION
- GREEN ROOM
- STORE
- SUPPORTERS

Healthy Yards, Safe Waters Conference

Introduction to OLC

Accreditation Course

Lawn and Turf Course

Advanced Workshops

Annual Gathering

FOR PROFESSIONALS

- About Accreditation
- Credit Opportunities
- Reaccredit
- Product Lists
- The Standards
- Soil Testing Labs
- AOLCP Search

COURSE OFFERINGS

- 2011 Accreditation Courses in CT, MA and RI are a success!
- Next Accreditation Courses will be in 2012!

CONFERENCES

April 7 and 9 [NOFA/Mass Statewide Organic Lawn Days](#) "Organic Lawns for Homeowners" workshops at 12 Locations in MA



Site-adapted plantings and dry-laid stone allow rainfall to recharge local ground water – R Darke

> Spotlight on People - Richard Bajana

NOFA Accredited Professional, 2006
Richard Landscaping LLC
Bethesda, MD



"Organic Landscaping is a Way of Life"

By Kathy Litchfield

BETHESDA, MD – After spending three "very long" years applying over 1,500 gallons of pesticides weekly, to large government properties in Washington, D.C., Richard Bajana sees organic landscaping as much more than a simple business practice.

"It is a way of life, that we choose," said the five-year NOFA AOLCP (CT course '06). "Interacting with the environment (nature and socially) should be a win-win situation and if we really live our work, becoming an organic landscaper is the natural way to be harmonic and respectful with nature."

Bajana, owner of Richard Landscaping LLC based in Bethesda, Md., is a native of Venezuela. He lived in Colombia for several years before moving to the United States in 2000. He was working with Judy Knauer at Garden Gate Landscaping Inc. in Silver Springs when he heard about the NOFA 5-day accreditation course.

"I loved the 5-day course, and I recommend it to anyone interested in exploring a way to offer a service that will harmonize and reconcile your clients and your company with nature," he said. "I believe NOFA is playing a leading role and I (hope) the organization will keep growing and generating research/testing, in our area."

Richard Landscaping is a small company, when compared with the \$5-\$7M companies in the greater Washington, D.C. area, a fact that Bajana sees as a plus:

"This high level of competition has give me the opportunity to differentiate our company using an organic program customized for each client. We see our small size as an advantage at this time, to keep our clients happy and establish a excellent relation base on good service and rapid response," he said. "The installations (plantings and hardscape) we provide for our clients are based on

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> Spotlight on People - Richard Bajana...

how the water moves on the property and sustainable landscaping that attracts desirable insect and bird populations. Also, our stone work is rustic, which blends well with our style."

His company has grown from a weekends-only yard work business for Chesapeake Bay clients, to the present – he now employs three staffers plus seasonal helpers, providing full service to residential and commercial properties in the greater DC metropolitan area. He subcontracts mowing and tree work, but does all of his own designs, stonework, lighting and irrigation.

He'd like to take on more commercial properties, and is always working to continue his education on native plants and sustainable landscaping. "We are exploring offering our services for GSA - taking advantage of the LEED certification benefits and my condition of minority," he said. "I think is important to present real alternatives to entities that have incentives and a growing interest in organic and sustainable landscaping. I think organic landscapers could generate more jobs if we (could) get larger contracts over conventional landscapers.

"We need to take more on commercial properties, this will allow the organic industry to be more solid and have more serious recognition," he said. Bajana has led presentations for LEED certification points on GSA, written several articles for Landscape Contractors Association (LCA) magazine and this year, is in conversations with a Montgomery College professor to present through the landscape technician program. He has also volunteered as a judge for LCA testing, as a way to make a presence for an organization that shapes the industry in the area, he said.

When he's not working, Bajana enjoys spending time with his wife, Elizabeth and 7-year-old son, Juan David, biking, mountain climbing and exploring the woods, creeks and animals near their home.

Elizabeth serves the company as business accountant and office manager, and Bajana's 18-year-old nephew Sean Dignan, works in the business with supervisor Medardo Espino and foremen Juan Carlos and Edy.

Bajana hopes his son, too, will follow in his footsteps.

"I think, being able to present green alternatives and promoting the use of organic products is my way to help other pesticide applicators to spray something that is not going to harm them, their families or the environment," he said. "I think being a landscaper is an opportunity to work with life and God's creation -- let's do it right and respectfully and enjoy our life!"

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