

Docket Item #8  
SPECIAL USE PERMIT #2005-0076

Planning Commission Meeting  
September 8, 2005

**ISSUE:** Consideration of a request for a special use permit to operate a plant nursery.

**APPLICANT:** Nature by Design  
by Randee Wilson and Carla Thomas

**LOCATION:** 300 Calvert Avenue

**ZONE:** I/Industrial

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends **approval** subject to compliance with all applicable codes and ordinances and the recommended permit conditions found in Section III of this report.

**SITE GRAPHIC**  
**AVAILABLE IN THE PLANNING AND ZONING OFFICE**

## I. DISCUSSION

### REQUEST

The applicants, Randee Wilson and Carla Thomas, request special use permit approval for the operation of an outdoor plant nursery located adjacent to the carriage house at 300 Calvert Avenue.

### SITE DESCRIPTION

The subject property is one lot of record with approximately 57 feet of frontage on Calvert Avenue, 98 feet of depth and a total lot area of 12,140 square feet. The site is developed with a two-story converted house in the front and a carriage house in the rear of the lot. Access to the property is from Calvert Avenue.

The surrounding area is occupied by a mix of residential and commercial uses. Immediately to the north is a residential neighborhood. To the south and east are commercial uses. To the west is the Mount Jefferson Park and Greenway parkland, formerly the W&OD.

### CURRENT CHARACTERISTICS

The odd-shaped lot consists of a main structure facing Calvert Avenue, which has been used as a contractor's office. The lot contains a carriage house in the rear, which is the proposed location for the outdoor plant nursery. A gate and landscaped path leads from Calvert Avenue to the carriage house. The western portion of the property has historically been accessed through the paved northern portion of the adjacent parcel occupied by Automatic Equipment Sales. The proposed parking area would also be accessed through this adjacent lot.

### PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to operate a container plant nursery of native and non-invasive plants, and some annual vegetable plants and houseplants. The plants will be grown using organic methods and without pesticides. A small amount (less than 5%) of sale items will be non-plant items, such as bagged soils, watering equipment, and tools. Truck deliveries are expected during the period between March and October. The total number of truck deliveries during that eight month period is between nine and 13. The specific aspects of the plant nursery are as follows:

Hours: 7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. daily

Noise: Conversation-level noise is expected from patrons, with occasional mechanical noise from edging and trimming.

Trash/Litter: Initially, a large amount of brush will be disposed of as the site is prepared. Trash will be collected twice per week.

PARKING

For purposes of calculating the parking requirement, the retail ratio was applied to the square footage of the structure. According to Section 8-200 (A)(16) of the Zoning Ordinance, a retail use requires 1.1 parking space for every 200 square feet. An outdoor garden center with 400 square feet of indoor space will be required to provide 2.2 off-street parking spaces. The applicant proposes to provide three spaces, which meets the parking requirement.

ZONING/MASTER PLAN DESIGNATION

The subject property is located in the Industrial zone. Section 4-1203 of the Zoning Ordinance allows an outdoor garden center in the Industrial zone only with a special use permit.

The proposed use is consistent with the Potomac West Small Area Plan chapter of the Master Plan which designates the property for industrial use.

NEIGHBORHOOD OUTREACH

On August 11, 2005, staff attended the Del Ray Land Use Committee meeting. The Committee was generally supportive of the application.

**II. STAFF ANALYSIS**

Staff supports this new outdoor garden center because the use is more compatible with the adjacent residential neighborhood than many of the by-right industrial uses that could occupy the space.

Although supportive, staff is mindful of the proximity of the proposed plant nursery to the residences to the north and has recommended a number of conditions to require adequate screening, the shielding of any lighting, and controls on the storage of materials.

Staff also was concerned with access to the proposed parking area through the adjacent property. The applicant has begun working with the owner of the property to determine if an access easement already exists over the adjacent property. If one does not exist, the applicant has committed to obtaining permission to use the adjacent property for access to the parking lot, or working with the owner of 300 Calvert Avenue to obtain access directly from the street. Access through the adjacent parcel would also require signage to prohibit parking or storage within the area required for access. Staff has recommended a condition requiring documentation that access will be granted and “No Parking” signage posted prior to approval of a business license.

With the following conditions, staff recommends approval of the special use permit.

### III. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

Staff recommends **approval** subject to compliance with all applicable codes and ordinances and the following conditions:

1. The special use permit shall be granted to the applicant only or to any corporation in which the applicant has a controlling interest. (P&Z)
2. The hours of operation of the outdoor garden center shall be limited to 7:00 a.m to 9:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Sunday. (P&Z)
3. The applicant shall post the hours of operation at the entrance of the business. (P&Z)
4. The applicant shall encourage its employees to use mass transit or to carpool when traveling to and from work, by posting information regarding DASH and METRO routes, the location where fare passes for transit are sold, and advertising of carpooling opportunities. (P&Z)
5. The applicant shall conduct employee training sessions on an ongoing basis, including as part of any employee orientation, to discuss all SUP provisions and requirements. (P&Z)
6. The applicant shall provide a screening fence and landscaping to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning & Zoning. (P&Z)
7. Any lighting shall be shielded to avoid glare and excessive spillover lighting onto adjacent properties. (P&Z)
8. Storage of materials shall be kept in a neat and orderly fashion within the property lines. Storage materials shall not be visible from right-of-way or adjacent properties. No storage shall be permitted in the public right-of-way. (P&Z)
9. The applicant shall provide documentation from the adjacent property owner at 300 Swann Avenue to allow public access to the parking area through the paved portion of the adjacent property and to allow the placement of “No Parking” signs to ensure the area remains clear during business hours. This documentation shall be submitted to the Department of Planning and Zoning and “No Parking” signs shall be installed to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning and Zoning prior to approval of the business license. (P&Z)
10. Loudspeakers shall be prohibited from the exterior of the building. (T&ES)

11. All waste products including, but not limited to organic compounds shall be disposed of in accordance with all local, state and federal ordinances or regulations and not be discharged to the sanitary or storm sewers, or be discharged onto the ground. (T&ES)
12. The applicant is to contact the Community Relations Unit of the Alexandria Police Department at 703-838-4520 regarding a security survey for the business and a robbery awareness program for all employees. (Police)
13. The Director of Planning and Zoning shall review the special use permit after it has been operational for one year, and shall docket the matter for consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council if (a) there have been documented violations of the permit conditions which were not corrected immediately, constitute repeat violations or which create a direct and immediate adverse zoning impact on the surrounding community; (b) the director has received a request from any person to docket the permit for review, or (c) the director has determined that there are problems with the operation of the use and that new or revised conditions are needed. (P&Z)

STAFF: Eileen Fogarty, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning;  
Richard Josephson, Deputy Director;  
Lorrie Pearson, Urban Planner.

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Staff Note: In accordance with section 11-506(c) of the zoning ordinance, construction or operation shall be commenced and diligently and substantially pursued within 18 months of the date of granting of a special use permit by City Council or the special use permit shall become void.

#### IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F - finding

##### Transportation & Environmental Services:

- R-1 Loudspeakers shall be prohibited from the exterior of the building.
- R-2 All waste products including, but not limited to organic compounds shall be disposed of in accordance with all local, state and federal ordinances or regulations and not be discharged to the sanitary or storm sewers, or be discharged onto the ground.
- C-1 The applicant shall comply with the City of Alexandria's Noise Control Code, Title 11, Chapter 5, which sets the maximum permissible noise level as measured at the property line.
- F-1 Any land disturbing activity in excess of 2500 square feet, may result in the applicant having to comply with the provisions of Article XIII of the City's zoning ordinance for stormwater quality control. The applicant may request, in writing to the Director of T&ES, a waiver from the requirements of the ordinance. Contact the Division of Environmental Quality, T&ES (703/519-3400, ext. 219) for information.

##### Code Enforcement:

- F-1 An inspection of the premises was conducted on July 11, 2005. Staff discovered excessive outdoor storage of construction materials, several overflowing use oil drums and contaminated soil. The occupant was cited and ordered to clean up the premises in accordance with state and federal regulations. A follow up inspection was conducted in August 2005 and all issues have been resolved.
- C-1 All trash, debris, solid waste, contaminated soils, and hazardous materials shall be removed and disposed up in an approved manner in accordance with State and Federal regulations.
- C-2 Storage of display plantings shall be orderly and not obstruct egress from the existing dwelling or office.

Health Department:

F-1 No comments

Police Department:

R-1 The applicant is to contact the Community Relations Unit of the Alexandria Police Department at 703-838-4520 regarding a security survey for the business.

R-2 The applicant is to contact the Community Relations Unit of the Alexandria Police Department at 703-838-4520 regarding a robbery awareness program for all employees.

**Due to the adjacent residential neighborhood, staff is not forwarding this recommendation as a condition:**

R-3 It is recommended that the lighting level for the parking lot be a minimum of 2.0 foot candles minimum maintained.



SUP#2005-0076  
300 Calvert Avenue

**REPORT ATTACHMENTS  
AVAILABLE IN THE PLANNING AND ZONING OFFICE**