



Interiorscape Hall of Fame



McRae Anderson

2004 Plantscape Professional



McRae Anderson was born in Westbrook, Minnesota on May 8, 1951 the oldest son and second of Robert and Dorothy Anderson's four children.

McRae's early life, work and entrepreneurial experience came growing up on the family's dairy farm. At the age of 14 his father was seriously injured in an accident leaving major farming duties to McRae and his mother. They continued farming until McRae graduated from high school and left to attend the University of Minnesota. To fund his college education and "extracurricular activities" he milked cows at the University's dairy in the mornings and worked for an agricultural marketing firm in the evenings.

He also continued to pursue his love of music, embarking on a somewhat unsuccessful music career. However, even today you will often find him playing the piano at industry events or anytime he finds a piano sitting vacant.

McRae's second job after college was with a garden center. He tried to interest his employers in starting a plantscaping business, but his bosses thought the plant thing was just a passing fad. McRae, unconvinced, started his own interiorscaping business, McCaren Designs, working evenings providing plantscaping for residential interior designers. Within a year McCaren Designs had grown and McRae ventured out on his own.

Less than a year after leaving the garden center, McRae partnered with his former employer on a major interior landscape project. That project was the third hotel in a new hospitality concept called the Granada Royale Hometel, now known as the Embassy Suites Hotel. It was his first commercial project and in the years to follow, he completed 13 more Embassy Suites throughout the United States, helping to establish the franchising standards for the Embassy Suites trademark atriums.

At the San Antonio Embassy Suites, he was the first person to ever use *Bucida buceras* 'Shady Lady' (Shady Lady Black Olive) which became one of his signature plants. Years later, McRae used over 200 Black Olives at Knott's Camp Snoopy, none of which defoliated.

The success of his early Embassy Suites projects led to a series of large design and construction projects that established McCaren Designs' national reputation. During this time, McCaren Designs began increasing its local customer base, obtaining maintenance

contracts for dozens of new commercial accounts. In 1987 and 1988, McCaren Designs earned a listing on *Inc. Magazine's* "Inc. 500"-The Fastest Growing Private Companies in America.

Not much scares McRae. He and his capable staff have embraced serious interiorscaping challenges including:

- Designing, fabricating and installing a 40 foot high vertical planting for the Cleveland Zoo.
- Creating, with the renowned sculptor Michael Singer, on a dramatic moss and stone planting for the Denver Airport.
- Lowering a crane through a glass roof six stories high to recreate a cypress swamp for the Tennessee Aquarium in Chattanooga. This project not only received an ALCA Environmental Grand Award, but was the first ALCA project ever (interior or exterior) to receive the Judge's Award. Because this project received 100% scoring from all 3 judges, the judges asked the ALCA Board if they could give this project some special recognition beyond the Grand Award and thus, the Judge's Award was created.

His projects have been recognized with ALCA Environmental Improvement Awards, from design, to installation, to maintenance, a regional ASLA award, *Interiorscape Magazine's* Best Project Grand Award, and a Commercial Design Award from the Interior Plantscape Association.

McRae is committed to finding new interior landscaping solutions and sharing his knowledge with the industry. He is passionate about helping his fellow interior landscape professionals grow their businesses. He has shared his projects, ideas and expertise at CIPA's CalScape Expo, ALCA events, and the Ohio Short Course. He was integral in developing ALCA's Plants At Work campaign, and has served since its inception as the Plants At Work Marketing Director.

McRae's projects are works of art! He has an exceptional ability to help his clients turn their dreams into reality. His projects go beyond the traditional applications of indoor foliage. The California Interior Plantscape Association is proud to induct McRae Anderson into The Interiorscape Hall of Fame as a Plantscaping Professional.

McRae has truly helped build a foundation for our industry.

