Claudia’s work focuses on strengthening cooperation between designers and nurseries in order to create ecologically valuable and emotionally powerful landscapes.

1. What are some key differences between American and European design practices?
In Germany, environmental stewardship is more thoroughly synthesized into your practice, because designers are tasked with protecting and empowering the nation's little natural space. Landscape architecture practice in United States, despite having access to greater species selection and biodiversity, often focuses on ornamentalism instead of ecological value.

2. How do you handle sites that are completely inundated with invasive species?
The most important skill when working with plants is knowing what will grow if there is no maintenance involved. Try and “massage” the existing plant community into a more desirable plant community by choosing hotspots for preferable species—this will to strategically eliminate the invasive species, reduce soil compaction, and remove heavy metals from the site.

3. What are some common conflicts that you witness between designers and horticulturists?
The classic conflict is between the fundamentals of good design and ecological function. The Native plant industry is starting to understand aesthetics as an avenue for emotional power within a landscape: beauty and ecological function must go hand in hand. As designers, it is important that we keep our ears to the ground and stay up to date with botanical research, so that we can select plants that support the ecology of our sites.

4. What have you learned as a landscape architect in a nursery setting?
Horticulture and landscape architecture inform each other—knowing the challenges of the nursery industry will make you a better designer. As a horticulturalist with design experience, you have a better understanding of which cultivars are better suited to site conditions. The key is to facilitate communication between these two fields. Intern with a nursery and learn how to speak the language of cultivation.

BARCELONA TRIP

Ten students led by Professor Maria Goula recently travelled to Barcelona, Spain for the IX International Biennial of Landscape Architecture. There they conducted the first iteration of an interview series with cutting edge designers whose projects were selected are finalists for the Rosa Barba Prize.