



Figure 5.23 Lawn,
Finsbury Circus, London

surrounded by rural landscape, still included a small municipal park as part of the development.

GRASS COVER

Conventional amenity landscaping - that is landscaping consisting largely of mown grass - is more expensive to maintain than other landscape types. Native landscape, established using largely self-sown native vegetation is by far the cheapest type of landscape both to establish and to maintain. Naturalistic landscaping is defined as creating new habitats to simulate native vegetation: it is the most expensive of the three landscapes to establish but is cheaper than the amenity landscape to maintain (Elkin and McLaren, 1992). Cost factors, particularly ongoing maintenance costs are not the only

justification for establishing native and naturalistic landscapes. They have their rightful place in the structure of a city's open space. Similarly conventional amenity landscaping should not be dismissed because of the relatively high maintenance costs. Lawns, colourful flower beds and neatly manicured bushes beloved by so many residents, are important city amenities and serve a most useful function in ornamenting the townscape.

Small areas of lawn, however pretty they may appear, should not be used in places or in sizes which will result in their overuse and ultimate degradation. No amount of careful maintenance or an abundance of 'keep off the grass' notices will prevent the erosion of the surface of a badly sited lawn. A well-worn Persian rug may have the appearance of faded splendour, but an over used lawn has none of that charm. The small lawn must be left to the

private garden or the semi-public space where tight controls can be exercised. The formal lawn in Oxbridge colleges where social pressure prevents overuse or the railed garden of the London square spring to mind as successful examples of the use of lawns in cities (Figure 5.23). Areas of mown grass in the city should be large enough to absorb the effects of probable use and be accompanied by adequate paths following pedestrian desire lines. The edging or trim between lawn and footpath is important from a decorative and practical viewpoint. The smooth area of the path for walking should be edged with several rows of cobbles or similar hazard invoking material which act as a visual and physical constraint: the lawn edge is then raised 5-10 cm above the level of the cobbles to facilitate mowing. The public lawn with flower beds served by adequate footpaths is for many citizens the feature they would most associate with the beautiful or decorative city.

Routes through soft landscape where emergency access is required can be constructed with slab units designed to support emergency vehicles while retaining grass cover. The firepath is constructed in pre-cast concrete slabs taking the form of a grid made up of concrete castellations and regularly spaced pockets of soil in which grass may be seeded. The slabs are self-draining and have 75 per cent of the surface area in grass. Slabs of this kind, while expensive, can also be used for car parking surfaces to reduce the area of macadam.

Ground cover is a more expensive flooring material than grass but once established it excludes all weeds and requires very little maintenance. As a flooring material it is most useful in those areas having difficult access for mowing and maintenance. Even in the British climate, however, ground cover requires the proximity of watering points. Bedded out plants on roundabouts are clearly attractive to both ratepayer and visitor but maintenance costs are high: ground cover in such locations is an ideal form of soft landscaping and, if attractively arranged, it can be an acceptable alternative to the traditional flower bed.

CONCLUSION

The floor is the aspect of the city which is immediately apparent to the pedestrian. It is felt beneath the foot, seen at close quarters, from it the rain splashes and the heat rises to greet the user: its design is therefore of great importance. The choice of flooring must be appropriate for its use and fulfil the primary functions of comfort. Fortunately in fulfilling these functions flooring materials, both hard and soft, can present interesting and highly decorative patterning. Other aesthetic and symbolic functions enhance the range of decorative possibilities open to the designer in his or her attempt to ornament the city.