



Designs by Blondie's Treehouse at the Dream Hotel Downtown in New York City (left and above) and the Hyatt Regency Waikiki Beach Resort and Spa in Hawaii (below) reflect the vibe of each property.

"While the project is on the ocean, the area is further north and is subject to colder winters. The most noticeable impact is on the trees used, as palm trees would not survive, and many other tree types would lose their leaves in the winter. A thoughtful arrangement of deciduous and evergreen trees was required so that even in the winter, when some trees are bare, the overall lush feel is not lessened," said Keift.

The goal also was to create both softscape and hardscape that would be dramatic while not blocking views to the ocean, he said. "From key points in the buildings, we wanted the landscape to frame views to the ocean, with the waterscape and hardscape serving as a visual connection to the ocean water and the sky."

Blondie's Treehouse, Inc. works with numerous domestic and international branded hotels—from Best Westerns to Embassy Suites to Hyatts—as well as independents, doing landscapes and plantscapes, and is responsible for numerous hotels in its home base of New York, including the Waldorf-Astoria, The Peninsula, The Pierre, Four Seasons and The Plaza.

"We've pretty much done work for everybody," said President Howard K. Freilich, who founded the company in 1979. "We're a complete horticultural company for our hotels. We can do everything from your fresh weekly florals in the lobby to the flowers in your public space and room service, as well as

any of your banquet or wedding facilities." Among its most recent projects in New York City have been Wyndham Worldwide's Dream Hotel Downtown and Archer Hotel, and the Hyatt Regency Waikiki Beach Resort and Spa in Hawaii.

At the latter, the hotel was doing a major renovation in the pool area, and Blondie's Treehouse was brought in to create a new landscaping design on the second-floor pool terrace. "We came up with a geometric design. They probably had about 300 linear ft. of planters that ran around the perimeter of the parapet of the property. We needed to design something that was very pretty but low, so it didn't interfere with the views of the Pacific [Ocean]. The hotel also has 40 stories that look straight down on to the pool area, so we created these geometric designs and planters using different colored succulents and a pattern of different-color glass with lighting. When you look at it from above, you see the pattern—a very low mosaic," he said.

At Archer New York, Blondie's Treehouse does very minimalistic flowers for the trendy hotel; however, on the outside, it created a separation from the street, creating a patio space.

As for the Dream Hotel Downtown, it "has this beautiful garden that was built on top of the lobby, so when you're in the pool—which is suspended over the lobby and has portholes—you can look

down and see the lobby," said Freilich. "We were limited in what plant material we could use because of the lack of light [in the lobby]. So we used 12-ft. specimen *Dracaena Tarzan* with uplights and black marble-shaped rocks for this very modern, chic type of hotel. And, when you walk outside to that garden that you see from the inside, there are these kind of floating stairs up to the pool with ivy growing all along this stainless-steel, custom cable trellis."

Once at the pool level, Blondie's has installed 12-ft. bamboo plants around the perimeter to give an exotic feel to the space, which includes 10,000 cubic ft. of sand that Blondie's used to create a beachscape.

"You can play in the sand, have a Margarita, sit in your own private cabana, and look out at the bamboo and ivy in the garden," said Freilich, adding his team had to test out several grades of sand before they were approved by the owner, who wanted to walk on them.

The executive said some 1,000 trees were brought to the Dream.

In some cases, where there is not a lot of light, Freilich indicated replica plants or a mix of live and artificial plants might be used.

"Every hotel, what they're looking to do, is create a special feeling, to create a look... Flowers work very nicely with that," he said.