

# landscape artists

four talented landscapers  
who can transform  
environments &  
delight our  
senses

*It is not necessarily those lands / which are the most fertile / or have the most favored climate / that seem to me the happiest, / but those in which / a long stroke of adaptation / between man and his environment / has brought out the best qualities of both. —T.S. ELIOT*



Landscape gardening has always been a form of visual art, and, like painting, it has evolved over time. During the past century traditional formal plantings gave way to gardens that incorporate the surrounding terrain, use native plants, and satisfy the desire for a more relaxed—and sustainable—outdoor lifestyle.

Here in Bloomington, talented landscape designers are employing their artistry to create gardens that look natural and are in harmony with the local environment. They are using local rocks and native plants that require little water or fertilizer, and they are focusing on the relationship among garden, house, and inhabitants. The four Bloomington-area landscape architects profiled here have different styles and approaches to designing, building, and maintaining gardens, but they all know that the best style for any garden is one that suits the owner's land and budget, delights them aesthetically, and enhances the quality of their lives.

STORY BY **Moya Andrews** | PHOTOGRAPHY BY **Jeffrey Hammond**

Liberal use of local stone and a variety of water features were used by the landscaper to integrate this garden, with the lake views visible from the windows of the home.





## Designscape Horticultural Services

Dan and Deb Gluesenkamp founded Designscape Horticultural Services, Inc. in 1986 with the goal of “designing sustainable growth for a changing environment.”

Dan describes their approach this way: “The site usually determines what can be achieved. I try to explain to clients what I believe is feasible for their site. I like to compare the benefits as well as costs of using local versus imported materials. We discuss how the garden areas are to be used and what style of garden is appropriate for the home as well as for the region. Of course, plants must match the conditions of the site in order to thrive. We use a lot of natives, but there are many non-natives that are low maintenance and deer resistant, too.”

The Gluesenkamps recently designed and installed a garden on a hillside near a lake and integrated the house and garden in a manner that demonstrates their commitment to environmentally sound, yet aesthetically pleasing, design of both hardscape and plantings. Dan worked on the design and construction of the outdoor living spaces with James Gray of Stone Cabin Design.

A stream flows under the home and links the front and back gardens. Some-

one sitting in the house can see the front driveway with lace cap hydrangeas and other shrubs but also see the back outdoor living areas with pool, fire pit, and patio. “This was a challenging sloping site which previously just had steps leading down to the wooded areas below,” explains Dan Gluesenkamp. “Now there are useful outdoor living spaces and easy-care plantings and even a plant bog that is about halfway down the stream bed above the waterfall.”

The bog contains plants that help clean the water by using up the nitrates that cause algae to grow. The stone comes from a quarry about five miles away from the garden, and all of the features can be seen from a variety of perspectives. Water is an integrating element. The water features in the garden are integrated into the outdoor rooms from which more distant views of the lake also can be seen. All of the focal points are seen from many different perspectives because there are several vantage spots at different levels.



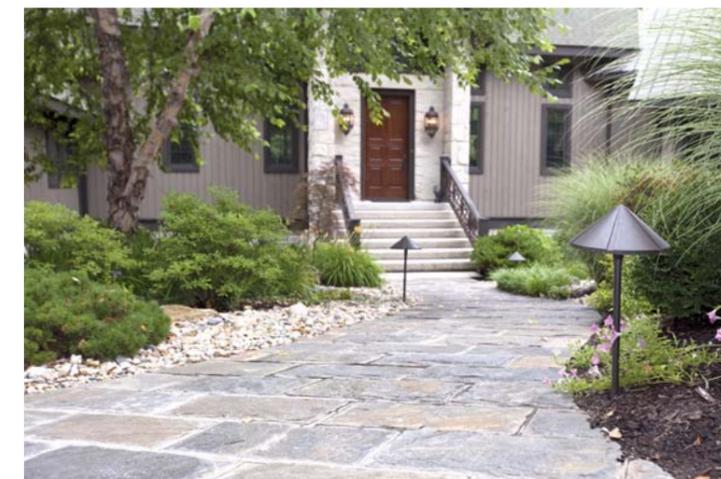
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(opposite) Dan Gluesenkamp worked with James Gray of Stone Cabin Design on this project.

(left) The house has a stream running underneath it, from the front to the back gardens.

(bottom left) The fire pit is a gathering spot for outdoor entertaining.

(below) The entrance to the home.





## Charles Steele and Associates

Landscape architect Charles Steele has operated his company in our community since 1981. The many visible examples of his work include the pocket park on South Dunn Street, a block from Hillside Avenue, and the courtyard garden at Trinity Episcopal Church on Kirkwood.

A strong organizing principle in Steele's work is drawn from the Prospect-Refuge Theory developed by Jay Appleton, an English geographer. This same principle has been applied to building design (e.g., by Frank Lloyd Wright) and can be identified in many great landscape paintings. Steele explains the theory: "Appleton suggested that individuals have always had a need for outside spaces that afford both prospect (a vista or view that is open and frequently below the viewer) and refuge (cover for the viewer that is afforded by a tree or rock, a hedge or enclosure). Landscape design essentially involves the creation of outdoor rooms or living spaces so that they look uncontrived and blend with the natural environment. The floors of these spaces may be lawn or hardscape (concrete, stone, wood, etc.). Structures (arbors, pergolas, and fences) may create walls and ceilings of outdoor rooms, but most often plant materials (trees, shrubs, and vines) are employed. Focal points in outdoor spaces are created by objects such as benches, statues, and fountains, as well as unusual plants that attract the eye."

A stroll around Steele's own private garden shows Appleton's theory in practice. White and red pine trees in front provide a screen from a busy street corner. The front porch allows a view from a raised and somewhat hidden position to an open area on a lower level. One deck is partially hidden by a bittersweet vine on the railing, but because the deck is raised, a view of an open lawn below can be enjoyed from the enclosure. The upper side yard is accented with a Bloodgood Japanese maple and a Hinoki false cypress as well as a limestone baluster from an old



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Indiana bridge. A variety of plants, all chosen for their interesting form, foliage, and texture, inhabit a space created by a three-rail fence covered by purpleleaf, wintercreeper and clematis.

In the backyard, a concrete patio sits on a low terrace with a small lacy-leafed honey locust tree that provides filtered shade and acts as a ceiling. Nestled in a bank near the patio are a waterfall, two ponds, and a connecting stream where frogs mate and lay eggs each spring. Columnar arborvitae and forsythia screen nearby storage sheds.

Focal points can be easily identified throughout this mature garden where beautiful forms and essential functions coexist harmoniously. Steele designed the garden before the home was built and has been refining it ever since. He first conceptualized the big picture and then

designed the components that contribute to the harmonious gestalt. His own garden illustrates his belief that an initial plan is essential but that parts of that plan can be gradually implemented over time.

(left) A sense of enclosure is created at the front entrance of the home.

(top left) Steele with a garden plan.

(top right) The back garden as seen from the house, with the red chair as focal point.

(middle right) The path causes the eye to travel, and the frog statue adds a touch of whimsy.

(bottom right) Steele relaxing in his garden.





## Mother Nature Landscaping

Business partners for 15 years, Shawn Eurton and Seth Inman operate both Mother Nature Landscaping and Bloomington Valley Nursey, and both are actively involved in design and installation of clients' gardens.

"We are very hands on," says Inman. "We personally like to analyze the orientation of each site in relation to sun and wind as well as soil and drainage. We consider what we have to work with and what the owners envision for their gardens. Garden design involves a series of choices such as if a retaining wall or path is needed, whether the planting areas are in sun or shade, which plants can be used and so on." Adds Eurton, "Garden design is a creative activity but only after the site's potential has been evaluated environmentally and scientifically."

In 2007, Ted and Diann Lock asked Mother Nature to design spaces for outdoor living and entertaining at their home. The resulting project included installation of both upper and lower patios made of natural limestone, a pergola, a charcoal grill, and a bar. Shade gardens were planted under existing maples and waterfalls were created on either side of an existing root cellar. The waterfalls are

what Eurton describes as "pondless," but they are still attractive to birds and frogs even though the pit for water storage is submerged and buried in gravel. The gardens are eclectic but low maintenance with a variety of hardy perennials that are dog friendly as well as drought resistant.

Diann Lock is herself a master gardener. The Locks, Eurton says, "are easy clients for a designer to work with, as they are so knowledgeable about plants. They do all of their own maintenance. They worked with us on the design and installation and then have taken it from there." The vistas that can be seen from the entertaining areas include views of the Locks' barn and horse pasture so the Locks preferred "naturalistic plantings that blended into the adjoining landscape," Eurton says.



(opposite top) Seth Inman is a hands-on co-owner of Mother Nature Landscaping.

(top) An old ice house and the weathered timber of the pergola provide a rustic framework for the plantings which were designed to attract wildlife. Photo by Steve Raymer

(above) Ted Lock, a large-animal veterinarian, and his wife, Diann, enjoy working in their garden and its proximity to the barn and their horses. A new foal behind its mother is an added attraction. Photo by Steve Raymer

(left and opposite bottom) A variety of outdoor entertaining spaces enable guests to enjoy the ambiance of the garden and views of the adjoining horse pastures. Photo by Steve Raymer

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## Jackson & Fourth Garden Design

Anita Bracalente is a garden designer and writer who, with her husband Jerry Sinks, has operated Jackson & Fourth Garden Design since 1996. Bracalente is best known for her exuberant, colorful mixed borders.

Mixed borders were first introduced by the famed British designer Gertrude Jekyll and include trees and shrubs, perennials, annuals, and grasses, as well as flowering bulbs. Like Jekyll, Bracalente is a knowledgeable plants-woman with an artist's eye. She has traveled extensively, studying gardens in other countries, and is influenced by European styles. Her plans are so beautifully executed that her clients often have them framed.

Local residents Bruce and Susan Colston asked Bracalente to design their garden in 2005, and it was installed in 2006. "While the Colstons have an immense yard," Bracalente says, "there is only one flat area where the grandchildren can play when they visit and that is along the front walk. So the garden border stretches across the front of the house. When we started, there were only a few stray shrubs and a pair of crabapple trees, so we added a third."

Three dogwood trees were then added to anchor the long border at the other end. "The entire border is actually on two levels," Bracalente explains. "There is a beautifully terraced stone wall which abuts the sunken driveway. This area faces north and was filled with many shade plants such as native ferns, tiarella, heuchera, alchemilla, and asarum."

The terraced area is completely hidden from the sidewalk view. "We like to place as many paths as possible into our large borders to invite participation into the beds," Bracalente says. "This element is very important to us, and paths can usually be found in all of our work. Susan told us that her grandchildren find the paths a great draw. We



also have two benches placed in the garden, one is easily accessed from the main walkway to the house and another is tucked around a wall of viburnum 'Summer Snowflake' flowering shrubs and the dogwood trees."

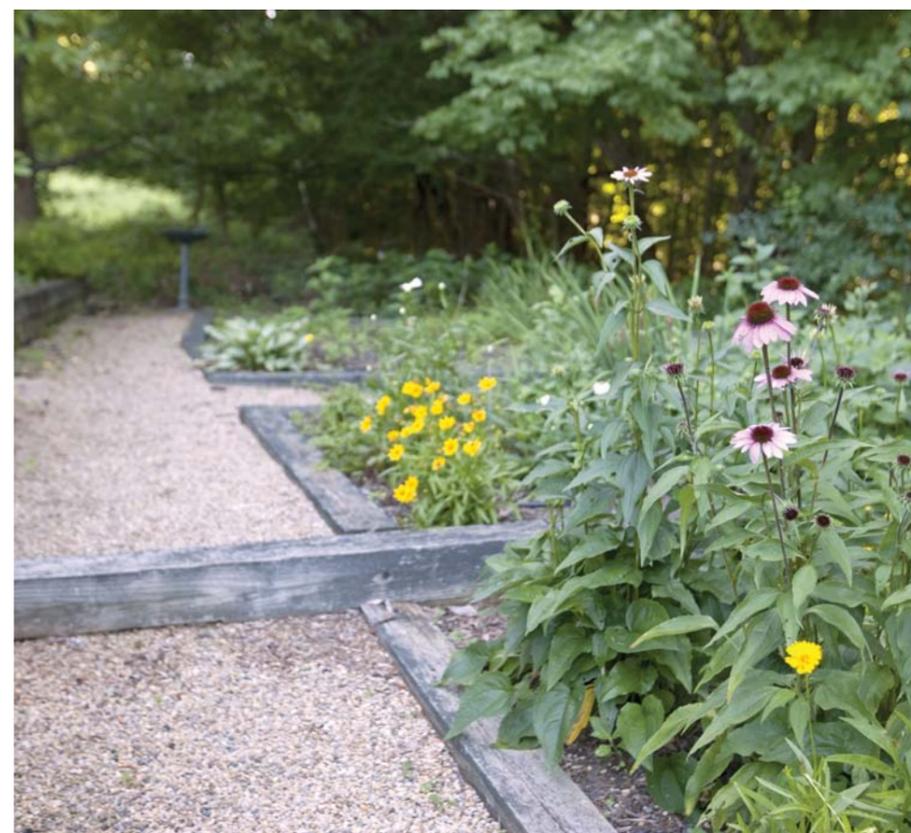
Bracalente says she tried to use deer-resistant plants, "but Susan loves day lilies so we kept them away from the outskirts of the garden, but that didn't work. Now we use Deer-Vic which keeps deer at bay as long as it is applied regularly and heavily on bamboo stakes." Because the Colstons are birdwatchers, Bracalente incorporated many plants in their garden that attract birds and butterflies and aligned many of those plants with the kitchen windows. ✨

(top left) Anita Bracalente among the vivid blooms of hardy monarda.

(right) The entrance gate provides a functional focal point.

(opposite bottom) The paths provide access as well as framing for the borders.

(top right) The mixed border stretches across the entire front of the home.



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