

SIX FIRMS CAPTURE AWARDS FOR RESIDENTIAL DESIGNS IN 1981

By John Kerr, Associate Editor

As sophistication and diversity of landscape design grow, homeowners seek quality scenery around their home. Rising property values and construction costs make the cost of quality landscapes a value in relation to the total cost of home ownership. Although aware of this value, homeowners often don't realize the challenge integrating modern styles with natural surroundings.

This year's residential landscape design award winners show that designers have kept pace with modern styles and demands of homeowners while respecting the environment. Some of the conversion jobs are barely recognizable through before and after pictures. Landscapes of new homes exemplify the skill in relating plant materials and structures to the appearance of modern construction.

Amidst the demands from homeowners arise limits on spending. Residential landscapes frequently exceed \$5,000 and construction materials are not getting cheaper. Factoring cost into the landscape means judicious selection of plants for beauty and low maintenance.

What follows demonstrates the challenges and solutions residential landscape designers found for their award-winning projects. The National Landscape Association awarded six residential designs for top work in the field of residential landscaping at this year's Landscape/Garden Center Management Clinic in Louisville. One of these winners also grabbed the grand award for residential landscaping contracting given by the Associated Landscape Contractors of America at their annual meeting in New Orleans.

Sterling Landscape Company, Boise, ID

Site: Boise, Idaho

Award: Single Family Residence

The owners of this long piece of property entertain heavily and needed a parking space and an attractive outdoor-indoor relationship for their guests. They also wanted privacy from their neighbors and the traffic of a country road while maintaining a panoramic vista of the Boise mountain range.

Sterling built up and established a back yard with fill and topsoil. An area for entertainment was designed and constructed along with a smaller patio area and a patio outside the master bedroom. By use of paths that were heavily surrounded with plants, the designer created small areas for different purposes. "Compartmentalization of all the spaces made it exciting," says John Sterling. "People experienced different spaces like they were walking into rooms."



Sterling — Compartmentalization makes this Boise residence an entertaining setting.

To show a long look from the front of the house, both sides of the entry drive were planted with matching trees, such as Bradford pear, evergreens, and pines touched off with flowering trees, including Eastern Redbud and Washington Hawthorn for lots of color.

The designer grouped Redtwig Dogwood and Shoebuttan Spirea coming out of Buffalo Juniper. He planted masses of day lillies and malcomia. In the back, flowering almond (3 to 4 feet) were placed along with Japanese Maple and Lodgepole Pine.

Bowmanite treatment of concrete surfaces extends all the way around the entry drive and approach to the front door. All the surfaces were accented with this. The stone used for the landscape was the same as that used for the home and helps unify the structure. Attractive pillars shed light onto the driveway. The heavy chain downspouts manipulate surface runoff in an imaginative way.

This site also won an award of distinction from ALCA for residential design and an award from the American Institute of Architects.

Steven Dubner Landscaping, Dix Hills, NY

Site: Dix Hills, New York

Award: Active Use Area

A steep incline in the back that sloped into the surrounding woodland made building an expansive entertainment and pool complex on this site a difficult task. Dubner did all the masonry, carpentry, and landscaping to design a multi-level area with decks. It was necessary to sculpture the land and recontour the whole property. The pool was built on one level and a cantilevered deck at the deep end of the pool provided a view of the surrounding area.



Dubner — Steep lot presented challenges of a pool and low maintenance material.

The interior of the house is very contemporary and the design of the landscape had to fit this. All the natural tones of the floor and inside of the house were matched through brick pavers and wood decking outside.

To keep the site low maintenance, Dubner used lots of ground covers, mulching agents, and hardy plant materials native to this Long Island setting. He also analyzed location of all the existing trees on the site so when he created the multi levels he could preserve as many trees as possible.

The judges of this project said the interlocking squares and rectangles of the decked and paved surfaces create a simple elegance in the project that handily accommodates and invites the flow of activity from the house down to the pool. The birches at the top and bottom of the steps are valuable as specimen plantings and for their function as pivots for the turns required by the steps.

"We ended with a contemporary entertaining area with a natural area surrounding it," says Dubner. "The key was we transferred difficult terrain to something that's aesthetic and functional." This project also won ALCA's grand award for residential landscaping contracting.

Vista Landscaping, Inc. Orlando, FL

Site: Orlando, Florida

Award: Passive Use Area

The middle-aged couple in this older neighborhood of Orlando are private people and like to entertain. They desired an enlarged patio and development of a back yard for viewing and entertaining.

This site is a good example of the introduction of new materials into an established surround-



Vista — New touches for an older site gives larger appearance.

ing. Wayne Hardy, who was in charge of the project, enlarged the patio with old bricks as pavers; added a wood trellis to the patio which enhances the natural feel of the area; and put in wood fencing for additional privacy. The tones in the old brick matched the wooded character of the house. The trellis was made of cypress, which ages naturally.

Since there was only small access to the back yard, all the plant materials had to be carried in by hand. Plants were chosen for seasonal color and variety of texture, keeping in mind that the growing season in this part of Florida is 10 months. Use of ground covers such as liriopis make the yard easy to maintain and holly ferns provide a woody feel. A flowering bottlebrush tree was added for color. All the planting was done with a sense of the mature oak stands in the neighboring yards which creates a sense of enclosure. The apparent size of the yard has been dramatically increased through the placement of plant masses.

Bunch Nurseries, Inc. Terre Haute, IN

Site: Terre Haute, Indiana

Award: Passive Use Area

The company had done landscaping for the same client before and knew that the couple enjoyed working with plants and dense clusters of them. Put these needs into the landscape with consideration of the plants' seasonal factors meant a variety of plants with room for working on them and maintaining a scale with the property. Very few homes in the area are developed from line to line and to blend this home with the community expanded the challenge.

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Harold Timmer of Bunch selected small flowering trees and dwarf forms, such as maples, to get a quantity of materials and keep them within the scale of the property. He worked in a few large trees as pivotal points and an undergrowth of hawthorns, redbuds, Amur Maples, dogwood, sourwood, *Amelanchier*, and small flowering crabs. Ground covers were also used as well as some shrubs and small evergreens to provide shape in the planting designs.



Bunch — Naturalistic approach for a plant loving customer. Carefully planned selection provides multi-season attraction.

A slope in the back yard to the lake required terracing. To get an open space, Timmer dropped the level of the yard near the house to make a level surface to the embankment of the pond. A low flagstone wall in front of the garden room retains a short terraced area and provides an adequate space for the owners to garden.

"We took a naturalistic approach to the landscaping yet didn't allow it to escape the people entirely," says Timmer. The flow from one area to another happens naturally. Plant materials were used as if they were there first. We had to do careful pruning, particularly on the Amur Maples, to keep the natural form but control them within a range."

**Green Brothers Landscape Company,
Smyrna, GA**

Site: Atlanta, Georgia

Award: Entrance

The residents of this house, built in the 1950's in a nice neighborhood of Atlanta, felt that if they could update its appearance they could sell it. The house was perched on top of a hill surrounded by hardwood trees. The greatest challenge was to solve the unattractive approach to

the house. Problems to deal with included double garage doors with windows above them and unneeded iron gates below two steep landing steps that led to the front door and to a basement room located next to the garage door.

The designer thought a series of steps and landings would make an interesting approach to the front door. From a large deck outside the guest bedroom suite and the large master bedroom, a walkway trails down to the driveway in a series of decks and landings. Through the creation of various levels of cedar decks, the designer wanted the clients to be able to use the area as a functional space and also feel when inside as though they were living in the treetops of the existing trees. The decks broke the steep look of the two story part of the house and brick planters softened the steps.

The wood of the house was changed from a bright white with a blue tint to tan which blends with the tree trunks and the decking, all of which was made of cedar. A Chippendale railing was designed to give a strong added detail to the house. Red brick was used and painted tan to go with the house. A driftwood sculpture fountain added to the motif. "We wanted to bring everything back to nature," says Jim Gibbs, president of Green Brothers. "We took advantage of the enormous trees around the house.



Green Brothers — Updated look for a house on top of a hill. Steps, decks and earth tones blend house on top a hill.

Gibbs thinks that he succeeded in his purpose and belief about design—that form follows function—on this site. The clients felt so good about the redesign that they decided not to move. "As a designer, this gives a personal satisfaction that is very rewarding," says Gibbs.

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Chazz Cox Associates, Winter Park, FL

Site: Winter Park, Florida

Award: Single Family Residence

This older house in Winter Park was completely gutted and rebuilt by the new owners. They needed a landscape setting to accompany the new home and a pool in the back yard.

To make this transformation, the landscaper had to cut into a steep slope in the back yard to allow the pool to lie on a level grade. A tremendous amount of boulders were used to build up the slope. In the front, more boulder work was used on the retaining slope. Chazz Cox chose Florida field stone because it blends well with plant materials.

Plant materials, which Cox grows in his own nursery, were picked to give a very tropical central Florida look. The wide variety used includes leather leaf fern, Needle Palm, philods, flowering evergreen pear, Weeping Podocarpus, scheffleras, spathiphyllums, impatiens (which flower year-round), ivy, tassel fern, asparagus fern, day lillies, holly ferns, dracenas, many accent plants, and a heavy mass of ground cover. There is no grass on the project.



Chazz Cox —Both house and landscape were transformed to make an older home and lot more entertaining and tropical. There is no grass on the project. Pool was also added.

The pool was painted a dark color to reflect the sky. The judges remarked that the judicious selection and use of plants and the selection of pool and awning color strategically integrate the house and pool area into the jungle-like environment.

Summary

All six award winners represent the most modern thinking in residential landscape designing. According to Ray Brush, administrator of the National Landscape Association, "The entries each year are becoming higher quality from a design point-of-view. Whether this is indicative of all landscaping, I can't say. It does indicate an ability of our members to do excellent landscaping."

Most of the projects were built on sloping ground. Brush thinks this may be a trend. "More people are recognizing that you can do more creative landscapes on less regular terrain. They are gradually becoming more prominent."

"In the U.S., we need to pay more attention to this," Brush says. "We have taken tillable land and put it into building homes—a waste of a precious resource. Your most interesting and greatest appealing landscape projects do have varying contours in the land. Although more expensive to build, it's easier to develop more interesting and outstanding landscape designs with slopes and contours."

The judges were certainly impressed, to the extent of being flabbergasted by some of the workmanship. Retainer walls, edging designs, and plant selection seem perfect on most of the sites. And this is exactly what the homeowner expects.

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