



Giardini del Palazzo

Period statuary and garden elements bring an authentic taste of Italy to this Dallas landscape

BY MICHAEL SEUFFERT / Associate Editor

Sitting on one acre in one of the more elegant areas of Dallas, you'll find a taste of Italy, courtesy of Lambert Landscape Co. That taste is the Giardini del Palazzo, a residential design/build project more than two and a half years in the making, and recently the winner of the Professional Landscape Network's (PLANET's) Judges' Award at the 2006 Green Industry Conference in Columbus, OH.

The project began when the existing home on the site was razed. From there, as the project moved along, the crews from Lambert Landscape worked closely with the home's architect and construction companies, capturing every small detail to truly transform the property into a classic Italian landscape.



Reminiscent of an Italian estate, Giardini del Palazzo is an award-winning landscape, which incorporates traditional decorations and trees, like the Italian cypress, to create an authentic feel.



Lambert Landscape sited the home and set a finish floor to take advantage of 9-foot topography and existing trees on the 1-acre site. The team implemented a planting schedule on its larger trophy trees – live oaks, magnolias, Italian cypress and others – to have them in place and flourishing when the project would be complete. The building plans were scheduled so Lambert's crews could get the back walls in for an Italian-styled grotto, with two trophy live oaks placed symmetrically on either side.

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Fountains, museum quality statuary and 17th to 19th century garden ornaments, many brought in by crane, provide the grounds a sense of maturity.

"To walk the project, you know it's a special place," says Bill LaSalle, project manager at Lambert Landscape.

Lead landscape architect Paul Fields designed the front garden around 30 geothermal

wells that were built, and created a side entry of dichondra-interplanted limestone lined with Impruneta terracotta of clipped box globes.

Additionally, stucco and carved stone piers with a wrought-iron gate begin the 250-foot axis, terminating into a 17th-century Italian statuary. Other touches of Italy include a linear fountain lined with Italian glass tile, 30-foot Italian cypress, and marble urn, bracket, and cartouche, all carved in Italy.

"The project took quite a while; it was months in design," LaSalle says. "The house is extraordinarily detailed, interior and exterior. We did all of the paving work – the diamond shaped stones in the front entry, the squares and pickets in the rear garden. All of that is kind of a geometric nightmare, getting it cut into the sizes and shapes we wanted and then actually getting it on the ground. It takes a lot of dry work, meaning you lay it out dry, make sure that your diamond points meet edges. A lot of detail went into the stonework."

In keeping with the classic Italian style of the home, LaSalle described Fields' design for the project as axial, symmetric, highly ornate and detailed.

"Those are the things that drive everything, from the smallest detail to the grand view," LaSalle says. "It's important in a landscape like this that extraordinary detail be paid to whole and half stones – that the project be designed around the geometry of the space. You don't just order X number of square feet of diamond cut stones and try to make it fit."

One of the most striking features is the entrance sequence. You walk through a large iron gate and a rough-hewn cobblestone path.

"The cobblestone slows you down, but once you get to the oval front entry where the diamond pattern is, you move to a more comfortable surface to walk on and elegance starts to emerge," LaSalle says. "There, we installed a piece of museum-quality statuary, a 16th or 17th century relic that was imported."

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Every detail was considered including the use of a wrought-iron gate while carefully designed lighting highlights the architectural forms and makes the garden glow at night.

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There's a transition from the exterior to the interior, and gives you a feeling of being contained within this property."

Another striking feature of the property is the lighting put into the landscape.

"The landscape lighting magically transforms the space, playing up the beauty of classical architectural forms," says Lara Moffet, Lambert Landscape garden designer. Lights illuminate banks of white azaleas set up in the front, making the

garden glow in the night.

"What we really wanted to convey was that 'Aha' factor that takes people's breath away," says LaSalle. "When you step into the back garden with the linear fountain to your left, the grotto fountain axial in front of you and a mass of magnolias to contain the space, that is probably my favorite space. It is so textured, there's just so much going on there.

"It's a kind of a visual candy. As you move through it, it becomes sensory and you almost have to sit down to take it all in."

The amount of work in all phases for the project was monumental. Lambert Landscape crews did construction, landscape installation, fountains and pool building. Fields helped the homeowners acquire the extensive collection of 17th-19th century garden ornaments, strategically placed to give the garden a sense of maturity. Some of the mature trees had to be craned in to be placed correctly. Other landscaping pieces were so large, it took 10 to 15 members of Lambert's crews to roll them in. "Like the Egyptians," LaSalle jokes.

"It was quite a process," he adds. "It seems at times it goes fast, but everything is so deliberate, so planned, it just plods along for us and worked out perfect. It's a project we're all really proud of." **LJM**

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