

Contemplation Gardens: Turn Your Backyard into a Restful Oasis

With people spending more time at home and using outdoor spaces as an extension of indoor living spaces, two disparate trends have emerged: using the outdoors for entertaining as well as respite and contemplation, often on the same property.

Backyards are becoming divided by type of activity – the high energy play areas are separated from areas reserved for quiet activities like reading. These reposeful spaces are usually enclosed and promote a restful and contemplative feeling. They provide a place to recharge, get away for a few minutes and prepare for the next day.

Keep these points in mind when creating a contemplation garden:

- Enclosure: The area can be divided from the rest of the yard by planting or by a low wall or fence.
- Sound: A small water feature masks background noise and creates a soothing environment.

- Location: A contemplation garden should be located away from a children’s play area and large gathering spaces.
- Entrance: To separate the garden from the yard, the garden’s entrance should be controlled by a gate or planting or arbor. When standing on the threshold of the garden, a visitor should be able to quickly see the “heart” of the garden.
- Color: The color scheme and plant palette should be restful; consider monochromatic colors.
- Shade: Create a relaxing haven by providing a shady nook through a covered swing or a pergola.
- Focal Point: There should be a prominent focal point in the space to promote contemplation.
- Seating: Comfortable lounging is a must!

Contemplation gardens can be developed anywhere. You can employ an infrequently used side door or a small balcony. Maybe you have a garage roof that can be converted to a green roof with seating. Look for under-utilized spaces in your yard – these are usually the perfect places to create your own oasis.



Lush plantings and a shaded swing provide the ideal setting for reading and relaxing.



Our mission is to create and maintain unique, quality environments for the benefit of our clients and community.



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Mariani Designs Infant Welfare Garden Front Yard in Lake Forest

Community, and good causes, deserve great work. Every year, Mariani donates time to design and install outdoor landscapes for charitable causes. This spring, Mariani will contribute to the Infant Welfare Society of Chicago’s 2007 Lake Forest Showhouse and Gardens. A fundraiser for the charity, the event takes place every other year and showcases interior and landscape designers at an historic location.



Flowering perennials add color and rustic charm to the entryway of the historic show house.

Mariani’s Carrie Woleben-Meade and Jim Osborne designed the property’s front drive and courtyard. With a theme that is elegant yet slightly wild, the plantings enhance the home by creating the feel of a European country retreat. A drift of crabapple trees adorns the front lawn. A boxwood alley dotted along the driveway adds formality and structure to the design, while a bounty of spring flowering perennials and bulbs complement the estate’s rustic charm.

“We have so many wonderful clients who dedicate their time to the Infant Welfare Society, we like to applaud and support their participation by also donating our time,” says Woleben-Meade. “This wonderful group does so much great work for the children in the Chicagoland area, we really feel lucky to be able to participate.” All proceeds generated by the event will benefit the Infant Welfare Society of Chicago. As a maternal and child community health center, IWS provides medical, dental, educational and mental health services to disadvantaged children and underserved mothers in the Chicago area.

The estate is located at 80 North Greenbay Road in Lake Forest. For more information or to purchase tickets for the event, go to www.lakeforestshowhouse.com. The show house and gardens are open through May 20, 2007.

Folio

MARIANI LANDSCAPE
DESIGN-BUILD-MAINTENANCE

300 Rockland Road
Lake Bluff, Illinois 60044
847.234.2172
www.marianilandscapelandscape.com

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17-year cicadas return to Northern Illinois

Contemplation gardens: creating a peaceful haven in your backyard

LAKEFRONT COUNTRY HOME TRANSFORMED

Tradition blends with informality and leisure to create a breathtaking outdoor space





Dear Friends:

My brothers and I spent a majority of our youth growing up and working at our grandparents' nursery in northern Illinois. Growing trees and shrubs along with our own fruits and vegetables was the life we lived. As we got older we joined our father and started to maintain the many landscapes our grandfather had designed and installed. Once our grandfather and dad passed away, we continued with the tradition of growing. Today we grow many of our own trees, shrubs, evergreens, annuals, perennials and vegetables. We also propagate many of our own plants so that we have the best selection of quality liners. We have an incredibly talented landscape architecture department and a team of professional associates to install these masterpiece gardens and then maintain them to perfection.

This coming year, we continue to grow our offerings. At Mariani Nurseries, where we sell wholesale to the industry, we have added stone, brick and other hard goods to our inventory. We believe our fellow landscape contractors will benefit from our one-stop shopping versus driving all over the place for their landscape needs.

At our Kenosha Nursery we have dedicated some of our acreage to grow large specimen plants. We are fully aware of the need for these plants, which currently are only available by searching for them at abandoned nurseries or by purchasing them from homeowners out of their yards. While this can be very successful, it is very time consuming, expensive and not always possible. Through allowing plants to grow to a larger size, we have the capability to build a consistent inventory and to assure that proper cultural practices will give these plants the best chance of transplanting success.

In addition to growing our wholesale operation, we will expand our retail presence by opening to the public in early June. Need an antique pot, a wrought iron bench, an awning that complements the fabric choice we helped you pick for your new outdoor furniture? Starting June 9 we will have specialists on hand to help you with your outdoor furnishings and those fabulous finishing touches as well as a full line of plants and flowers.

As I mentioned earlier, it is our culture to grow. We see growth as the best way to recognize and reward our fine team. Growth allows upward mobility and increased opportunity for our associates. It also allows us to control costs and spread the cost of doing business over a larger book of business, which helps us offer exceptional product and service at a reasonable price.

Our history also has made us passionate about the environment and our growth has allowed us to develop business practices that are green, like our use of bio-diesel to fuel our trucks or by offering a 100% organic lawn care program. Growth is a good thing.

Today, at Mariani, what started with two men has grown to a team of over 700 – thanks to the support of our loyal clients.

Frank Mariani, CEO

Seasonal Foliage



Geranium "Rozanne"



Clematis "Betty Corning"

Geranium "Rozanne" is easily one of the longest blooming perennials available to gardeners. The flowers begin to appear in early summer and continue nonstop through fall. It is most effective when planted en masse, often rivaling the most colorful of bedding annuals. Its flowers are blue with white centers and the plant habit is low and spreading. This geranium is ideal for full sun.

There are many nice clematis to choose from, but one of the best is Clematis "Betty Corning." Its beautiful, bell-shaped, soft blue flowers cover the plant starting in early June. Easily grown in a sunny garden, it combines nicely with shrub roses such as "Knockout" or Carefree Beauty." A mature plan always draws favorable comments from garden visitors.

In the News

Over the past few months, several publications have featured Mariani Landscape's superior work and talented landscape architects.

Design and Marketing Manager Carrie Woleben-Meade was Garden Design Magazine's January/February cover story. Woleben-Meade spoke about her design processes and inspirations and provided advice on garden styles.

John Mariani shared his expertise with The Chicago Tribune, recommending ways stone can enhance outdoor spaces.

Lawn & Landscape included Client Representative Edward Furner in its "Thirty-Five under 35," a prestigious listing of professionals who shape the future of the landscape industry.

In addition, the spring issue of Distinctive Backyard Ideas magazine features three of Mariani's landscape architects: Sara Furlan, Tony LoBello and John Mariani. The publication highlights Sara Furlan's use of native stone to construct an outdoor setting for a 1920's era Lannon stone residence. Tony LoBello's landscape design for a 1908 period residence is praised for both its practicality and consistency with the home's style. Also included is John Mariani's French country estate project: designed to transport visitors from suburbia to a rustic European countryside, the landscape is remarkably low-maintenance despite its grand appearance.

The Country House Landscape Transformed

In Wilmette, a home originally built as a country house more than 100 years ago has a new look outdoors. Set on the shores of Lake Michigan, the residence blends elegantly with its beachfront surroundings, incorporating formal and informal elements to create a spectacular outdoor living space in keeping with the grace and style of the home.

"The residence is known for its tasteful renovation," says project director Jill Burson. Over a ten-year period, Mariani worked with two different owners to complete two major renovations to the property.

Working with the first owners, Mariani was approached to renovate the front and rear yard of the property including the construction of the first beach house in Wilmette. "We worked with the architect to place the beach house and adjacent spa on the property," says Burson. Due to its location on Lake Michigan, Mariani consulted with both civil and structural engineers to ensure the integrity of the bluff walls. The initial house renovation included adding two wings to the rear of the home. Mariani then designed and installed a bluestone veranda with antique brick detailing to encompass the newly expanded addition.

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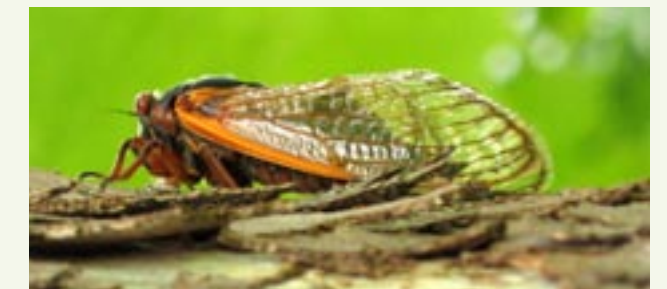


Adding to the previous owners' renovation, the current owners approached Mariani for further renovation. This included the addition of an infinity edge pool and a waterfall dropping into a lower basin adjacent to a flagstone patio. "Different levels in the rear yard give the gardens so much more dimension and interest," says Burson.

Playing off the Euro-historic feel of the house, the property showcases a formal front and rear terrace that transforms into a less-formal backyard toward the water. As a whole, the landscape is comprised of boxwoods, hydrangeas, a mixture of ornamental trees including crabapple, magnolia and Amelanchier accompanied by original horse chestnuts, hickory, maple and oak. "The current owners call it the Hanging Gardens of Babylon," says Burson.

Aside from design and installation, Mariani also maintains the property. "We visit the residence twice a week and perform specific types of work during each visit. The first weekly visit consists of maintaining flower displays, containers and perennials. The second visit includes mowing, pruning and re-watering containers," says maintenance Client Representative Jay Stevenson.

According to Burson, "When you get into residential renovation, you really need to be creative. The ability to coordinate several trades is a must." This organizational skill, combining design, construction and maintenance, helps Mariani provide clients with unmatched results.



Return of the 17-year Cicadas

Illinois residents will experience a noisy invasion this spring with the return of the 17-year cicadas. Unlike Dogday cicadas which appear every spring, the northern Illinois variety of periodical cicadas emerges every 17 years. The periodical cicadas, which are expected to appear in late May and create noise until July, accumulate in dense populations. The most noticeable aspect of these insects is the noise they produce, which is actually a mating call. In extreme cases, mating calls can reach 100 decibels, the equivalent of a car stereo at maximum volume.

Cicadas can cause minor damage to trees during their egg-laying process. After mating, the female deposits her eggs in tree twigs and branches. Another aspect of cicada season is the abandoned skin shells left on leaves and trees. As the population wanes and cicadas die out, their carcasses become a nuisance for outdoor landscaping.