

Art *and* Nature

Greener Greens . . . and Purples, Yellows and Reds.

At Van Zelst, we've been green for 30 years—just look at our trucks—and we're heartened by homeowners' renewed interest in protecting the environment.

You might be surprised to find out that some common gardening practices are anything but eco-friendly. Fortunately, that's changing. High-maintenance plants and lawns that require a great deal of chemical treatment, water, time and money are losing ground to beautiful plants and grasses that are adapted to life in the Midwest.

Because they are well-suited to our climate and soil, native plants...

- Need less fertilizer, mowing, water and other types of care
- Won't squeeze out other species the way invasive exotic plants do
- Benefit birds, bees and other wildlife
- Are less susceptible to pests and disease

Landscaping can benefit the environment in other ways, too. Properly positioned trees, shrubs and groundcover shade your home, pavement and soil, reducing cooling costs by up to 50%. Trees planted as wind breaks buffer against winter's cold. Improving the soil before planting conserves water. And plants improve the quality of the air your family breathes.

In addition, as you'll see later in this issue, our professional maintenance teams can further enhance the sustainability of your landscape. By managing plants throughout the season, spot-treating problem areas and keeping yard waste out of landfills, we ensure optimum plant health while minimizing the impact on the environment.

Create a picturesque landscape that complements your home and benefits the environment. Talk to the Van Zelst team today.

Source: GreenScapes Environmentally Beneficial Landscaping, Environmental Protection Agency, Center for Urban Forest Research.

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Landscape Development & Management

Van Zelst, Inc.39400 N. Highway 41
Wadsworth, IL 60083**847-623-3580**
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Let the Driveway Clear Itself

Chicago winters are more pleasant with a heated driveway or snow-melt system. Radiant heat installed beneath the pavers or concrete melts ice and snow, eliminating the need for snow removal and reducing your family's risk of slipping and falling. Talk to Van Zelst about having a snowmelt system installed with your new driveway, patio, or walks.



A New Direction for an Existing Landscape.

It had been more than a decade since Van Zelst had developed this home's landscape—lush plantings of perennials in every color of the rainbow. The gardens had matured beautifully, offering the owners a quiet place to enjoy the outdoors. But only half of the property had been landscaped. A second adjacent lot remained unfinished.

That's when the homeowners had an idea.

They spoke with the Van Zelst team about creating a labyrinth—a circular, maze-like walkway used for meditation or spiritual practice since the Middle Ages. Perhaps the most famous labyrinth is the one designed into the floor at Chartres Cathedral in France. When



walking a labyrinth, a person moves slowly and gently along a single path to the center, then returns the way they came in. It is a way to quiet the mind and focus internally.

Van Zelst was enthused

by the project. While we hadn't built a labyrinth before, this was an opportunity to delve into something new, for clients with whom we'd had an outstanding long-term relationship. We performed extensive research on labyrinth designs and their meanings. We studied labyrinths around the globe and from every age.

The homeowners selected a design they found peaceful and inviting. Then the Van Zelst installation team outlined the 70-foot diameter shape in natural limestone pavers, leaving space for grass to peek out between the stones.

After adding a privacy-enhancing screen of mature evergreens and extending the existing perennial theme into the new space, the empty lot had been transformed into the tranquil sanctuary the homeowners had hoped for.



Above Right: Brussels block and brick pavers carve out a spot to entertain among perennials and grasses.

Right: Abundant blooms of bright white Annabelle hydrangeas and purple astilbe soak up the sun.

Far Right: A natural fieldstone path winds through clusters of daisies, black-eyed susans and blushing daylilies.





Stone Completes the Scene.

What distinguishes a captivating landscape from a pretty garden? The answer is often found in the stone hardscape—walls and walkways, fountains and sculpture, patios and ponds.

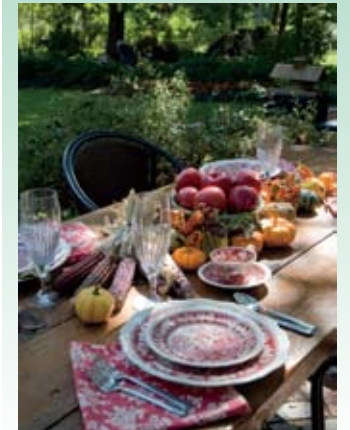
Stone is an incredibly flexible medium. At Van Zelst, we use it to pave driveways that better harmonize a home's design, create inviting patios and pool surrounds, form walls that create a sense of flow and build vertical features such as outdoor fireplaces and planting structures. We often blend two or more types of stone in an environment for a completely original, custom design. For example, natural fieldstone and flagstone's irregular edges blend easily with grass and flowers, while bluestone or pavers can provide a more polished, refined feel.

Finally, because stonework installation requires great skill, we use our own crews of experienced masons who understand the nature of the stone itself and how to use it to enhance your setting.

When contemplating a new landscape, think about who will be spending time there and what they might enjoy. Perhaps a firepit or sandbox makes sense. Stone steps leading to a secluded koi pond or trickling fountain. Or open space for entertaining large numbers of guests. These answers can guide the Van Zelst team in developing hardscape features that will make your landscape the new centerpiece of your home.

Dining al Fresco

Whether you prefer informal family meals or dining by candlelight under the stars, planning an outdoor dining space that suits your lifestyle will ensure that it's used from Spring through Fall. Here, an inviting reclaimed-timber table is perfect for impromptu get-togethers.



Smarter Landscape Lighting

Van Zelst is proud to offer high-quality, low-voltage outdoor lighting designed to complement your landscape and stand up to northern Illinois' weather. Not only do these systems add ambience by lighting pathways and plantings, they offer long lamp life and great, natural color. As a result, your landscape continues to look dramatic and inviting after the sun goes down.



Left: Lanonstone peeks out from creeping thyme and sedum for a soft, centuries-old effect.

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Maintenance Checklist

The Van Zelst team can manage:

- Soil Testing
- Fertilizer and Pesticide Application
- Appropriate Watering
- Weeding
- Mowing
- Pruning and Dividing
- Replacing Bulbs
- Yard Waste Removal and Composting
- Hardscape Maintenance

Talk to Van Zelst about a weekly or monthly maintenance program.



Right: A bluestone patio is the perfect complement to the owners' contemporary home, drifts of bold color and striking sculpture.

Professional Maintenance Makes it Easy.

Some of our clients like to get their hands dirty. Others just want to come home to a picture-perfect scene. Of course, even the most committed green-thumb may tire of deadheading and weeding by mid-July. Fortunately, Van Zelst maintenance plans allow you to do as much—or as little—as you desire.

Even the most spontaneous-looking garden requires a hands-on approach to keep plants healthy and looking their best. Some tasks, such as mowing and weeding, may be needed frequently at the height of the summer. Other duties, such as pest control, fertilizing, pruning and getting the landscape ready for winter must be timed right and performed properly for the greatest effectiveness and to avoid injury to the plants and trees.

What's more, the plant waste that we remove from your landscape is taken back to our nursery and composted, instead of finding its way to a landfill. That way, once it breaks down into rich, organic matter, it can be reused to provide nutrients for other plantings.

The Van Zelst team takes maintenance very seriously. We understand the nutritional, moisture and management needs of the many varieties of plants used in your landscape, and develop an ongoing maintenance plan that takes each one into account. Not only does that lead to a more aesthetically pleasing environment today, but a healthier, more disease- and pest-resistant landscape for seasons to come.

Full, Healthy, Colorful



Good Reasons to Stay Home.

It's been called the "stay at home economy," with more and more people spending their evenings and vacations in their own backyards than any time in recent memory. But what's wrong with that? When the evenings are in the 70s and your backyard is as inviting as your dining room, we can't think of a better way to spend a Saturday night.

What could be more enjoyable than gathering friends around the outdoor fireplace, mixing cocktails at the backyard bar and grilling a meal featuring summer's bounty? The outdoor fireplace is the latest in a series of trends that have continued to pull people outdoors—following full-service kitchens, complete with running water and refrigerators, and built-in grills.

But is now the time to invest? Readers of *Art & Nature* have read that a well-designed landscape can actually increase your home's value up to 15%. And that a landscaping investment can pay back up to 200% when you decide to sell your home.

Still, Van Zelst believes that landscaping is more than a way to improve your home. It's an investment in your family, friends and lifestyle, setting the stage for great times and memories you'll all treasure.

Source: American Nursery and Landscape Association.



Grandmother's Hostas Live On.

When Dave Van Zelst's grandmother moved out of the family's Evanston home nearly 30 years ago, one of the prized possessions she took with her was a basket of six hosta plants.

The plants found a new home in Dave's own yard, thriving in shady areas beneath the trees. Today, there are thousands of offspring of those original hostas, and the Van Zelst team propagates these, as well as many other unexpected varieties, for use in our clients' landscapes.

These hardy plants are a natural choice for shady areas, with their foliage adding color and texture throughout most of the spring, summer and fall. But perhaps best of all is the way their color and texture get amplified year after year—hostas truly get better with age.



Above: A new spa and lanonstone wall were carefully installed to protect an existing crabapple tree.

Left: Irregularly shaped stone on the outdoor fireplace is offset by the squared edges of pavers and brick.

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Right: Ferns, lady's mantle and other foliage plants add texture and a range of greens to the entry.

Below: A cast stone fountain is flanked by mounds of cool colors, including bright white begonias, glossy boxwood, and blue hydrangeas and mixed annual varieties.

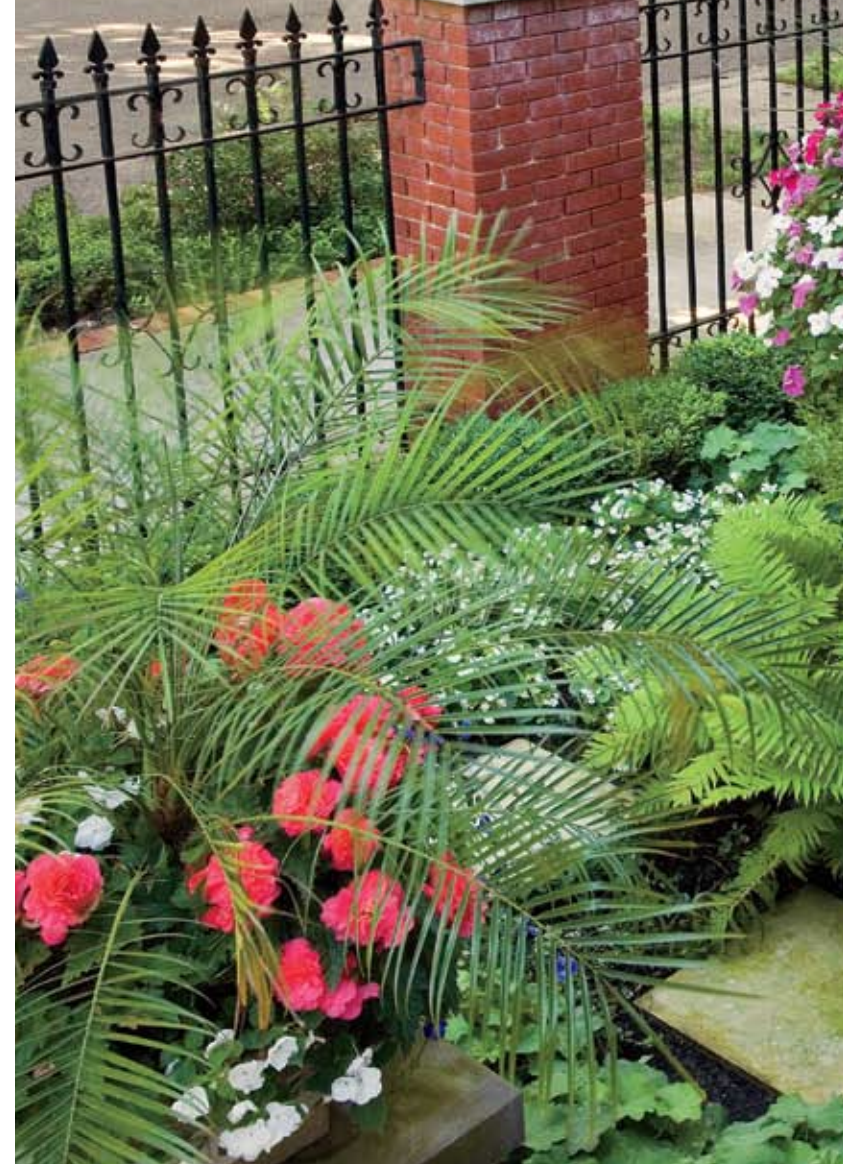
Small Spaces. Big Impact.

While we often showcase our larger landscape projects, the Van Zelst team is just as skilled at creating glorious landscapes in smaller spaces. Many clients in the city and older, established neighborhoods have limited space—but that doesn't mean they have to limit their imaginations.

In a compact space, functionality and flow are paramount. Details stand out. And the whole garden must work together at a glance. But the foundations of good design, careful preparation and well-executed maintenance are the same, whether you have a tiny lot or acres of open space.

For example, in a smaller space, we're likely to recommend long-blooming perennials that make the most of the available footprint. We bring shady spaces to life with the right plants and hardscape elements. An emphasis on architectural shapes, containers and vertical elements takes full advantage of the space available. And carefully planned structures or stonework can support the way you entertain.

By looking at each space as a unique opportunity and applying solid landscaping principles, the Van Zelst team can create beautiful outdoor environments in the most unexpected places.



Compact Gardens



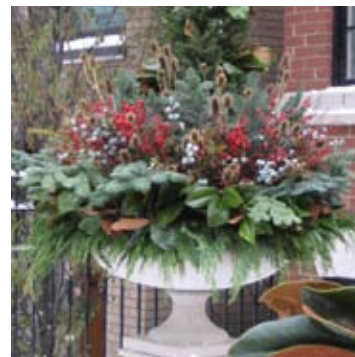


Extend the Look (and Season) with Containers.

Adding containers throughout the landscape is a terrific way to accessorize—in a small-space garden or as focal points within a sweeping environment. Containers allow you to incorporate plants into the patio or near the house, add height and artistic appeal, and update the garden from season to season.

While perennials mature and fan out season after season, making them perfect for planting beds, containers can be filled with pretty annuals and refreshed throughout the year. Because container plantings tend to be short-term, they allow greater spontaneity and experimentation.

Lush with pastel begonias and petunias in the spring, brimming with bright marigolds and geraniums at the height of summer, then transitioning to asters and bold red and orange gaillardia in the fall, a single container may have several personalities over the course of just one year.



Above Left: This urn takes on a new personality for the holidays with seasonal colors and evergreen boughs.

Above Right: A striking columnar juniper adds height, making the most of a compact space. As the seasons change, so can the flowers' theme.

Far Left: Welcoming urns are updated with new plantings throughout the seasons. Here, annual pink geraniums spill out throughout the summer.

Left: Combining large numbers of fewer plant types can make a big impact. Simple pink petunias are stunning paired with the broad, red canna foliage.

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Recent Honors

Awards for Landscape Design, Construction and Management presented by the Illinois Landscape Contractors Association (ILCA)

- 2009 Gold Lincoln Park Residence
- 2009 Gold Lake Geneva Residence
- 2009 Silver Northbrook Residence
- 2008 Gold Lake Bluff Residence
- 2007 Silver Glenview Residence
- 2006 Gold Lake Geneva Residence
- 2006 Gold Glenview Residence
- 2006 Silver Wilmette Residence
- 2005 Gold Wilmette Residence
- 2005 Silver Glencoe Residence
- 2005 Merit Kenilworth Residence
- 2004 Gold Glenview Residence
- 2004 Silver Lake Forest Residence
- 2004 Merit Lake Geneva Residence
- 2003 Gold Kenilworth Residence
- 2003 Silver Wilmette Residence
- 2003 Merit Lake Forest Residence
- 2003 Merit Glencoe Residence

For a complete list, visit www.vanzelst.com.

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All of the design services and installations described in this issue of Art & Nature are available from Van Zelst, Inc.

Celebrating Our 30th Spring.



At Van Zelst, we're always eager to see the first signs of Spring. It doesn't matter how many years we're in this business, or how much we love a quiet, snowy winter night—when we hear the birds return and those first green shoots emerge, we're like kids again. New plant introductions are like a new set of paints to play with. Getting dirty up to our elbows never grows old—even after three decades in the business.

And this year, when we're all hungry for some good news, we appreciate those cheerful greens, pinks and yellows more than ever. Trend-followers are predicting that the recovering economy will lead to people spending more time at home in the coming months—instead of going out on the weekends or traveling extensively. Of course, when your garden is in full bloom from Spring through Fall, we don't think that's missing out on anything.

Regards,

Dave

Landscape Awards.

The Van Zelst team has won more than 75 awards for landscape design, construction and management. We share these honors, awarded by national and Illinois-based associations, with the homeowners who have trusted us to bring the environments they envision to life. Without strong collaboration between our clients and our team members, none of them would have been possible.



2009 Gold Award
Lincoln Park Residence



2009 Gold Award
Lake Geneva Residence



2009 Silver Award
Northbrook Residence



2008 Gold Award
Lake Bluff Residence

2009 Plant Introductions

Take a look at some of the incredible new plants we're incorporating this year:



Echinacea Little Magnus
All the glory of the full-height variety with a maximum height of about two feet.



Iris Immortality
A brilliant, white bearded iris prized for its consistent reblooming throughout the season.



Heuchera Caramel
Glowing, apricot-hued foliage that's more tolerant of heat and humidity than other heucheras.



Hemerocallis Pygmy Plum
A constant rebloomer, this attention-grabbing daylily will bloom throughout June and July.



Phlox Danielle
Large, pure white blooms are glamorous against dark green foliage that also resists mildew.



Stachys Hummelo
Large clumps of dark green, heavily textured leaves send up showy spikes of lavender-rose flowers.

Grilling with Dave: ASPARAGUS RAFTS

Asparagus is everywhere right now, and it's delicious on the grill. After snapping off the tough ends, I line up four or five spears and thread wooden skewers near the top and bottom to form a raft. These are easier to grill than individual spears, and it makes a neat serving for each guest.

- Brush each raft with olive or sesame oil and grill 3 minutes on each side until crisp-tender
- Sprinkle with salt, balsamic vinegar, soy sauce, parmesan, herbs, you name it!

