

Grand Award for Van Zelst for a vibrant
Residential design/build landscape

An ALCA Grand Award in residential design/build was given to **Van Zelst, Inc.**, Wadsworth, Illinois, for its landscape design and installation of a residence in Barrington Hills, Illinois. The project's intent was to replace the ordinary green, weedy, and non-native woodland plantings with vibrant, colorful and every-changing views that complemented the home's architectural style and grounds and allowed for horseback riding through and around the property. Van Zelst developed a dynamic natural, well-crafted, beautiful environment that fills the 15-acre property.

A unique construction challenge

The project was a unique construction challenge with scale and specialized client needs. First, the company removed eight acres of unsightly, dense, and overgrown, non-native buckthorns from the rear woodland areas to open up views on the grounds. Van Zelst replaced the large dying evergreens that bordered the right side of the house with 40' specimens and a Lanonstone wall. The sensitive root zones of mature oak trees made tree care and preservation a top priority. To minimize tree damage, Van Zelst staff used hands-on care rather than machines.

Among the problems Van Zelst encountered were compacted soils, drainage, erosion and spring flooding issues along the creed edge. They resolved these issues by using native varieties of perennials and wildflowers. The company planted a perennial garden with a diversity of early to late blooming perennials for both sun and shade conditions.

The plantings installation was formidable. It included: large deciduous and evergreen trees; over 50,000 two gallon perennial plants; more than 38,000 bulbs; bark and stone paths; and five acres of wildflowers. The trees, understory plantings, and boxwood and yew hedges created clean and crisp formal lines. Van Zelst used flagstone steppers to create a path from the rear of the pool that circles the entire woodland area. The firm completed an extensive installation of spring flowering daffodils and narcissus in the newly opened woodland areas. Rudbeckia, coreopsis, Echinacea, and other plant varieties were planted alongside the small patio near the master bedroom. Rows of mature spruce trees were planted along the western edge to create a visual shield of the neighboring property.

Looking toward the rear of the home, there is a striking overview of the rear façade. In the summer and into early autumn, the owner has breakfast and coffee at a small table on the bluestone deck.

“Weathered” bridge provides a safe crossing

Van Zelst completely removed an old, worn down bridge and installed a new custom-designed bridge in its place. The company used barn wood to give the new bridge a weathered appearance. Horses and equipment can now be safely transported across the creed on the new bridge.

A tranquil and beautiful retreat

With the strategic placement of thousands of plantings, Van Zelst fulfilled the owners' wish to surround their house with constantly changing color, while creating a quiet and natural retreat. The resulting private, quiet and colorful landscape is the perfect setting for the owners to pursue their love of horses and enjoy their property.