

New Sun
Wadsworth firm strikes landscape award gold

The results of the annual competition for landscaping excellence were recently announced by the Illinois Landscape Contractors Association at the Mid Am Meeting in Chicago, Van Zelst, Inc., a design/build landscape contractor with main offices in Wadsworth, won prestigious Gold and Silver Awards for landscape construction and a Gold Award for landscape maintenance. Van Zelst, Inc. was founded by landscape architect, T. David Van Zelst. The honors were given to the firm's landscape professionals at an awards luncheon held at the Fairmont Hotel.

The Van Zelst firm has been active in design, construction and maintenance of landscapes for homes, businesses and institutions in the northeastern Illinois area. An Zelst, who is also president of the firm, stated, "There is a growing trend in the industry for one firm to handle the total landscape project from design through the full construction phase and then maintain the property. The ILCA Awards reflect this design/build concept."

A Gold Award for excellence in landscape design and construction was given for a Libertyville residence. The home was constructed two years before the landscape project began. A major objective was to solve horticultural problems caused by the original construction process in which tree root zones had been compacted, resulting in a loss of trees. New drainage systems were developed and special mixes of soils installed to protect the remaining and newly planted trees on the property. The end result is a beautiful landscape which balances the objectives of the client with realistic choices of plant materials to overcome severe site obstacles.

The homeowner is a bird and wildlife enthusiast. The Fountain grass, Rudbeckia, Liatris spicata, and other perennials placed in this garden were used in planting beds throughout the property to provide a colorful and constantly changing appearance. Several large ash trees were installed to occupy a prominent position in the front garden. The project included a circular brick drive which creates an island garden when viewed from inside the home. Along the entire rear of the property, a special selection of deer-resistant plant materials was mandated because large groups of deer are drawn into the area to the delight of the client. As a final phase of the landscape construction, a direct mercury vapor lighting system by Lunare was installed to allow the owner's natural enjoyment of the property at all hours of the day and night.

Van Zelst received a Gold Award for its landscape maintenance of a 2-acre residential property in a wooded area of Lake Forest. A diversity of plant materials and light conditions requires constant technical supervision of the property to ensure that the landscape management program achieves consistent results. This property is characterized by perimeter perennial gardens, ground cover beds, bluestone hardscapes and a sparkling turf. Extensive flower and ground cover beds border one edge of the property.

Van Zelst's Silver Award was received for landscape design and construction of an unusual residential project in Barrington. This involved the blending of a wide variety of landscape elements which created a natural prairie appearance surrounding a newly constructed home. The owner's objective was to have a naturally wild and rustic setting. The design involved the use of low growing prairie grasses, native wild flowers, and shielding trees like spruce.

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The front of the home presents guests with a startling view of a sweeping 150-foot prairie garden that runs along the property edge. *Euonymus vegetus*, Russian sage, other extensive perennial plantings and large boulders form a transitional landscape area that serves as a bridge from the prairie setting to the formal entryway of mortared bluestone. *Rudbeckia*, *Coreopsis* "Moonbeam," *Euonymus coloratus*, and *Astilbe* are some of the varieties planted in the driveway area.

A full service firm, Van Zelst, Inc., has its own experienced crews for installation of flagstone, bluestone, and other special stone and brick paver work for patios, walks and driveways and for installation of Lunare landscape lighting. Many of the trees, shrubs and perennials are supplied from its own nursery.