

PREMIER PROPERTY & LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

LAKE & COUNTRY

SPRING 2013



Trending in 2013:

LANDSCAPES FOR LIVING



Russian sage, liatris, purple coneflower, black-eyed Susans and daylilies are just a few of the perennials that thrive in southern Wisconsin.

by David Van Zelst

It's still a bit cool outside, but it's not too early to talk about what's hot in the world of landscaping this season. As a landscape architect, over the past few decades (and counting), I've seen a lot of trends come and go. But right now, I'm excited by some of the ideas taking hold that have some real staying power—most likely because they're focused on how people really want to live in and use their outdoor spaces.

I've narrowed it down to four trends I think are likely to stay in style for a number of years.

1. Midwest-hardy and native plant varieties. The idea of choosing locally adapted plants is considered a new idea in some circles right now, but it's something I've always advocated. There have been times when plants or trees that weren't suited to our soil or conditions have been all the rage. But that can be expensive and frustrating. If you plant something that isn't right for southern Wisconsin summers and winters, you're going to spend a lot of time and money caring for and, most likely, replacing it.

As an added advantage, local plantings are more environmentally friendly, too. Generally speaking, they require less water, stand up better to pests, weeds, and disease, and aren't likely to invade the space and compete with other plants for light and nutrients. Many Lake Geneva properties, for example, have been overrun by buckthorn to the detriment of more appealing plants. But perhaps the best reason to choose plants that thrive here is the wide range of absolutely beautiful options available for this area.



A full kitchen encourages outdoor entertaining. Heavy-duty stainless steel appliances and countertops set in stone stand the test of time.



Creeping thyme and flagstone, instead of turf grass, require little maintenance yet still feel soft and informal underfoot.

2. A great outdoor kitchen. Whether it's an informal seating area with a grill and refrigerator within easy reach, or an elaborate build-out that looks like it belongs in a magazine, nobody ever regrets installing an outdoor kitchen. People who love to host do so because they enjoy spending time with their family and friends, and an outdoor kitchen lets you be part of the party. Perhaps that's why so many second and summer homes focus as much on the outdoor kitchen as the one indoors.

When it comes to your outdoor kitchen, the sky is the limit. Outdoor rotisseries, wood-fired pizza ovens, sinks, warming drawers and cabinetry are all available, so you can incorporate just about anything you're likely to use. Building these features into stone surrounds heightens the level of finish, making the outdoor kitchen truly feel like an extension of the home.

I should note that, in addition to cooking and serving areas, we're seeing outdoor lounges and smaller, more intimate dining areas, too. These are great ideas, and give family members and guests a variety of spaces suited to different sizes and types of gatherings.

3. Thinking beyond the lawn. Many of us grew up in homes where the centerpiece of the "yard" was a pristine carpet of green grass. Today's landscapes tend to be more about color, texture and interest, devoting more space to living areas, beautiful stonework and a greater variety of plantings.

A sustainable landscape is comprised of native and hardy plants and reduced lawn spaces. Choosing lower-maintenance shrubs, groundcover, and flowers reduces the need for water, chemicals and the fuel used in mowing.



An outdoor lounge, complete with fireplace, invites guests to stay and chat after the sun goes down.



Tucked in a shady area, a whimsical antique fountain stands on a glossy bed of river rock, adding a distinct personality to the garden.

4. Personalization. As with the interior of your home, the landscape has become a place to truly express your tastes and interests. Families are incorporating outdoor art, one-of-a-kind fountains and found objects as well as friendly features such as fire pits. Creating a personal environment requires a real partnership between the designer and the homeowner. A good landscape architect will be more interested in complementing your lifestyle than imposing their own ideas on your home. Of course, you should expect a professional to bring a lot to the table, enhancing your ideas and proposing new ways to meet your goals, but you should be working together to create a true reflection of your personality.

The three things I think these trends have in common are the way they respond to people's lifestyles. The focus on environmental responsibility, the drive toward enjoying time with family and friends instead of performing unnecessary tasks, and the idea of individual expression all appeal strongly to enlightened homeowners today.

Photo Credit: Photos courtesy of Linda



Black-eyed Susans and purple coneflower thrive in Wisconsin and Illinois.



David Van Zelst is founder and president of Van Zelst, Inc., an award-winning landscape architecture firm serving southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois. Van Zelst, Inc. is a complete design-build landscape firm that provides exemplary personal service, even growing many of its own perennials to assure the highest level of client satisfaction. Located in Wadsworth, Illinois, Van Zelst has created environments for many beautiful homes and businesses, as well as the Chicago Botanic Garden. For more information, visit www.vanzelst.com or call (847) 623-3580.