

# creating beautiful living space outdoors

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Outdoor living space designed for enjoyment and relaxation.

**SPRING IS NOT LONG OFF, AND MANY OF US ARE EAGERLY AWAITING ITS arrival.** We'll soon see buds peeking out from our trees or up from the ground.

It's bad enough being cooped up all winter, but why would you want to stay inside in spring and summer and not enjoy Mother Nature? Why not make your outdoor space as welcoming and beautiful as your home?

"The possibilities of life outside the home are only limited by the imagination," says Doug Myers, owner/designer of Fernhill Landscapes in Strasburg.

Myers, whose businesses serves south-central and southeastern Pennsylvania, admits he's not afraid of being innovative and, in fact, many of his clientele frequently ask him to step outside the box and think creatively, beyond simple plants and flowers.

"Through the years, I started expanding into an abundance of other trades," Myers says, "and now when I speak with our clients about projects, we are looking at building walls and pools, patios and pergolas, pool houses and water features, lighting, and really almost anything you can do outside."

Fernhill's projects range from simply planting a tree to projects that are complex in their design and nature but sublime and peaceful in their result. Most projects can take two weeks to several months to design because real thought, creativity, and a lot of problem solving are needed to come up with great design.

Too many homeowners, Myers says, have devices or elements such as outdoor kitchens, fireplaces, and water features that are both functionally and aesthetically dislocated from their site. These types of issues, where design and taste come into

play, can change the look and feel of one's backyard.

One such space is located in Camp Hill with a courtyard area that originally had no relationship to the mid-century home.

"It was filled with some type of stamped concrete and a collection of shrubs that did not relate to each other, let alone the home," Myers says. "The result [of Myers's redesign] became this elegant, modern space with striking visuals and a range of rich textures."

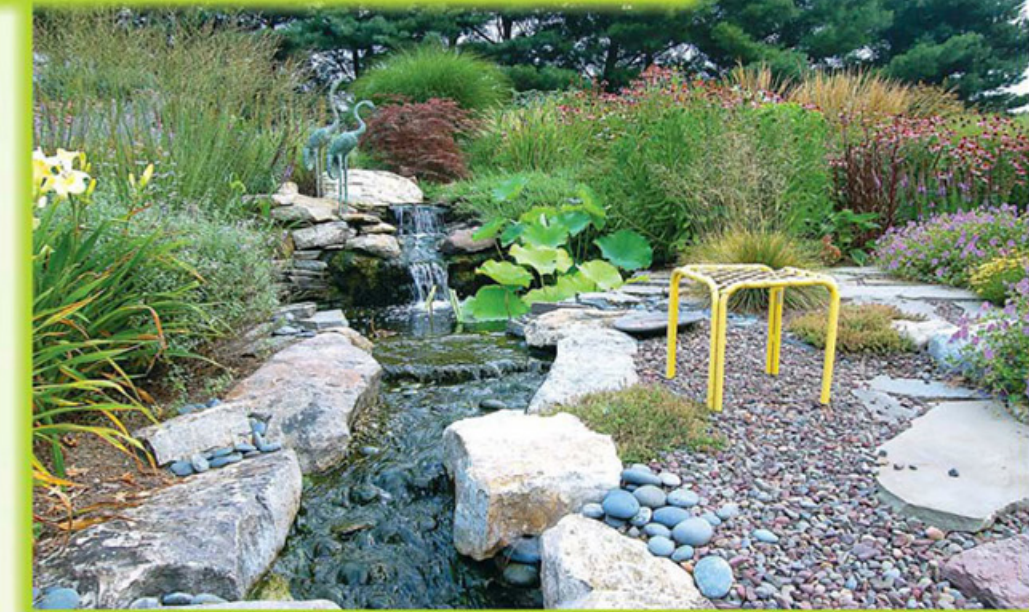
In Stevens, a water feature and a new, romantic planting style were used to establish a theme for its creative homeowners, who worked from their home and needed a garden that would stimulate them visually yet provide refuge.

Myers added a water feature and a romantic planting style amid a historic farmhouse and barn/studio already on the property. The result was a space that was influenced by history but related to the present.

At a home in Hershey, a stone wall and a water feature with a copper scupper were installed as focal points, along with a contemporary planting style with hedge composed of fountain grass and more traditional boxwood.

While cost is many times a big consideration, Myers advises homeowners to think in terms of having a project completed in steps rather than all in one time.

"We encourage clients that know what they want but find the total cost beyond their initial budget to wait and install their plan in phases," Myers says. "The outcome almost always results in a more satisfied



photos courtesy of Fernhill Landscapes



photos courtesy of Igneous Rock Gallery



Simple lava rock creates focal points of art.

client. Too often, builders and homeowners want to rush the process, and then both end up with a project that does not succeed on all the levels they had hoped. It is much better to wait on an excellent product than to rush and get a mediocre product.”  
 Sometimes a fountain can appear to have a life of its own—through shape, color, and history. The materials that Robert Wertz, owner of Igneous Rock

Gallery in Mechanicsburg, works with every day have such attributes and, in turn, homeowners reap the benefits of this material’s beauty.  
 Wertz offers design options for homeowners in the realm of these unique fountains—from candleholders to outdoor torches to memory candle urns—using a highly colored lava rock called Beaver Canyon andesite.  
 “My artistic intention is to alter this

natural material as minimally as possible while accentuating its appeal by focusing on the composition and presentation of the columns,” Wertz says. “I don’t know how mere mortals could create something as beautiful as this ancient stone.”  
 According to Wertz, this rock formed into columns approximately 50 million years ago when lava breached the Earth’s crust and cooled. Long, narrow

spires developed, making this material unique not only due to the dramatic width-to-height ratio, but also because of its diverse color palette and curvy formation. Yet, the vibrant color is only on the surface.  
 “If you cut through a cross section of the rock, you will see the darker color of the parent magma,” Wertz says. “But after millions of years, highly mineralized water found access through the crevices and oxidized and altered the outer surface.”  
 This act of nature makes homeowners the victors. Along with the fountain being a conversation piece, Wertz’s

clients have remarked on the naturalness of these unique sculptural fountains as well as their beauty and ability to provide a sense of calm.  
 These fountains become a work of outdoor art, much like a most-loved canvas hanging above the fireplace. Once a fountain is chosen, Wertz can offer design services in the vicinity of the fountain, thus completing the “picture.”  
 While Wertz always has six fountains of various configurations and price points on display and ready to install, he does consider the scale of the space, the budget, and which style of fountain “speaks” to each client.

“I watch clients’ reactions to the various flowing fountains on exhibit in our showroom,” he says. “In part, my creativity is inspired by what moves the client. When they admire certain features, it helps me engage in the process of creating a custom arrangement they will value long term. I also enjoy sharing my own inclinations and preferences along the way.”  
 So consider the time you took to create just the right look on the inside of your home. Now put that same care into creating something beautiful on the outside. The choices are endless and “are only limited by your imagination.” >>>

photos courtesy of Igneous Rock Gallery