

Landscape Architecture

Designs from the Landscape Design Group
blend elegance with imagination.

by Mary Beth Schwartz • featured in Bucks County Town & Country Living

When people think of the landscape architect, they often envision someone putting shrubs around the house. The Landscape Design Group (LDG), however, takes landscape architecture to a new and interesting level. According to Michael Montemuro, LDG is unique, in that the company creates different spaces on property, usable outdoor living spaces, as he calls them.

"These days, most families have two incomes. The breadwinners work long hours. So, when they come home, they want to enjoy those precious few hours of relaxation, especially in their outdoor spaces," Montemuro says. Michael started LDG almost 20 years ago, along with his brother, Frank. With each job, the firm's staff tries to be very client and site specific. Each job is custom designed, and well done. There is no such thing as cookie cutter work.

Over the years, LDG has come to be a well-respected Bucks County landscape design/build company. It has a staff of full-time architects, along with five installation crews. Word of mouth has been a definite asset to the firm. Clients love to spread the word of LDG's cutting edge quality and creativity.

LDG has several certifications and memberships from the Pennsylvania Registered Landscape Architects; the American Society of Landscape Architects and the Pennsylvania Nurserymen's Association. In addition, the company has received the award for "Most Distinctive Garden in Show," as a major exhibitor, at both the 1995 and 1996 Philadelphia Flower Show.



Photographs: Randl Bye

Above, landscape designers (from left to right),
Frank Montemuro and Michael Montemuro.

Opposite, several views of a property
landscaped by Landscape Design Group.





The design company does not just win awards, however. It also goes out there and tracks down the latest trends in landscape architecture. One new trend that is becoming quite popular is European type gardens.

"I think design landscapes with continental flair are catching on because the general public is traveling more, into culture more and the architecture is also going that way. It is relaxing, as well as elegant," he states.

LDG's staff learned about this European design in college studies, travel and life experiences. The architects had to study the European gardens (country French, Italian, German, etc.) to see which elements they had in common, what made them different from American landscapes.

According to the architects at LDG,

there are four basic elements to the European landscape. One, use of substantial structure, hardscape elements, such as walls, terraces and pergolas to create a solid backbone for the plantings, which often reinforce the effect, by taking the form of clipped hedges, topiary and espaliers. This dominant structure is vital in the makeup of the formal gardens of Europe's palaces and villas, along with the informal country gardens. Two, contrast of materials. For example, formal stone gates with intricately carved finials flanking a loose gravel drive, or wild rambling roses on delicate wrought iron grillwork. This contrast of the tailored and the rustic is important in creating a look that is both grand and relaxed. Three, container plantings, especially in small gardens. All over Europe, LDG architects found a variety of container plantings, ranging from cherry geraniums on a windowsill, to the incredible orangery at Versailles. Four, a feel of nostalgia. Although you can't recreate the history so intrinsic to many European gardens, you can create a feeling of age.

Selecting quality materials, whose finish will only improve over time, such as stone, stucco and wrought iron and copper, can give your garden a feeling of timelessness, as if it has always been there.

LDG architects have taken these four elements, and put them into a current Bucks County landscape ar-

chitecture design.

According to the firm, the landscape design took its cues both from the architecture, an American interpretation of an Italian villa, and the mature woods of the sloping site. The resulting design contains a strong hardscape backbone of freestanding and retaining walls, architecturally creating outdoor rooms that strongly relate to the house's interiors. These walls also kept the footprint of the garden's compact, respecting the wooded character of the site, through the minimization of grading and tree clearing. Simplicity and rusticity also were part of the project. The plantings, as well as the paving layout, serve to accentuate the architecture, or provide color. All hardscape materials were chosen for their aged, rustic character, such as tumbled brick and rough stucco.

To create an innovative landscape, or put a little bit of Europe in your yard, write to: Landscape Design Group Inc., 4284 Burnt House Hill Road, Doylestown, PA 18901, or call (215) 340-7890.❖

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