

Smooth, curly, spindly, spiked—varied leaf textures and shapes add layers of depth to this landscape.

# evolving beauty

## This Caledonia, Ontario Estate Showcases More Than a Decade of Landscape Projects

**Some landscapes take on a life of their own.** And sometimes you can never do enough; not because there's a deficiency, rather, because there's always an opportunity to enhance the natural beauty that already exists. This estate in Caledonia, Ontario, a rural community about one hour southwest of Toronto, presents almost endless possibilities for adding beauty. "We've worked there nearly fifteen years and completed close to fifteen projects on the site," says Harry Gelderman of Gelderman Landscape Services in Waterdown, Ontario. "This has been a project in the making."

With every client, Gelderman tries to get at the heart of what they long for. "When I first meet with a client, my goal is to know the end result that they desire. Do they want to entertain? Do they want to feature a piece of art? What do they want to achieve when all is said and done?" explains Gelderman. For the owners of this home, their initial goal was simple and shared by many homeowners: beautify the property. But this couple is community minded, and over time their goal morphed into adding enjoyment for their neighbors as well. The couple graciously allows wedding photos to be taken on their country estate property.

From the start, the landscape has been a group effort. This is a large country estate, and the couple employs an operations manager and a full-time gardener. These employees, the couple, and Gelderman collaborate on the landscape projects.

The property is substantial, and because of its size, Gelderman notes the importance of having smaller vignettes within the larger landscape. "If you create a wide-open garden, then it looks industrial and uninviting," he says. "Having pathways that lead to smaller areas makes the garden more inviting and welcoming."

WRITTEN BY RONDA SWANEY PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF MCNEILL





THIS PAGE FROM TOP: The pergola shades a seating area above the waterfall, while red daylilies invite attention from across the stream. A water weir provides a soothing sound to this sunken seating area. OPPOSITE: Purple and yellow blooms are natural complements and soften the rough hardscape.





## Transform Your Landscape from Meh to Marvelous

Texture matters more than color. As Gelderman points out, most blooms only last one to two weeks. You'll see leaves and stems more than the flowers. With that in mind, consider the color and texture of the plant beyond the blooms.

Plan for winter interest in your garden. Most homeowners consider spring, summer, and fall as prime time for the garden. This mindset overlooks the beauty that can be realized during the winter months. Interesting bark patterns on deciduous trees, hardy evergreens, art objects, and hardscape deliver stark beauty in the harshest season.

Meandering pathways and partially obscured views of seating areas add an air of mystery to any garden. Visitors will enjoy exploring and discovering special spots throughout your site.

Add lighting to see your garden in, well, a different light. Daylight floods down from above. At night, however, use uplighting to provide a completely different perspective. Lights extend the usable time in your garden and, just like meandering pathways, add a touch of mystery.

Humor also plays a role in the garden by adding laughs and a touch of personality. Art objects can be serious but can also exhibit a playful side to any homeowner's garden.

The pathways that link the intimate settings provide the connection required to make the design cohesive. "Hard surfaces are the anchor of any design. It's very important that they blend in with the softscape," says Gelderman. Pavers, stone slabs, brick, and pebbles provide walking paths to the various areas of interest dotted across the property. The paths and intimate areas serve a practical purpose, but also a less obvious one. "Walkways and vignettes add an element of the unknown. If you can hide where a visitor is going then it adds mystery," explains Gelderman. The pathways allow for guests to experience a sense of discovery when they find a new spot.

Included in the various vignettes are multiple water features. Designed to operate year-round, the features provide focal points at several locations on the property. A turn-of-the-twentieth-century-style bridge was recently installed to cover an existing swale. Two water weirs highlight a semicircle seating area.

A waterfall paired with a stream creates soothing sounds to delight the senses. And a fountain with a seven-ton rock as a focal point anchors the front of the house.

Calendonia experiences four distinct seasons, making it a challenge to maintain interest all year long. Most homeowners feel confident making their landscapes beautiful during spring, summer, and fall. Adding winter interest always presents the greatest challenge. In addition to hardscape, evergreens, including native juniper and spruce, provide a strong backbone to the winter landscape.

Even though Gelderman has been working on this property for over fifteen years, he has yet to get bored with it or run out of ideas. "What's been interesting about this project is how it's taken shape over the years," he says. "It's one thing to come to a project and change the whole place at once, and I enjoy that process. But it's something else to watch a project evolve and become more beautiful and special over time." ■