

BEAVERTON VALLEYTIMES

Just add water

A water feature can add sparkle to your landscape

BY GAIL PARK

The Beaverton Valley Times, Oct 26, 2006

Nourish the senses with liquid sunshine. Smooth the soul with a melodic trickle. Create a restful refuge with a shimmering fluid lullaby. Evoke a sense of peace and tranquility with a water feature.

As the finishing touch on a landscape or the focal point of the big picture, trickling water is used to welcome and vitalize the spirit of the natural environment.

A good, experienced landscaper will design a water feature which creates a usable living environment that adds a spatter of water. The feature should blend in with the existing surroundings and not stick out like a sore thumb.



Jim Lewis of Lewis Landscape Services in Beaverton, next to one of the water features his company designed and built.

Wondrous ponds, waterfalls, bubbling stones and flowing scenery are becoming more prevalent in our neighborhoods. While water, a powerful conductor of energy, welcomes customers to a business, it embraces nature.

Brilliant water features express a homeowners' style and flair. Sexton Mountain resident Jim Lewis, owner of Lewis Landscaping Services, indulges property owners' playful side by designing and installing the poetic "luxury" feature.

"They are usually the last thing a budget goes into," says the 35-year-old full-service landscape guru. "They look nice and are a status symbol. They can cost a lot of money."

As a foundation of a garden, a water feature invites the creation of a patio, spectacular plantings and ambient lighting. Stone fountains can add charm to an existing landscape. Depending on the dimensions of the feature, the sound of crystal clear flowing water can create a magnificent scene.

"The size of a property should determine the size of the feature. It needs to fit the scale of the home's value. A small space should have a nice, small feature," says Lewis who installs three different styles of features.

Budget often dictates the design.

By nature, a water feature uses water that is piped in and recycled over and over again. In a region that sees a lot of rain, fountains should be show-stoppers. The three types of water features that Lewis' crew installs are:

1. A waterfall with a pond that sometimes contains fish. (The fish need to be protected from local blue herons and raccoons.) The sound of water flows over rocks for an intimate setting. The

gentle splash of water can add natural balance and harmony to one's surroundings.

2. A pondless waterfall with the rushing sound of water. The sight and sound of water is reassuring. It can calm the mind. It is easy to maintain and is child-safe. It can be an oasis for play or meditation on a dismal autumn day.
3. The rock bubbler fountain costs relatively little. Those on a tight budget can enjoy the rewards, especially if synthetic rock is used. A real rock fountain can weigh in the vicinity of 800 pounds. A nicely textured and color cultured rock weighs an average of 100 pounds. These portable bubblers have a relaxing sound.

For very little money, a large, flat basin filled with water that reflects the sky can create a calm energy.

Usually, the bigger the project, the more time is required for installation. A large waterfall could take a week to install. When shifting the layout of the land is necessary to create a natural-looking fall line, it could take two to three weeks to complete.

"The higher the slope the greater the fall," says Lewis who studied business at Oregon State. "Land with a natural slope is easier to work with. Flat is more difficult."

Once the slope is established, a liner and pump are installed.

"The pump is a very important feature. You need a heavy-duty model," insists Lewis. "I use pumps that last a long time. I give a five-year guarantee on all our water features."

Hand-laying of the stones is necessary to create a desirable mosaic look. The placement of the stones determines the water flow and its sound. The job can take many man-hours depending on the size and complexity of the project.

The plants that frame the feature are critical to the design. Mindful choices of trees and shrubs ensure a natural look to the new setting. Creating a balance with the natural surroundings is the key to a spectacular harmonious environment.

"The entire look of an area must be considered," suggests Lewis who employs a team of 16 landscapers. "The plants and trees should not distract the eye."

Planting lilies on the surface of the water helps keep the water clean, but a water feature will require some maintenance. Cleaning and rinsing out the pump is necessary from time to time. Understand the spring cleaning regimen before installing a feature.