

HARDSCAPING UTOPIA

Landscape isn't just verdant vistas; non-plant areas balance out lush

By Lauren Hoyt, The Herald August 12, 2004

When landscape architect Duane Christopher suggested a pink statue of a woman as the centerpiece of a garden at the Woman's Club of Rock Hill, the women were a bit taken back. "We never visualized a large statue being in the garden," said Nancy Bresenham, a master gardener and club member.

But there she is—they named her Victoria—blushing pink among bright pink flowers and varieties of perennials. And she looks great.

The clubhouse's utopic gardens also incorporate other elements among the bushes, trees and flowers. There is a fountain, small birdbaths and two pergolas.

Those elements are called hardscapes by landscape designers, and they're being used in design much more these days, leaving plants green with envy.

"It's really the heart of landscape design", said Christopher, a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects and owner of Duane F. Christopher and Associates in Rock Hill.

Raquel Anderson, owner of Anderson's Red Barn Nursery and garden Center with her husband Tom, said hardscape is considered "anything other than green plant material", such as walkways, retaining walls, rocks in a water feature, surrounds, light fixtures, concrete or brick pavers, pergolas, statues and more. "All the extras in the garden," echoed Bresenham.

And it's the first thing to deal with designing outdoor spaces, Christopher said. "It's really the backbone of your design."

Hardscapes can be used to create height, said Anderson. They can also be used as an accent or to create a focal point said Tommy Crump, landscape designer and co-owner of Rolling Hills Nursery and Landscaping. Those elements are then softened with flowers and plants.



Virgil Hooper and Ren Gobel's courtyard features two fountains, including this wall-mounted one.



The sloping backyard of Henry and Warrenette Sharp's Red Hill home was made into a useful outdoor space through the use of hardscape including brick, wrought iron, greenery, cement and lighting.

Landscape designers along with do-it-yourselfers are using more hardscapes because it has become more available and accessible, said Christopher.

Brick and concrete were the only options for a long time. Now there are pavers in varieties of shades and shapes that allow gardeners to stretch the limits. And there is the possibility to design with a variety of colors and textures.

Also, people are putting more efforts into making their yards outdoor living spaces, so there is the push for more exciting elements. That would include the use of a pergola to define an outdoor space, and fountains or statues to decorate those spaces. Overall, said Christopher, "I see it as a lot more opportunity for creativity."

Mark and Jeanne Woolery of Lake Wylie have used a pergola and lattice to create a structure that has become a focal point in a narrow part of their front yard. "It's basically a sculpture in itself," said Christopher who worked with the couple to design the piece.

At the Rock Hill home of Dr. Henry and Warrenette Sharp, a sloping backyard was transformed into a useful outdoor room. A patio was created with brick and pavers.



Lattice and pergola combine to form a beautiful hardscape at Mark and Susan Wherry's Lake Wylie home.

Photography by
Jim Sturges
The Home



Cement was used to cap the brick and create seating. Iron work was used for the gate and trim, and lights were used throughout the space. What had been a virtually unused space is now a gorgeous patio that transitions to the greenery of the yard.

Brick and pavers were used at Virgil Hooper and Ron Gobel's Rock Hill townhouse to expand a builder-made patio into a larger court yard. Pavers were laid out to form a decorative star in the center. Within the space, too, are fountains – one large with two tiers, another wall mounted, which both add a tranquil sound to the quaint space. Plantings were added to small green spaces to soften those hardscapes.

By using more hardscape, outdoor living spaces have improved upon the days of simple lawn chairs and umbrellas. Now we can think of it in terms of pergolas, pavers and beautiful Victoria.