

## Fountain Finesse

Feb. 9, 2010

After purchasing an elegant stone fountain embellished with intricate and ornate carvings for his back yard, John Ludwig of Denver, Colo., started collecting estimates for the concrete basin. Several estimates later, Ludwig discovered that the cost to pour the concrete basin exceeded his projected budget.

Dave Garton of Lawnchair Watershapes designed a self-skimming basin for his client's new stone fountain. (Courtesy of Lawnchair Watershapes)

Click here for the Slideshow. When Ludwig asked Dave Garton of Lawnchair Watershapes in Lakewood, Colo., to design an inexpensive basin that the owner could build himself, Garton accepted the assignment.

"A common mistake in water feature design is to treat the water basin -- the frame -- as an afterthought," Garton said. "One wouldn't buy a Picasso and then go to Wal-Mart to frame it."

With respect to his client's time and budget constraints, Garton drafted plans for a self-skimming basin that required minimal maintenance and would primarily be built using off-the-shelf materials and borrowed weekend labor. He paid close attention to design and construction details such as elevations, water level and the inclusion of a specialized pump vault to minimize the distractions of mechanical components and to create a virtually flawless view.

Elevations play an important role in the construction of any water feature. In this case, Ludwig's yard sloped steeply toward the back, providing an easy means to drain the fountain and keep it dry during the winter months.

During the initial excavation, Garton's team worked carefully not to disturb the earth where the foundation blocks would sit, to prevent uneven settling. They used the flat edge of an awl, a 4-foot level and a straight board to level the surrounding earth and to ensure that the water level would remain exactly the same beneath all the capstones. The crew also elevated the capstone slightly higher than the patio as a safeguard to prevent stone path material from entering the basin.

The specialized pump vault, a Filtrific T40F designed for remote installation, allowed Garton to locate the mechanicals, including wiring, away from the fountain. Once installed, the only observable part of the unit is a small round top that hides the filter basket.

Ludwig participated in perfecting the final results through his choice of plantings and materials, blending the water feature into the space. The basin complements and showcases the stone fountain, minimizing mechanical distractions from any vantage point, Garton said.

"Over the years, I have found that designing a water element appropriate to the building site creates more client satisfaction," Garton said. "This installation was a good match for the site. Its simplicity and sophisticated mechanical installation will serve this space for many seasons to come."

### Specifications

Designer/Installer: Dave Garton, Lawnchair Watershapes

Contact Information: 303-237-6817 (office), 303-918-8841 (cell), davespeaks@aol.com, www.davegarton.com

Project Location: Denver, Colorado

Components: Firestone 45 mil liner and Filtrific T40F

Crew: 4 men

Time to complete: 2 months (weekends only)

Material cost: \$2,800