

Grand Results in Grand Rapids

March 31, 2010

Nestled on a quiet hilltop 10 minutes from Grand Rapids, Mich., stands the home of Vince and Karen Venezia. The Venezia's spacious home, built away from the road and framed by a colorful landscape, is enveloped by a naturally sloping hill leading around the house to the wooded back yard.

before

after

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Vince loves koi and he and Karen enjoy spending time outdoors, so in Spring 2009, the Venezias contacted Jack Huisman at Landscapes Plus Inc. to redesign their back yard.

Huisman and Vince established a long history together, since Landscapes Plus installed the Venezia's existing 16-foot-by-14-foot pond and 20-foot stream in 2003. After collecting many koi fish over the years, the Venezias recognized that their 2-foot-deep pond was too small and shallow for their growing koi fish population.

The natural flagstone patio proved inadequate for the Venezia's entertainment needs and was difficult to clean. The pond also sat partially covered by the shade of the large trees, and Karen wanted to grow more flowering water plants, especially lotus.

After spending time with the Venezias to understand their vision for the back yard, Huisman created a new design. It increased the pond size, incorporated an upper pool in the sun to grow lotus and connected the upper and lower ponds with a series of cascading waterfalls and natural-looking streams.

Huisman suggested adding a built-in fireplace to cover an existing concrete retaining wall that was an eyesore and an expanded patio using a concrete paver that looked like natural flagstone. The Venezias loved the concepts and approved the renovation.

A 3-man crew began the project in May by dismantling the existing pond, stream and patio and salvaging as many of the materials as possible for the new pond. Because of the limited access caused by the hill adjoining the house, the crew did most of the work without equipment, relying on hand digging and wheelbarrows to move materials.

"Inaccessibility proved to be the most challenging aspect of the job," Huisman said. His crew enlarged the pond to 22 feet by 21 feet with a new depth of about 4 feet.

Nearly 45 feet away from the main pond, the Venezias back yard included an upper lotus pool elevated almost 12 feet above the main pool. The team used a meandering stream with multiple cascades and waterfalls to connect the two pools.

An elegant faux flagstone patio now borders the new pond and extends to the back of the house. The 16-foot-tall outdoor fireplace, built at the hill slope, creates a focal point that furthers the value of an ideal outdoor living space. Add to it the colors of the plant varieties around the patio and the pond, and the colorful koi swimming in the pond, and the Venezias reported being pleased with the results.

"I am a meticulous guy, and I put a fair amount of demand on Jack," Vince said. "I can't say enough about how pleased I am with the outcome."

Specifications

Designer/Installer: Jack Huisman, Landscapes Plus Inc.

Contact Information: Hudsonville, Michigan, 616-669-6240, www.landscapesplisonline.com

Project Location: Ada, Michigan

Components: two EasyPro Pro Series skimmers with filter brushes, two EasyPro Pro Series Aquafalls biological filters, two EasyPro TH400 4900 gph pumps, one EasyPro bottom drain, 100 feet of 3-inch flex PVC pipe, 100 feet of 2-inch flex PVC pipe, 2,500 sq. ft. of 45 mil EPDM rubber liner, nine underwater LED lights, 25 tons of Michigan fieldstone boulders (8 inches to more than 40 inches), 5 tons of 1 to 2-inch washed stone and 12 29-ounce cans of Gun foam.

Time to complete: 475 hours over six weeks

Project Cost: \$39,000