

World's Largest Disappearing Waterfall

Water garden expert and designer Rick Bartel's work was cut out for him.

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A flat piece of land served as the foundation for a flowing water feature designed by Rick Bartel. Water garden expert and designer Rick Bartel's work was cut out for him: Take a flat piece of land, and create the illusion of a hillside in its place, complete with cascading waterfalls. This was no small feat, as it called for a significant alteration of the visual appearance of an existing church property in Chattanooga, Tenn.

For more than 30 years, the church served as the home for a local denomination. Upon moving to a new place of worship, the property was purchased by a congregation that wanted the entire community to know about the change. They hired Bartel and his flair for water feature design to accomplish their goal.

The most challenging aspect of this project was the flat surface. It lacked any contouring. With the recent popularity of disappearing, or pondless, water features, however, Bartel formulated a plan. This water feature had to be significant in size to make an impact on the community. He wanted to make the project highly visible, and it required power and aesthetic qualities to be worthy of its location.

The water feature took five weeks to construct and has served as the backdrop for multiple weddings. To this end, Bartel and a crew of six workers created a subtle rolling hilltop. He calls it the "world's largest disappearing waterfall" with research through worldwide business contacts, including National Association of Pond Professionals, to back his claim.

Instead of a plain surface covered with dirt and dead grass, visitors can admire a 120-foot-long streaming water feature that encompasses an area of 7,200 square feet and weighs in at more than 529 tons. This structure sits at a major traffic intersection and is difficult to ignore. Every hour, 82,000 gallons of water circulate over a 32-foot-wide, multi-leveled and split-tiered complex cascade waterfall.

Bartel said the project has been well-received by the community at large. The water feature has served as the backdrop for numerous wedding ceremonies.

SPECIFICATIONS:

Designer/Installer: Rick Bartel, primary instructor and program administrator, Savio Water Feature Institute.

Contact information: P.O. Box 9604, East Ridge, TN 37412

Project location: "The Crossings" church, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Construction: The entire project was constructed using the RISE method developed by Bartel and taught exclusively through the Savio Water Feature Institute Seminars. RISE stands for Random, Irregular, Spontaneous, Erratic — a natural rock and boulder placement technique. The system's reservoir measures 40 feet wide and 30 feet from front to back, and it tapers to an overall depth of 4 feet..

Components: Features five Savio Pond Free Waterfall Wells and Savio Pond Free Extensions. A Savio Electronic Solenoid Water Level Sensor ensures a completely automated maintenance-free system.

Overall cost: \$97,512

Time to complete: Five weeks

World's Largest Waterfall Part II