



Cottage Gardens

By Ashley McCredie

Creates Beauty



You might customize your home's interior by installing granite countertops, replacing your floors with hardwood or selecting special décor for a room. But did you ever think about customizing your landscape?

That's where Cottage Gardens comes into the picture. Cottage Gardens is a family business that creates a masterpiece with plants for each of their customers by introducing colors, layers, textures and heights into landscape.

"The landscape can be a real retreat for people – a 'staycation,'" said Jon George, owner of Cottage Gardens.

Cottage Gardens isn't the kind of landscaping design company that plants "the same-old three shrubs and a tree" for each client. Instead, the experts at Cottage Gardens take time to listen and find out what the customer wants and what will grow well in their location using plants that are easy to maintain. They can also build any type of garden imaginable, like a lush tropical oasis, an artistic Mediterranean look complete with water-savvy plants or a colorful mixture of blooming plants inspired by Monet.

The Cottage Gardens experience starts with a walk-through consultation at the customer's home or office. The customer shares their desires and the Cottage Gardens employees use their plant knowledge and creativeness to draft the perfect design.

"It was a very educational experience," said Vicki Santello, a Cottage Gardens' customer since 2005.

No matter what design style the customer wants, Cottage Gardens will find the plants and design that works for that space.

"I like the southwestern and tropical look, and they wound up giving me both," said Jo Ann Mallory-Cross, another customer who selected a cobalt blue vase for the centerpiece of her garden.

Then the client will walk through a realistic, 3-D digital layout of what the finished garden will look like using photographs taken during the consultation. From there changes can be made on the screen until the customer is completely satisfied.

"We make sure everything is set up for success," said Jon George.

After a plan is decided on, work begins quickly with extensive soil preparation and plant placement. But Cottage Gardens' care doesn't stop just because the garden is finished. Every customer is given follow up complete with care instructions for their garden and a guarantee on each plant.

Its customized, one-on-one approach is not the only thing unique about Cottage Gardens. The company's origins are also a bit unusual.

Jon went to high school in Gainesville and during college had the opportunity to study in France, Hong Kong and Japan.

"Gardening has always been a passion of mine, and I've been able to study gardens all over the world," said Jon.

In France, Jon spent many days at Monet's garden observing combinations of light and color. In Japan, he was inspired by

the simplicity and use of negative space. He also ran a gardening program for rehabilitating addicts in Hong Kong that introduced him to some of the therapeutic uses of gardening.

Jon returned to the United States 15 years ago and started Cottage Gardens. Today, they do more than 100 projects a year – including subdivision entrances, the Progress Center in Alachua, and Perkins restaurant on Newberry Road to name a few. Cottage Gardens also continues to make many residential clients happy by giving them their own refuge to escape to.

"My vision for Gainesville is to bring in color and design concepts from all over the world," Jon said.

While Cottage Gardens has many enthusiastic clients, Vicki Santello was a particular case of just how much Cottage Gardens can change someone's life.

About three years ago Santello was involved in a near fatal bicycle accident. Being confined to her home for approximately eight months, she needed a place to get away and not feel restricted – a garden. Cottage Gardens came in and built her an extraordinary garden.

"The garden really was a great source of relief for me from a mental point," said Santello. "It was one piece of my life that was beautiful, peaceful and soothing."

Santello used Cottage Gardens' services to maintain the garden and still does to this day.

"I feel like they are a part of my home," Santello said about Cottage Gardens and its staff.

Thus far, Cottage Gardens has been serving Alachua county residents and businesses since 1995. And with its dedicated owner, creative designs and supreme customer service it's safe to say that Cottage Gardens will continue to bring great landscaping to the area for years to come.

To learn more about the range of services offered by Cottage Gardens, go online to www.TheCottageGardener.com or call (352) 333-9661.

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