



# COTTAGE GARDENS DESIGNS

Turn the Unusable Into the *Extraordinary*

■ ■ By Caitlyn Finnegan  
■ ■ Photos by Jon George

With some creative and good planning, turn your outdoor space into a personalized living oasis.

**H**ow people choose to decorate their landscaping can speak volumes about personal taste. Luckily for Gainesville residents, Cottage Gardens owner Jon George specializes in knowing just what it takes to make a great first impression.

Using gardener's intuition and knowledge gained from years of studying horticulture abroad, George is well-versed in bringing out the best in an outdoor space. By combining a variety of colors, textures, structures and heights, Cottage Gardens brings customized style to each of its projects. From a water-thrifty Mediterranean oasis to perfectly symmetrical French formal gardens, if you can dream it, George's team can help you make it a reality.

"We don't focus on making your typical landscape of a couple shrubs and trees," George said. "We want to collaborate with the landowner and help them to create a personalized landscape that reflects their needs."

George's staff takes several measures to make sure their work is a success. As the company's scope of projects continues to expand and develop, George and his staff test dozens of plants to find colorful and interesting varieties that would be a refreshing addition to any landscape. Examples of the company's work can be found everywhere from a 100-acre farm in Alachua, to the southwestern landscape at The Mission church complex, to manicured residential developments around town.

A longtime Gainesville resident, Jon started Cottage Gardens in 1995 after choosing to travel abroad in college through garden meccas like France, Japan and Hong Kong. His studies led to an appreciation of simplicity, color and the psychological effects of having a space to relax.

"One of my biggest goals is to create spaces where people can take refuge from daily life," he said.

For Dr. Stephen Rothstein, a local doctor and avid gardener, an escape from stress at work translated into a beautiful

English-style garden in his back yard.

"I always had an interest in developing the space to use for gardening and entertaining," Rothstein said. "Cottage Gardens helped to bring a different perspective on what it could be."

The space was a bit of a challenge for the team at first. There was no patio, a fence and only a blank canvas of grass with which to work. They went to work planning with a one-on-one consultation outlining what Rothstein would like the space to include. Then a 3-D rendering of what the finished landscape would look like was developed. They decided on an English cottage-style garden with plenty of natural landscaping and a pond structure with a waterfall.

"I told them the basics of what I wanted, and they did the rest," Rothstein said. "The patio came out beautiful, and the pond was exactly as I had envisioned it. They are artists at what they do."

What began as an unusable yard was transformed into a versatile outdoor space in a matter of eight weeks. An expansive stone patio with capstone seating overlooks a pond and waterfall surrounded by meticulous landscaping and pathways. While the space was designed professionally, George wanted it to turn into something Rothstein could manage himself and make his own.

"Once the construction was complete, Jon gave me plenty of information on what I need to do to keep the space looking beautiful," Rothstein said.

Now with the first phase of development behind him, Rothstein is ready to tackle another unused part of his yard. Already thinking up possibilities of what it could be used for, he can't imagine using anyone other than the Cottage Garden's team.

"Jon hires the cream of the crop and it is truly a pleasure to work with him and his team," he said. "I wouldn't trust my yard to anyone else." ■ ■

*To learn more about the services offered by Cottage Gardens, please visit <http://www.thecottagewardener.com>.*

