

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

Lamorinda Weekly Volume 06 Issue 6 Wednesday, May 23, 2012

Cairns in the Garden

By Sophie Braccini

If you're looking for a fun way to entertain your guests (or your family) during a sunny summer afternoon, look no further. A cairn building party is a great way to exercise creativity. We are not talking about a 10-foot-high dry stone building here, just small stone formations, hidden or in plain sight, that gently enhance a landscape. That's the activity Lafayette resident Stu Selland recently proposed to his guests. They had a great time, and as a token of appreciation, they left their ephemeral creations in his garden.

"I was looking for an activity to entertain my friends from my 'Close to Home' hiking group," explains Selland who is a photographer by profession, as well as a gardener and volleyball coach. "Like in photography, I like to reveal the extraordinary in the ordinary. I wanted something that would have them experience that concept." When he saw a video clip with children building little cairns along a river bank, he knew he had his activity.

Cairns of all shapes, sizes and purposes have graced the earth since the prehistoric times: Man-made dry rock tumuli (mounds of earth and stones) have been used as grave markers or for religious purposes. They range in size from the tiny pile



Stu Selland in his back yard

Photos Sophie Braccini

of a few decorative rocks to entire hills. In modern America, they are used to mark trails, especially in mountain regions. Depending on how they're built, they can be short lived or last millennia. "What I had in mind were small sculptures that

would take just a few minutes to build," says Selland.

Selland bought a large amount of small rocks of all shapes at Diamond K in Lafayette. All his guests had to do was pick the ones they liked and try their hand at it.

"A delightful exercise in slowing down," says guest Renate Woodbury. "The rounded river rocks Stu had available can be hard to stack - looking for that perfect connection between one rock and another requires a fragile balance." ... continued on page D8

