

Published November 5th, 2014

Award-Winning Lamorinda Garden Designs

By Cathy Dausman



Sweepstakes Award winner for Sustainable Landscape: Kathy Dickinson says her yard has "a very natural setting." Photos courtesy Garden Lights Landscape Development trees," Dickinson explained, and it has an overabundance of gophers and moles. The family's first attempt at landscaping was to plant vegetation the deer wouldn't eat.

"That was a fool's choice," she laughed, having learned since that deer will eat practically anything. They were unsure whether to simply give up or to install fencing. Dickinson asked Lambert to infuse their yard with color and protect their oaks.

He planted a combination of native and drought-tolerant Mediterranean-style plants.

Lambert also installed a series of rock walls to prevent slides. The result, Dickinson said, was a "more stable" back yard; one which her family is "very pleased to use."

"We use the [sunny] lower part to sit and read," she said.

Darlene Davidge calls her award-winning yard "really unique." The yard won a first place in the Small Residential Design/Build installation category. Her first attempt to remodel a portion of her yard was about eight years ago. Davidge, an artist who works in oils, mosaics and ceramics, had already built and designed an outdoor fountain and bird cage. She wanted to give their yard an outdoor living room feel, and gave Lambert "a crummy space" and free reign.

Lambert incorporated the fountain and bird cage in his project, and installed a fire pit and retaining wall. The three open areas became an outdoor living room, bedroom and dining room. Furniture colors of turquoise and orange play tricks in the outdoor light, and while the top of the fire

Beauty abounds in Lamorinda gardens; the East Bay chapter of the California Landscape Contractors Association says it's so. Lamorindan Steve Lambert of Garden Lights Landscaping Development entered six landscape projects for consideration - five in Orinda and one in Lafayette - and garnered a total of seven awards, from second place to Sweepstakes in the categories of large, small or custom residential design and building, special effects lighting, and sustainable landscape.

CLCA awards are handed out in 15 categories, from landscape design construction and maintenance on both residential and commercial properties. Each project is reviewed and judged anonymously by industry experts from outside the area.

Lambert is most proud of his Sustainable Landscape award. "This was the first time I've ever entered a project in this category," he said. But Lambert is no stranger to the contest criteria; two years ago he helped judge the CLCA North Coast Chapter submissions. Lamorinda Weekly spoke with three of the owners who won the contractor's awards.

Kathy Dickinson learned just recently that her project won the Sweepstakes Award. Her family has lived in their hillside Orinda residence for 15 years; she said her outdoors is a "pretty challenging environment" because of the wind.

"It's a very natural setting with about 20 oak

pit and retaining wall looks like marble, it is actually concrete. Davidge credits fellow artist and friend Murphy Adams with her suggestion to outline the fire pit arch with mosaic tile.

The Davidge family, which includes grown children, finds the garden area a peaceful sanctuary. The splash of the fountain, the sights and sounds of the finches and humming birds, the smell of flowers and the sizzle of dinner on the grill makes their new yard a place they don't ever want to leave. "It's almost a problem," she admits wryly, calling Lambert "incredibly talented."

When Emma Bishopp's family purchased their mid-century Lafayette ranch house 12 years ago it had been completely remodeled inside and out. But Bishopp hoped to update the yard by giving it a Moroccan feel, minus anything that might make the look too dated. "A lot of landscapers have a style [of their own]," Bishopp explained. "I wanted my own...individual look."

Bishopp knew Lambert after having worked with him previously and having seen his work elsewhere. The finished product, which won first place in the large residential installation category was a complete hard and soft backyard re-landscaping surrounding a pool. It contains both a fire pit and a fireplace. Lambert began by taking out some diseased trees, which opened up the available space. He removed a play structure, installed stone bench seating around an outdoor fireplace kitchen, and added a patio around the pool. But Bishopp put her foot down when Lambert suggested gas torches for low-light ambiance near the fire pit. "I have three girls," Bishopp said. "I wanted spotlights and nanny cams!"

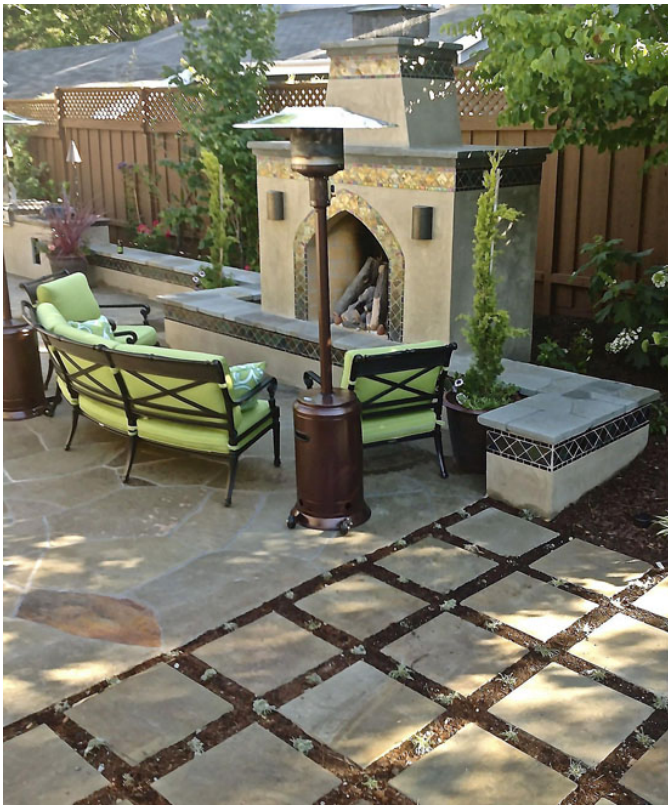
The garden improvements have radically changed the way the family uses their back yard, Bishopp said. She adds that Lambert was "lovely to work with."

"It's nice to support a local family [who does] quality work," she said.

Garden Lights Landscape & Pool Development
1 Northwood Drive, Suite #7, Orinda, CA 94563
Office (925) 254-4797 Fax (925) 254-3211
email: office@gardenlightslandscape.com



The inconspicuous fencing almost disappears visually but still keeps the deer at bay.



First Place winner, Large Residential Installation: Subdued Moroccan influences show themselves in the Bishopp residence outdoors. Glassy tiles, a material Lambert's crew found, add sheen to the vertical surfaces.



First Place winner, Small Residential Design/Build Installation: Turquoise mosaics and lime green umbrella and pillows enliven the horizontal surfaces in Darlene Davidge's yard. Although it appears to be marble, it is actually concrete.

Reach the reporter at: cathy.d@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA