

The joy of living outdoors

Ferndale landscapers create woodland garden

By MARTY HAIR
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Just 2½ years after they moved into their Tudor-style house in Ferndale, Brian Rinkel and his partner Dan Jones have turned their backyard into a secluded woodland garden.

The time — and more than \$20,000 they put into it — turned out to be a smart investment because the garden is where they live.

Sure, they had the know-how. The couple run B&D Garden Design Inc. But, with their day jobs, overhauling their own yard was no picnic.

About this series

This summer, we're looking at how metro Detroiters are landscaping, relaxing and entertaining in ways that turn a backyard into an oasis. Want to tell us about yours? E-mail Marty Hair at mhair@freepress.com. Don't forget to send photographs.

To read the first installment, go to www.freep.com.

"We'd come home and relax and do the same thing," says Rinkel.

He, 35, and Jones, 43, enjoy the deck and patios and eat dinner outdoors whenever weather allows. They use the backyard when they have friends over for meals and parties. They look out at it in the winter, when they say the conifers and design keep it interesting.

As part of our summer series on backyards and how people are investing time, money and creativity in them, Rinkel and Jones talked about their garden and environs.

Where they live: A leafy street in Ferndale. They share the home and yard with two Boston terriers, Bailey and Halle, and a dachshund, Abby.

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STEPHEN MCGEE/Detroit Free Press

Brian Rinkel, above, and his partner Dan Jones have created a woodland garden in their backyard.

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The backyard features a patio that looks like it was dropped into a lush woodland setting of perennials and trees.

What was there when they moved in: Mulch, some plants and a level 42-foot-wide by 60-foot-long area for the backyard planting area. Lofty oaks and maples caught Brian's fancy when they were house shopping.

What they added: Gradation changes. From the rear of the house, a two-level deck holds the hot tub. A reflecting pool splashes soothingly into a koi-filled pond. Around the pond are three rectangular seating areas.

Planted areas are mulched and stone paths wind through shade perennials like hostas and brunnera. The garden has uplights that shine high into the trees. There are also antique iron fencing, driftwood and chimney pots. Large boulders are sunken halfway in the soil.

What Dan likes: The pond, which glows with underwater lighting at night, and woodland plants like jack-in-the-pulpits and ferns. The angular hard surfaces amid the naturalistic plantings make it look like "a man-made patio plopped down in the woods," he says.

What Brian likes: The sheltering canopy of trees, even though they drop leaves, flowers and branches that require clean up. He's big on

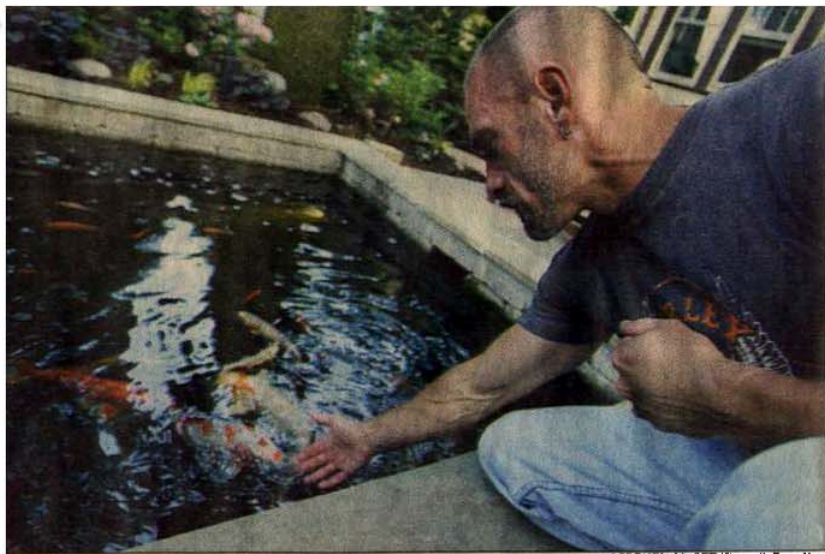
plants with wild foliage, like a chartreuse dracaena and a banana plant in containers, and hostas with eye-popping leaves.

How they think gardening is changing: Better designed items like outdoor furniture are available in wider price ranges. More people — even ones who aren't that into gardening — have higher landscape expectations.

Their design advice: Take cues from a home's exterior style when designing the garden. A cool contemporary landscape design, they explain, would be out of place around their classic Tudor.

What they're doing right now: Getting everything set for Saturday's Ferndale garden tour, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Their garden will be one of eight featured. Tickets (\$10) and a plant sale will be at the corner of West Oakridge and Liver-
nois.

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Dan Jones of Ferndale feeds the fish in the koi-filled pond. His yard will be featured in Saturday's Ferndale Garden Tour.