

# From The Ground

The Burnett's Landscaping Newsletter

Winter 2005

# Up



## Client Profile: Vivien Blackford

One of the most basic challenges of landscape design is determining the vision. With a clear vision, a garden can become something special – a space that touches the heart and soul. Without a clear vision, a garden may be nothing more than a collection of plants.

Vivien Blackford struggled for years to develop a vision for her garden. “I did not have a complete vision. I needed someone to help me through the process.”

The area in which Vivien wished to create a garden was important. It was right outside her expansive kitchen window, a space that occupied the visual center of her home. The slope of the area was conducive to a water feature, and Vivien knew early on that she wanted a meandering stream as the dominant feature. But she needed help working out the mechanics of the stream, and guidance in determining the relationships of the other components of the garden. How would the space look and feel?

Finding a design professional to assist her in developing the garden was foremost in her mind, but the major question Vivien asked herself was this: “How much do you want this to be

out of your own mind and heart, versus the designer’s mind and heart?” She commissioned an internationally recognized landscape designer, only to discover that the designer was more interested in realizing her own vision than the client’s.

Finally, a local landscape architect recommended Burnett’s Landscaping, and Vivien soon contacted Bill Ross, Senior Landscape Designer. Water features are Bill’s specialty, and Vivien would need the help of an expert to create the water feature she had in mind.

**“Vivien knew early on that she wanted a meandering stream as the dominant feature.”**

Another contractor had already placed much of the stonework that would form the foundation for the stream. Bill’s role would be to hammer out the details of the construction. One of the more challenging elements of the design was Vivien’s desire to route the stream under a portion of the granite block walkway that led from the house to the patio.

An entire section of walkway was removed, modified, and replaced to allow the stream to run unimpeded.

Worried at first that this critical feature could not be built, Vivien was delighted when Bill arrived at a solution. “Bill was simply amazing to work

**Continued on page 2...**



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### Inside this issue...

**Sudden Oak Death**  
**Meet Heather Cassidy!**  
**Hiring a Contractor**  
**Plant Pick: Helleborus**  
**...and much more!**

# Client Profile:

...continued from page 1.

with. He was extremely adaptable.”

The finished product is a magnificent tribute to Vivien’s dedication to her vision. Even on a windy, frigid December morning, the garden’s emotional warmth is evident. The streambed meanders down the hill, disappearing here and there around a bend or behind a boulder, pulling you along its length and enticing you to hop from stone to stone. Halfway down the hill, the streambed snakes under an informal bridge created with a flat slab of granite retrieved from an

old foundation.

At the base of the hill, the stream curls around and embraces the patio. A

**“The streambed meanders down the hill, disappearing here and there around a bend or behind a boulder...”**

stately pergola supported by four crisp white columns crowns the garden and echoes the architecture of the house. A pair of step-stones emerge from a pool

near the edge of the patio, serving as a whimsical invitation to hop across the water. Vivien’s husband, Bill Cuddy, has been inspired by the garden as well, and is now considering the variety and placement of trees around the garden.

Vivien offers this advice to those preparing to embark on their own quest for a special outdoor space. “Start early. I waited too long. Spring was here before I knew it.”

## Ants in Your Plants Sudden Oak Death

Unless you’re a nursery or landscape professional, you probably haven’t heard of *Phytophthora ramorum*, the fungus responsible for “sudden oak death”. For those of us in the “green” business though, it is very big news. Over the course of the past year, growers have lost millions of dollars, several states have issued plant quarantines, and landscapers and garden centers across the U.S. have found it difficult or impossible to obtain certain species of plants.

For several years, plant scientists knew that *Phytophthora* was responsible for the rapid death of oak trees, especially in Northern California.

But then, in early 2003, the disease was discovered on Camellias in a large nursery in Southern California. Federal and state regulators were forced to order nurseries to destroy infected plant material, and many states (including Connecticut) followed by banning plants from affected California nurseries. One nursery in California was forced to destroy 200,000 camellias. Some time later, a federal regulation mandated that all California growers be certified as free of *Phytophthora* before they could ship plants to market. While certifications were underway, certain species of plants became increasingly difficult to obtain, especially some varieties of

rhododendron and viburnum.

*Phytophthora* was just recently discovered in Connecticut, and last September, another large nursery in California was forced to destroy thousands of plants to eradicate the fungus. As growers continue to grapple with *Phytophthora*, it’s almost a certainty that some varieties of plants will be difficult to obtain. The design staff at Burnett’s Landscaping is keeping abreast of developments in the industry and can help advise you on wise plant choices during the design process. Give us a call!

## Meet Heather Cassidy!

Heather is a Salem native, and like many other members of the team here at Burnett’s Landscaping, she’s had some interesting job experiences before coming to work for us. For two years, Heather reported for work at a bakery at 4:30 am and made donuts (her favorite: jelly!) She also

performed some community service work for Americorps in Denver. Since joining Burnett’s Landscaping in May 2002, Heather has become our “Swiss army knife.” Her job description doesn’t begin to describe the wide range of duties she performs. During a typical day on the job, you might

find Heather installing a new landscape. Or, you may find her in the office answering phones, working on payroll, ordering materials, or doing a little accounting work. In her free time, Heather enjoys being outdoors, skiing, swimming, traveling, or just hanging out with the family.

# Hiring a Contractor: The Importance of Insurance

Mr. and Mrs. Homeowner decide to hire "Joe Schmo Landscaping" to build a new patio. Joe seems like a nice guy, but even better, his estimate is considerably lower than the other contractors that estimated the job. On the second day of the job, one of Joe's workers drops a 75-pound slab of bluestone on his foot. The worker will be unable to work for several months, and may never walk normal again. Several days later, Mr. and Mrs. Homeowner discover that the worker has filed suit against them for his injury. It turns out that Joe Schmo Landscaping's estimate was signifi-

cantly lower because Joe was neither insured nor licensed. And since Joe is a small contractor with few assets, the worker's lawyer takes aim at Mr. and

**A professional contractor will not use *your* home liability insurance for protection.**

Mrs. Homeowner, who have homeowners insurance.

The bottom line: a professional contractor will not use your home li-

ability insurance for protection. Any contractor you select should readily provide you with proof of liability and workman's compensation insurance. Liability and workman's compensation insurance is very expensive. Consequently, some contractors may be tempted to operate without insurance. Our advice: be wary of the low estimate. Ask for proof of insurance and the contractor's state license number. Burnett's Landscaping is fully insured and licensed (CT License # 533503) and we will be happy to provide you with our insurance information.

## News and Notes

For the fourth year, the staff of Burnett's Landscaping participated in the "Santa Anonymous" program sponsored by the United Community and Family Services of Norwich. We contributed 20 pairs of boots to the program, which in turn distributed over 700 pairs of boots to children throughout the Norwich area.

Heather Cassidy, Crew Helper, is currently donating her weekends to work on a Habitat for Humanity project in Oakdale. The house is almost complete. So far, Heather has helped construct concrete walkways and has installed insulation.

Angela Lytle, Designer, recently completed the training and exams necessary to become a Connecticut Accredited Nursery Professional. By virtue of her outstanding test score, Angela will be presented with a certificate and pin during the Connecticut Nursery and Landscape Association Winter Symposium.

## Plant Pick: Helleborus Orientalis (Heh-LEB-o-rus)

Here's a hardy perennial that's evergreen, deer-resistant, highly-adaptable to different light and soil conditions, and produces beautiful flowers that bloom in late winter/early spring -- sometimes when snow still covers the ground! Known as Lenten Rose in the north and Christmas rose in the southern states, Helleborus is a 12-24" tall, clump-forming perennial native to Europe and Asia. There are fifteen species of Helleborus, but the hybrids are the varieties most commonly available and easiest to grow. Flower colors

vary depending on the variety. "Royal Heritage" flowers emerge white, then turn to red, and finally become nearly black. "Ivory Prince" flowers emerge white and gradually turn a unique lime green. Hellebores are woodland plants and prefer shade to part shade. All varieties prefer a moist, well-drained soil. Slugs will occasionally munch on Hellebores, otherwise, they have few insect and disease problems. For late winter color and excitement in a shady spot of the garden, plant some Hellebores!

### From the Ground Up

The quarterly newsletter for Burnett's Landscaping Clients

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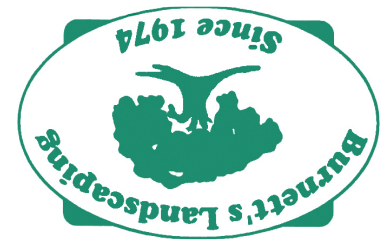


## Winter is for...Landscape Design!

Spring might seem like a distant dream, but now is the time to start thinking about your spring landscape needs. Our design staff spends much of the winter creating new designs for spring installation. The winter months provide the perfect opportunity to work out the details of a new garden. Keep in mind that spring is by far our busiest season; waiting until spring to start the design process can mean a long lead-time until installation. It's never too early to start thinking about your spring landscape. Why choose us for your design needs? The Burnett's Landscaping design staff has nearly 40 years of combined design experience. **Call (860) 859-3100 and speak to one of our designers today!**



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