

AUTUMN 2010

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# At The Lake<sup>®</sup>

GENEVA LAKES AREA MAGAZINE

## PORTFOLIO

FALL COLORS: THE YEAR'S LAST, LOVELIEST SMILE

## ZEN AT 2,500 FEET

BALLOONING OVER GENEVA LAKE

# Bringing Back the Beauty:

VAN ZELST REVIVES AN HISTORIC LANDSCAPE

Upgrading an existing landscape can be a challenge, but the rewards can also be tremendous. In 2007, Van Zelst, Inc. was selected to renovate the landscape of an historic Lake Geneva home. The award-winning results breathed new life into the landscape while honoring the existing environment, established plants and owners' preferences.

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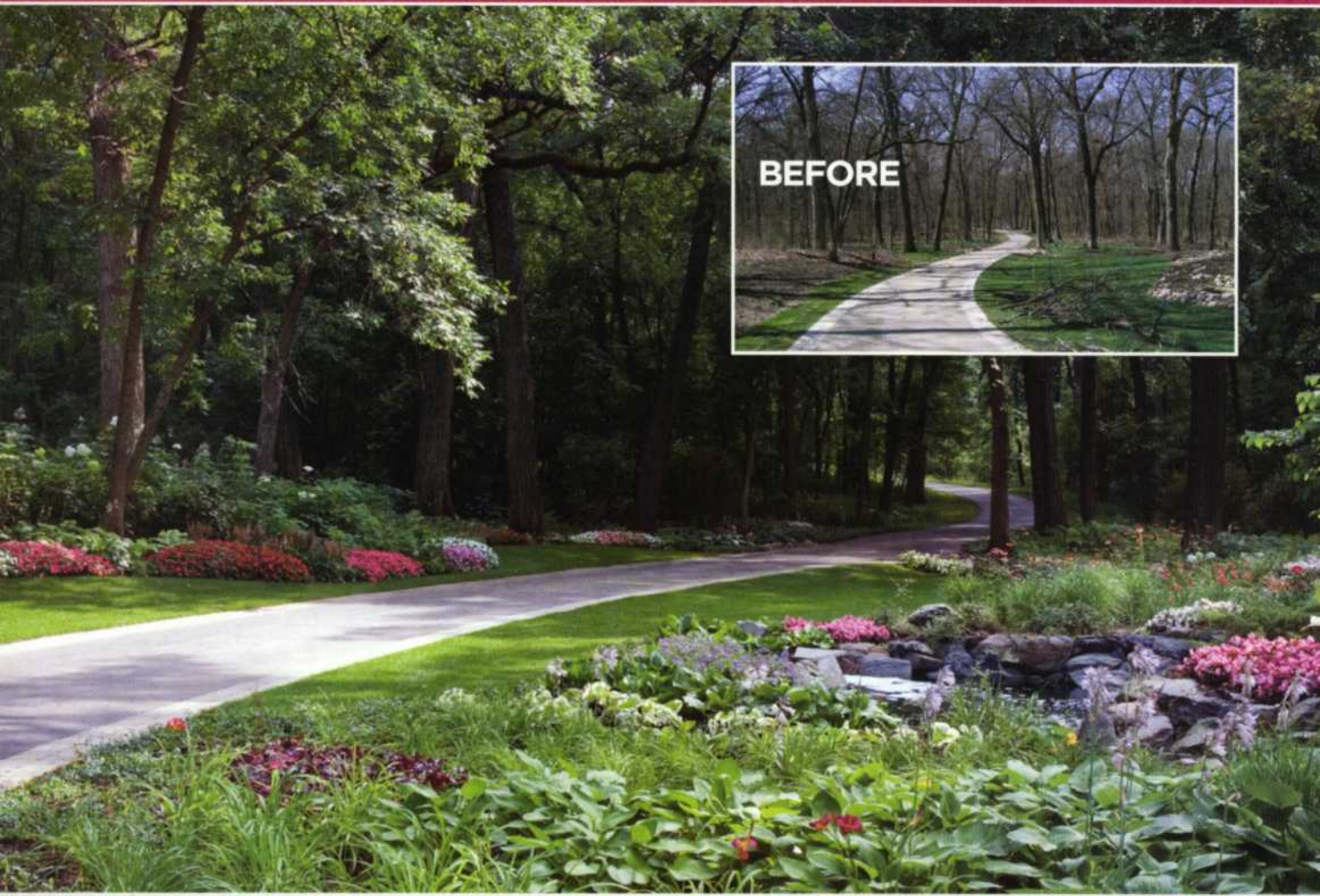
#### PROJECT INFORMATION

Allegheny private residence on the  
southeastern shore of Geneva Lake.

PHOTOS BY LINDA OYAMA BRYAN



Before renovation, beds near the creek were overrun by ground cover, hostas, and naturalized ferns. In the redesign, these plants have been thinned out and complemented by a variety of shade-loving perennials and annual flowers. Interesting shapes, sizes, textures and colors make every area of the garden visually stimulating.





Most of the old trees and expansive lawn remain. Boxwoods, raised beds of colorful annuals and perennials, and footpaths add charm and a sense of enduring beauty to the landscape.



COURTESY OF THE GENEVA LAKE MUSEUM.

The opportunity to update an established property in Lake Geneva, with great history and a beautiful site situated between the lake and natural woodland, can be a challenge and delight for a landscape architect. In 2007 David Van Zelst and his team were given just that—a stunning home with acres of lawn, hundreds of shrubs and thousands of perennials, all ready to be looked at with fresh eyes.

The Van Zelst team of landscape architects, horticulturalists, and stonemasons went to work, ultimately earning a 2009 Gold Award for Residential Construction and a 2010 Gold Award for Residential Maintenance by the Illinois Landscape Contractors Association.

The estate, named “Allegheny,” was designed by Howard Van Doren Shaw and built for Lewis Myers in 1925. It has been in its current owners’ family since 1945. While the landscape has been lovingly cared for, little had been done to restore or renew the property until Van Zelst Inc. was brought in. Van Zelst was selected for its reputation as a leading full-service landscape architectural design/build firm recognized throughout Chicago, the North Shore and the Lake Geneva and Williams Bay area.

From the start of the engagement, the Van Zelst team made a concerted effort to build on what the family already loved, rather than tearing everything out and starting from scratch. The landscape had marvelous potential, which the Van Zelst team brought to life by clearing away invading buckthorn, updating structural and hardscape

elements, and repairing a drainage way through the perennial garden.

Mature, native plants were kept wherever possible, and the overall flow of the property was improved with the addition of stonework and masses of colorful perennials that provide year-round interest. Van Zelst also renewed and repaired existing hardscape elements and addressed structural issues. One example of this is a creekbed that had grown in volume over the years and effectively divided the garden in two. The Van Zelst team placed stone blocks over the water to act as a bridge connecting the two halves. They also created a new water feature to showcase a beloved bronze statue. The finished look is a cohesive design that radiates color, flow and connection.

The cultivation of natural beauty seems to be a tradition at the Allegheny estate. The original owner, Lewis Myers, was an avid orchid grower whose collection of more than 200 rare specimens on the property gained international attention. Now, after allowing the new landscape to mature, the current owners have made Allegheny a stop on the Lake Geneva Garden Club House and Garden Cruise. In 2009 more than 700 visitors gave it rave reviews. ▲



## SNAP THIS TAG

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See page 8 for instructions.

**AT LEFT TOP:** The winding entry drive is now a beautiful welcome for the homeowners and arriving guests. Incorporating a variety of colors, textures and heights, generous plantings and natural stone add visual interest beneath the trees. **BOTTOM:** The pond and waterfall showcase the family’s beloved bronze statue, sculpted from a photograph of the homeowner as a child. Surrounded by shrubs and perennials, the outdoor art personalizes the landscape and makes it fully unique. Due to its location at the property’s low point, pond drainage presented a challenge. French drains were installed to catch water flowing from the house, drive and lawns.