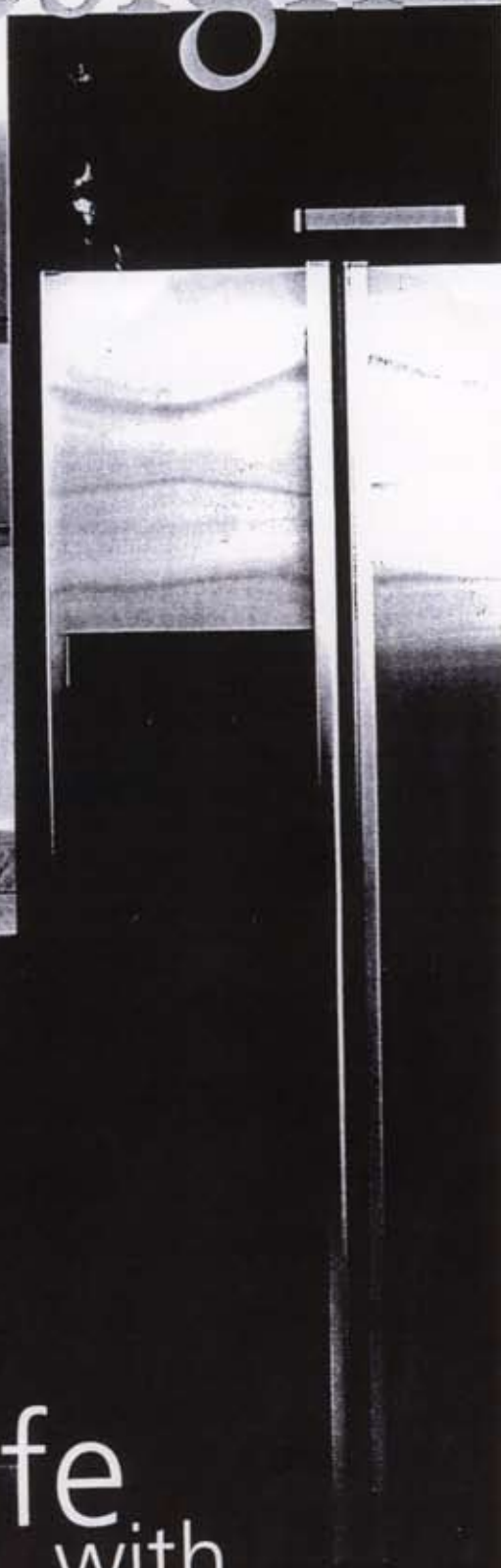


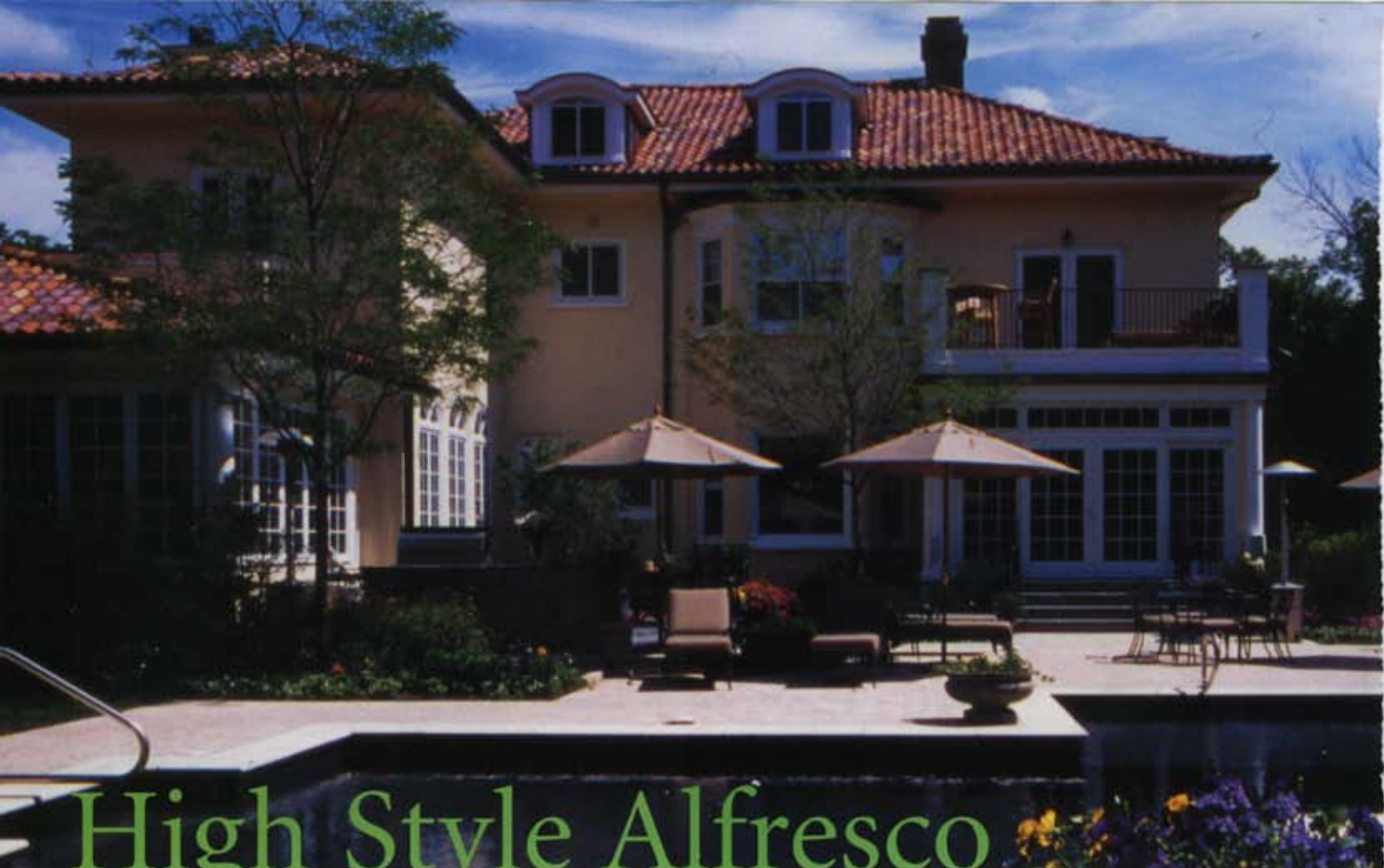
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**68 High Style Alfresco**  
A Mediterranean inspired  
garden in Kenilworth

Life  
with  
Style



# High Style Alfresco

In Kenilworth a dazzling array of trees and perennials creates a series of inspired settings for outdoor entertaining

*Text: Patricia Gerlach*

*Photography by Linda Oyama Bryan*

**A** rough stucco exterior and classic Old World tile roof give the circa 1920 Mediterranean villa the appearance of being nestled in the hills of Tuscany rather than on a tree-shaded Kenilworth street.

Its oversize three-quarter acre site is studied with trees—Colorado spruce, American hornbeam, Carnelian cherry, Star magnolia, Honeylocust, Crabapple, Red and Norway maple. Beds, planters and containers introduce a blaze of color that changes with the seasons. Talk about curb appeal!

Four years ago when the current owners moved in the picture was less than postcard perfect. The couple had planned to refresh the existing landscape with a few dramatic touches and get on with their lives. Until they learned that the old brick foundation of their beautiful vintage home was crumbling and needed immediate replacement—a task they discovered would totally obliterate all of the standing plant material.

Enter David Van Zelst, the landscape architect who had worked with the owners on

their previously owned property. Putting their heads together, the homeowners and Van Zelst set about creating a master plan that would coordinate with the foundation reconstruction.

"It had become a matter of going back to square one and planning a complete landscape re-do," says Van Zelst, president of Van Zelst Inc. Landscape Development & Management of far north suburban Wadsworth. The result is a sought-after design/build firm whose staff can take a project from concept to construction completion and outdoor furnishing, making certain along the way that every detail gets proper attention.

"Creating a landscape is the blending of art, architecture, nature and personal style," says Van Zelst. A proponent of teamwork throughout the project, Van Zelst scheduled a series of intense planning sessions with the homeowners. As the plan evolved, abundant color became an intrinsic element of the strong Mediterranean flavor called for by the

architecture of the handsome old home. A combination of active and passive recreation areas including a swimming pool and spa, a playlot for the smaller children, quiet seating for adult entertaining and—most importantly—an outdoor kitchen were "musts" on the owners' wish list.

Once the plan was drafted, Van Zelst plotted a course of action which would be maintained in concert with the contractors' work rebuilding the foundation. Van Zelst uses a team approach that requires each of his eight experienced and accredited staff landscape architects collaborates with the firm's horticulturists, foresters, engineers and field managers to interpret the clients' ideas in a design which both creates the desired effect and is well-suited to the existing environment. Unfortunately, no existing material remained to be worked into the landscape, something that David Van Zelst usually makes certain happens to preserve and enhance the site's natural beauty.

"This was definitely a fast-track project for



Opposite: Oversize containers brimming with brilliant yellow and purple annuals introduce color and texture to the swimming pool's deck. Above: Plantings that contrast height and density give the landscape the finished facade that is landscape architect David VanZelst's trademark. Above right: Drifts of salmon pink impatiens are nurtured during VanZelst's regular summer maintenance visits. Right: A well-equipped outdoor kitchen is on its way to becoming a staple in Chicago and other Midwest area landscape settings.





us," notes Van Zelst, saying it took about five months—from early summer to late autumn—to complete.

Addressing the hardscape elements first, the team went to work on the bluestone front porch and stone stoop. Brussels block stone was used on the front walk and the pool patios. Pinehall Old Town clay pavers and Brussels block edging were used on the driveway.

Then the planting began with a glorious assortment of trees. Followed by shrubs—Euonymus, Viburnum, Spirea, Hydrangea, Cotoneaster and Rhododendron just to hit the high spots. Twenty-five varieties of perennial plants, including some ground covers followed. Examples are asters, astilbe, chrysanthemums, coreopsis, daylilies, penstemon, rudbeckia and sedum—all placed in areas of the landscape where sun and soil conditions favor their success.

Appropriate containers such as Haddon stone in front and Mexican terra cotta in the rear yard add seasonal splashes of color. Each spring, forced bulbs sprout from them, followed by annuals in summer, then autumn. Textural boughs are used to soften the winter scene.

"Our goal is a landscape of finished quality when the trucks pull away," explains Van Zelst, saying the outcome is not necessarily one of maturity but rather completion. An example is using a 20-foot Blue spruce in a side yard rather than planting a smaller specimen and waiting for it to "grow into" the landscape.

And when the pool and its adjacent spa



area were completed, the Van Zelst teams didn't pack up and go home. Instead they made certain that the area was furnished and ready for entertaining. Comfortable poolside chairs, lounges, tables and umbrellas from Brown Jordan International, a manufacturer of stylish outdoor furnishings were placed in conversational groupings.

More Brown Jordan pieces—a small bistro table and stools—were installed in the outdoor kitchen, an amenity that was a special request of the owners, who enjoy alfresco dining and entertaining.

"Today's outdoor kitchens have everything a chef needs," says David Van Zelst, pointing to the Viking (his firm is a Viking dealer) gas range with its built-in grill, smoker system and heavy-duty rotisserie. Warming drawers that keep food fresh until the entire meal is ready and an undercounter refrigerator are also tucked into the stainless steel unit.

For years outdoor kitchens have been popular in California and other states that enjoy moderate climates, but their popularity here in the Midwest has skyrocketed in the past few years.

"These clients make use of their outdoor kitchen year-round," says Van Zelst, noting that it has been enclosed with Brussels block stone and outfitted with a bluestone counter and work surface.

"Casual but organized" is how David Van Zelst categorizes the laid-back style that his team has created for the grounds of this lovely Mediterranean dowager of a house. It is truly, he says, a landscape for all seasons.

For more information, see Resources. | SD



Opposite: A gently meandering sideyard path wends its way through a dense crop of flowering shrubs and lush ground cover. Above left: Feathery branches of winged *Euonymus alata* and velvety contours of *Stella d'Oro* daylilies soften the hard edges of the spacious bluestone porch and rough stucco exterior. Above right: A variety of yellow and pink annuals draw the eye to flowering shrubs that outline the foundation of lovely vintage house. Above: Designer Van Zelst took inspiration for his landscape from the home's Mediterranean design.