

FLAK'S NEWS

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FLAKNE FINALLY DOES IT!

For years, I have been saying I should hire another designer but the time and circumstances just didn't seem right. Now, I am very pleased to announce that Scott Marotz has joined the Flakne's team this spring! Scott comes to Flakne's with extensive knowledge of plant and hardscape materials, the ability to manage multi-dimensional projects, and with the honesty and first-rate customer service skills that you expect and deserve from Flakne's. His design experience covers everything from small "remodels" to large residential projects, to even larger commercial shopping centers. No job is too large or too small for Scott!

Scott is very active in his community of Big Lake where he lives with his wife, Tara and his two young children Sydney, age 4, and Garrett, age 2. He serves as a Big Lake Planning Commissioner, as well as on several planning and development committees. The Marotz family loves to camp, just like the Flaknes!

Scott has even figured out how to sneak away during "the season" to camp and canoe the Boundary Waters. I think I have some things to learn from him!

Scott and I both believe that we are masters of our trade and our job is to use our horticulture knowledge and design skills to make **your ideas** look great! I know that anyone who chooses to work with Scott will be amazed at his knowledge, his capabilities, and his straight forward and honest approach to customer service.

Speaking of honesty, running an honest business seems almost like an oxymoron these days. But I know that I have built my business, as well as my personal reputation, on my good word. And I hired Scott, knowing that honesty is paramount to him as well. The English word 'honest' comes from the Latin word, 'honestus', which means from honor'. Scott and I both believe that when we are upright



and fair in our principals, intentions, and actions, we honor ourselves, as well as those we serve. We hope that when you have any type of landscaping project, you call us and give us a chance to put honor back into the business equation! We also appreciate your referrals to your friends, neighbors, and family members. With discretionary spending expected to decrease this year, we will rely on referrals more than ever this season. We would like to thank you for your referrals by taking you out to dinner! See the coupon on the left. Thank you for thinking of us and spreading our good name!

Enjoy your spring and summer with your family and friends!

Greg Flakne, CLP

Slow Economy Means Great Prices in 2009!

Look forward to some unbelievable deals on plant materials and hardscape materials this year! Strong competition combined with the slower economy has forced wholesalers to hold prices and even cut prices on many products. This is definitely a great time to work on your landscape projects, large or small. Give us a call and we can assist you with any size

or scope of project to suit your budget. If you are watching your dollars and thinking of spending more time at home with family and friends this year, check out the "What's Hot" article on the next page to see how you can make your backyard the "go to" place this year. It will bring many hours of fun and relaxation and will

serve you well from the first days of spring through the cool days and evenings of fall!

Big Berry!

Did you know that a watermelon is botanically classified as a berry?



WHAT'S HOT ?

Backyard Fireplaces and Rain Gardens!

Minnesotans were quick to pick up on the backyard fire pit craze years ago. Firepits allowed us to gather in our yards earlier in the spring and well into the late fall, keeping everyone toasty warm and even enjoying a s'more or two! The current trend in backyard warming has taken the backyard fire pit to a new level of sophistication and convenience! Backyard fireplaces are now finding their way into Minnesota backyards in many shapes and sizes, with so many different features for outdoor fun and memory making!

Since so many Minnesotans are extending their living rooms to their outdoors, it makes sense to include an outdoor fireplace as an anchor to your outdoor living space. An outdoor fireplace serves as focal point for beauty's sake, as well as an invitation for family and guests to sit and relax and enjoy each other's company. And with many people watching their entertaining dollars these days, backyard entertaining is simple and fun while keeping the budget in tact.

As designers, our job is to help you decide the best location for your outdoor fireplace, as well as the best type and features that will serve you and your family's needs. When placing a fireplace in a yard, the first consideration is to place it at a distance from the home, other structures, and plant materials. Then we can decide what location will provide the best view from the inside of your home. What about privacy, screening from the wind and traffic flow through your yard? Safety and building codes will dictate some restrictions. Next, the matter of size must be decided. How many people will you make room for? Do you want to be able to cook over your outdoor fire? Will natural gas be best for you or do you want to burn firewood or wood pellets? (Some communities have restrictions on the burning of wood fires).

The smallest and least expensive outdoor fireplaces are the Chimineas, which are usually made of clay. They have an open belly for a quaint patio fire and a stack or chimney to draft air into the fire. The downside is that the

fire can only be seen from the opening in one side of the pot. But portable Chimineas are smaller and simpler, and run a smaller price tag—from less than \$100 to several hundred dollars.



This customized fireplace was finished just as the snow began to fly last fall. Imagine the fun to be had this summer in this beautiful outdoor living room!

A permanent wood burning or gas fireplace (such as the one pictured above) is more practical and can complement any style of outdoor living area. If cooking over the fire intrigues you, outdoor fireplaces can be built so you can grill your meal and even make pizza!

Contemporary stucco, classic brick and stones are frequently used to face the fireplace. But concrete is a great alternative. It can be molded into any shape to give you the look you love. Do you like straight lines or curves? How about a customized mantle? A concrete fireplace can stylishly complement your home and your outdoor landscape. It can be smooth or textured, even colored by pigments and stains. There are even special coatings that will make everyday concrete look like granite or marble! And concrete is low-maintenance for easy clean-up.

Outdoor fireplaces can be purchased pre-manufactured or custom built. Obviously, the custom-built fireplaces can be designed to your every whim. But with a designer's touch, even the pre-made ones can be finished to your unique style.

The ambiance of a glowing fire always brings people together. Call us and we would be happy to show you how you can add a fun and functional outdoor fireplace to your outdoor living space.

Rain gardens seem to be popping up in all areas of the country in an effort to reduce polluted runoff into our storm sewers. Rain gardens are installed in such a way to allow rain, snowmelt, and excess water from sprinkling to soak naturally into the ground, helping to refresh the supply of groundwater. They also prevent the water polluted with soil and fertilizers from flowing into the gutters, storm drains, then eventually into our streams, ponds, and lakes. Rain gardens can decrease the amount of pollution that reaches our waterways by 30%! An additional benefit is watching the activity of the birds and butterflies that are attracted to your rain garden.

Rain gardens are planted with a depression in the center of the garden to collect rain, snow melt and water from nearby sprinkling. The most effective place to plant a rain garden is where water runoff is greatest, such as near sidewalks and driveways or under rain gutters. The key to a successful rain garden is to maintain a healthy blend of loose, non-compacted soil. It's best to plant hardy, native plants that grow well without any fertilizers and chemicals. Rain garden plants grow well in soggy soil as well as drier conditions. Whether shrubs, perennials, wild flowers or ornamental grasses are planted, a good designer can create a lovely garden with low maintenance.

Rain gardens are becoming more popular as homeowners and businesses seek ways to live more ecologically. Bachman's Wholesale Nursery has added 100 additional rain garden hardy plants this year alone! Some cities are even offering rebates and other incentives for homeowners who install a rain garden. Check with your local city hall then call us to show you how you can incorporate a rain garden into your landscape.



This rain garden catches runoff from the yard and prevents the polluted water from flowing into the storm drains.

Can't Say Enough About Lighting!

It seems that I have frequently written articles about landscape lighting. I just can't say enough about it, I guess! It's not just that we Minnesotans spend half of our lives in darkness. I am just passionate about the benefits of professional landscape lighting and am even more excited to share some amazing technological updates in this industry.

I have been installing landscape lighting for many years. Although many of you have enjoyed the benefits of landscape lighting, you may also suffered frustrations from the inconsistencies from the old analog systems. I own one of these systems too, so I share in your frustrations. But just as our computers and cell phones become outdated as technology creates the new "must have" features, the old analog switches have been passed up by new technology. The new systems are digital and are controlled by a Universal Powerline Bus (UPB) network. Both the analog and digital systems work via sound waves. We have found that we are all now enjoying more digital appliances in our homes these days; and these tend to cause more interference in these sound waves in the old analog systems. If your old system seems to work inconsistently, that's probably what's happening. There's only one way to fix that—go digital!

These new networks control the low voltage landscape lighting transformers, as well as the home's brighter exterior lights. By coordinating the intensity of your home's outside lighting with the landscape lighting, we can achieve that desired, softer, more inviting glow to unify your nightscape. Another fun feature of the UPB controller is the flexibility and consistency of the timer. All the system needs is a zip code to determine the local times of dusk and dawn! Preset light zones throughout the yard can be programmed by date, time, and/or day of the week. Homeowners can set the system to turn on all exterior lights at dusk and turn off lights by zone at various times throughout the night or next morning. No more leaving the porch light on! Of course, if you entertain late one evening or just want to linger in your outdoor paradise a bit

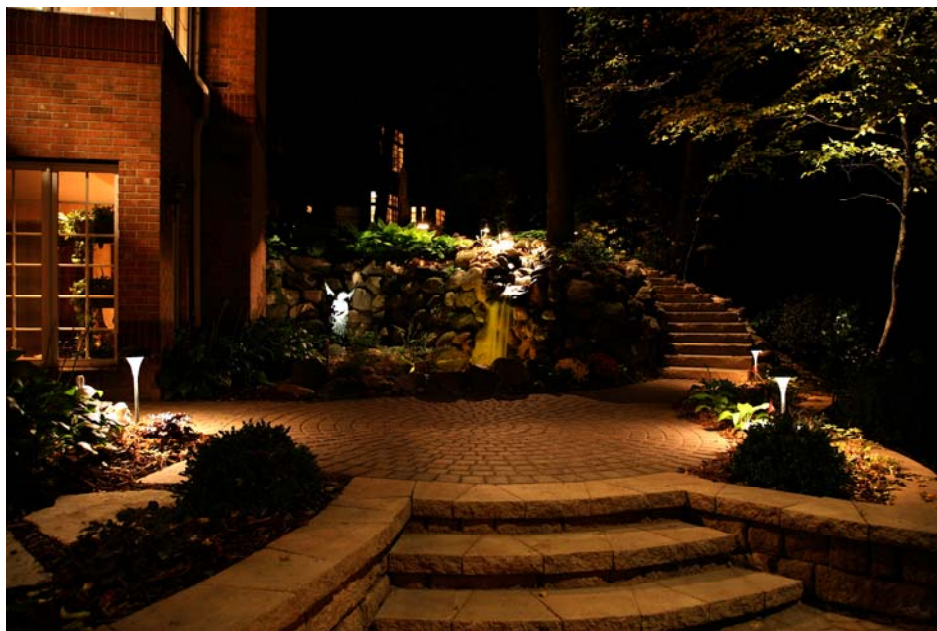
longer one evening, you can override the preset program with the flip of a switch. You will be thrilled with the added beauty, safety, and security to your home at night.

If you are still not enjoying the benefits of landscape lighting, read on....

Homeowners get more bang for their buck when they include lighting in their landscape budget because they will use and enjoy their yards long after the sun has gone down. Even time spent indoors is more enjoyable when you can see your beautifully landscaped yard during the evening hours. Landscape lighting offers the dramatic play between light and shadow. A quality lighting design can help make an architectural statement with some technical knowledge and creativity. You will be amazed at the transformation of your yard

tem which is more efficient and looks better too. The soft intensity of low voltage lighting gives the most dramatic effect in a landscape.

We use only professional grade lighting fixtures, which are built to last and provide a more desirable, subtle, indirect glow. And there are so many creative and functional ways to direct this soft glow. Uplighting trees or moonlighting from taller branches provides a broad area of illumination. Spotlighting pathways, stairs, patios, decks, fire pits, water features, planting areas, even your homes' siding creates inviting drama. Subtle moonlighting can create a soft glow over a path or driveway in lieu of path lights that may glare. Look at how lovely the lighting is over the steps in the right side of the photograph below. The steps are safely



with the soft, indirect glow of landscape lighting. Of course, an obvious argument for outdoor lighting is that it provides illumination for safety and home security. And lighting puts the necessary finishing touch on a landscape. I don't consider a project complete if it doesn't include the lighting.

I recommend using low voltage systems for landscape lighting. Low voltage creates a safer electrical sys-

aglow from lights hidden in the branches of the tree. Even the tree is softly lit to create a special mood. The creative possibilities are endless. You can choose a basic starter design and add to it over the years, if necessary. And landscape lighting will add to the value of your home when the time comes to sell it.

Convinced? Please allow us to show you how your landscape can look equally beautiful by day or night!

FLAKNE'S NEWS

FLAKNE'S EXTERIOR DESIGN/SCAPE CO.



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2009 Perennial Plant of the Year

Hakonechloa macra 'Aureola'



Golden Hakone Grass took high honors at the Perennial Plant Association this year, as Plant of the Year for 2009! This particular grass is a member of the Poaceae family and is native to Honshu Island, Japan. It grows from 12 to 18 inches tall and 18 to 24 inches wide. The individual blades are yellow and only 1/2 inch wide with very thin green stripes. In the fall, the foliage turns golden with hints of pink and red. Its cascading blades make it a great edging plant and it is a natural complement to hostas and tiarellas or any purple or dark leafed plant. The lighter color makes it stand out in darker areas and perks up an otherwise drab area in a landscape. Try it in a container to bring in a lighter colored foliage. Hakonechloa macra 'Aureola' thrives in partial shade, and in moist but well-drained soil. It spreads by stolons, but since it is such a slow growing plant, it is not a threat to nearby plants in the landscape. Golden Hakone is almost disease and pest resistant. Even deer seem to stay away! Beware Minnesotans, since this grass is hardy for Zone 5, it should be planted in protected areas.