

# FLAK'S NEWS

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*"Creating and caring for  
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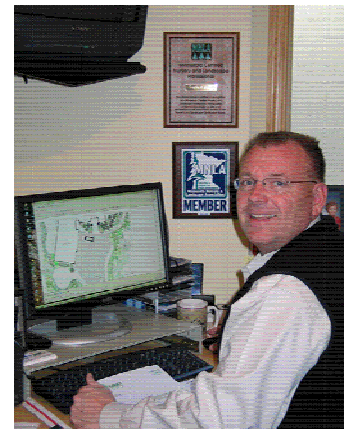
## What's new? Lower Prices!

Happy Spring! What an interesting start to our spring! From 40 degrees to 70 degrees and back to 40! One of my sons complained of mosquito bites after just one day of warm weather! Then snow again! I, for one, am looking forward to spring's official arrival. I am rejuvenated when the trees bud and the perennials begin showing some signs of growth!

What's new at Flaknes? I am excited to announce lower pricing on most plant materials and mulch for the 2007 season. I also have a new line of all brass or copper landscape light fixtures at great prices! I have always prided myself that Flakne's has offered the best customer service and quality of workmanship at lower prices than most of my competitors. My low overhead normally allows me to keep my prices down, but this year, my increased purchasing power has qualified me for even lower prices on many landscaping products. If you have been mulling over a possible project, this year is the time to get going and take advantage of some great deals!

Over the winter months, I have been doing the usual software tweaks to make my designing and bookkeeping more efficient. I also have plans to upgrade my web site: [www.flaknes.com](http://www.flaknes.com)).

I am proud of my current web site. In fact, I have received many compliments saying that my web site is one of the nicest, local landscaping sites on the web. Look for some fun changes over the coming months! In the meantime, if you are planning a future landscape or hardscape project, take a look at the "Links" page. You can link to the web sites of my suppliers for retaining wall systems, pavers companies, etc. You can actually see photos of projects and samples of the products, including colors, sizes, and textures. Or if you are a perennial lover, select the link to the perennial Plant Association. I am also proud of the landscape lighting section. If you have not explored the possibility of landscape lighting for your own home, take a look at the "Landscape Lighting" area. Lighting your home and landscape is one of the best investments you can make. The soft, warm glow of my landscape lighting shows off the most beautiful features of your home and yard during the evening hours while also providing **safety and security**. With the summer entertaining season approaching, landscape lighting can also extend the length of time you can host your outdoor get-togethers.



Speaking of outdoor entertaining, check out the inside article about outdoor kitchens! This year's "What's Hot" topic on outdoor kitchens is so HOT, that I couldn't find the space to include another article! If you enjoy outdoor entertaining, read on, as outdoor kitchens, no matter the size or scope are the hot new trend in outdoor planning and landscaping. How can an outdoor kitchen be considered landscaping? Remember, I design and build anything outside the walls of your home. You wouldn't consider building a home without a designer! The outside of your home is no exception! A good designer will offer the features you desire in your yard, along with the esthetic appeal and the functional flow for you and your guests to enjoy year around.

Greg Flakne, CP

# WHAT'S HOT ?????

What's hot? Not your indoor kitchen! Outdoor kitchens are taking the heat out of summer cooking! And this summer, outdoor kitchens have never been hotter! Your tried and true gas grill just won't be enough when you see how you can transform your backyard into a gourmet retreat for your family and friends!

Last year, almost half of 600 residential architecture firms surveyed, responded that upscale landscaping is on the rise, including the outdoor living spaces such as courtyards decks, patios, and KITCHENS! Built-in barbecues, fireplaces, even brick pizza ovens, refrigerators, and icemakers are making their way outside for optimal outdoor cooking and entertaining.

I would guess that most all of you have some sort of outdoor cooking apparatus. My family loves a grilled meal year round. But grilling outdoors in the summer is our favorite way to beat the heat in the kitchen. However, the in and out routine can get the best of a seasoned outdoor chef. Even the simplest of outdoor kitchens can make cooking outside more efficient and the most extravagant can mean that you don't have to go inside until it's time to go to bed!

So you think you are ready to transform your backyard into a gastronomical paradise? You need to ask yourself a few questions. What kind of cooking do you want to do and how often?

What kind of entertaining would you like to do and for how many people – small groups or big groups or both? What time of year will you use your outdoor kitchen? Will you permanently install the kitchen components or will you want to move them around?

Outdoor kitchens can be as elaborate as you want or can afford. Start with the grill as your centerpiece and you can add as many components to meet your outdoor needs and desires. When choosing a grill, the sky is the limit on options. Do you want wheels for portability or will your grill be permanently installed? Side burners offer additional cooking options. Rotisseries, skewers, and baskets for fish and veggies accessorize your grill for a variety of cooking methods. You will also need work space. Many grills offer an adjacent shelf for holding serving plates and cooking utensils. There are many models of self-contained grills that can be set right on your patio. Some of these have their own refrigerators, built-in thermometers, a storage unit, even stereo speakers, such as in the photo below.



Another option is to place a grill insert into a free-standing modular block structure that I can design to meet your entertaining needs. The photo at the top of the next page shows how counter space and even a seating area was created

to close in the cooking area while giving you and your guests a place to sit and relax. Need more work area?

Outdoor counter tops can provide the same benefits outdoors as they do indoors. Counter surfaces of granite, slate, concrete, and porcelain tile, are sturdy, weatherproof, and can be sanitized.

Outdoor lighting is a must. Our long Minnesota summer days offer natural lighting during usual cooking hours, but try to check to see if your steak is cooked to perfection at dinnertime in the winter, and you know you will need direct light overhead for producing an edible meal. Lighting is essential and if you know me, outdoor lighting is not only my specialty, it's my passion! Softer, indirect lighting is a must for dining and entertaining areas, setting a mood for entertaining family and friends.

Speaking of winter, consider a patio heater to keep you and your guests toasty warm while outside. You can extend your outdoor cooking season well into the winter months with a portable, propane powered heater or one that is permanently installed.

Now you have the basics. Ready to have some real outdoor cooking fun? A refrigerator is a wonderful addition to an outdoor kitchen. Stock it with your favorite beverages, but leave room for your meal components for optimum efficiency. Eliminating the extra trips in and out of the house is our goal! Tired of schlepping coolers around? How about an extra refrigerator and a tapper for easy access to your favorite frothy beverage? Take it to the next level and add an ice maker!

A sink will add another level of convenience and efficiency. Stainless provides the best material for durability and can be fed and drained with a garden hose (camper style) or connected to your home's water supply or even your sprinkler system! Of course, this is a seasonal convenience in Minnesota!

# OUTDOOR KITCHENS !!



How about a wood burning oven for roasting meats and vegetables? Make an authentic pizza while you drive your neighbors crazy with the savory aromas.

Electrical outlets for appliances are also handy for your small appliances to work outside too! Whip up a blender of cold margaritas while you're grilling or plug in a boom box for some mood music while you entertain. Better yet, pipe your indoor stereo system to weatherproof outdoor speakers. Properly positioned, you can even create outdoor surround sound.

Shall I keep going? How about a wine storage unit, warming drawers to keep your meal hot until serving time? Maybe an exhaust hood for your grill will be necessary if your grill is placed under a roof. And the ultimate luxury for your outdoor kitchen – cabinetry for storing everything from your cooking and eating utensils to your dishes and glassware! Outdoor cabinets can be made of masonry block, and then covered with stucco or tile for weatherproofing the contents and the cabinets themselves. Lightweight modular concrete cabinet systems are also available and are less expensive than masonry cabinets. Stainless steel cabinets are esthetic, as well as functional outdoors. Marine grade plywood is also an option. Cabinets can be customized with cutouts for grills and other appliances and will eliminate the running to and

from your indoor kitchen. You will love the convenience!

Where should the kitchen be placed in your yard? Outdoor kitchens can be located against the side of your home, which can make plumbing and electrical connections a breeze. Or they may be better placed farther out into your yard to make the most of other features,

such as your pool or other water feature (Don't have a water feature? I can help with that too!) Other entertaining areas such as dining and sitting areas, playgrounds (need to keep the children away from hot cooking areas) and gardens need to be positioned in a way to optimize your viewing and entertaining. Overhead protection can be provided to keep you and your kitchen out of the elements. Portable walls can even be designed for seasonal closings. Arbors and pergolas can adorn your kitchen or camouflage it if you prefer.

Not convinced yet that you need an outdoor kitchen? Indoor cooking during the summer months can increase

the temperature of your home to the point that your air conditioner can not keep up. You remember those evenings! And equipping your outdoor kitchen with the amenities of an indoor kitchen can boost the value of your home. Qualifying as a second kitchen can pay off when you sell your home.

Is your mouth watering? Design is crucial to maximize efficiency in your outdoor kitchen, no matter the size. There are even important design elements in just placing a grill in the proper spot! If you desire more extravagant amenities, we can consult with my kitchen designer friend and client, Jolynn Johnson, owner of the Crystal Kitchen Center in Crystal, MN. Jolynn is the pro at outdoor (and indoor) kitchen design. Jolynn and her staff will design the beautiful and functional outdoor kitchen of your dreams. And I will create the adjacent areas for you and your guests to enjoy all those delicious meals you will prepare and to maximize your outdoor fun!

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# FLAKNE'S NEWS

FLAKNE'S EXTERIOR DESIGN/SCAPE CO.

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The perennial plant of 2007, as awarded by the Perennial Plant Association, is a lovely catmint with delicate blue-violet flowers. Walker's Low is a Minnesota hardy variety and, if pruned properly, will bloom continuously through the season. This perennial is easy to propagate, easy to maintain, and is almost void of pest and disease problems. It attracts bees and butterflies but not the rabbits and deer! No wonder it was selected as Perennial of the Year! Walker's Low grows best in full sun, but can tolerate shade. It grows to about 30 – 36 inches tall and wide (Walker's Low was named after a garden, not its size). Plant it in a rock or herb garden or as a perennial border. It even makes a nice container plant. Crush the grey-green leaves and add to your potpourri and Walker's Low will keep on giving long after the blooms have faded.

2007 Perennial Plant of the Year

*Nepeta 'Walker's Low'*

