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WATERLOO CHRONICLE



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Waterloo's Monarch Landscapes won four awards at the 40th annual Landscape Ontario Awards of Excellence for its classic, transitional and contemporary designs. The firm will be launching a new design studio at its 550 Parkside Drive location and will unveil it at the K-W Garden Show March 22-24.

Award-winning landscapes

Monarch Landscapes receives four awards for its design builds in 2012

By BOB VRBANAC
Chronicle Staff

Creating perfect outdoor living space with natural materials and unique designs has helped Waterloo's Monarch Landscape grow into one of the premier landscape companies in Ontario.

And they have the awards to prove it, as four of the design-and-build projects the firm constructed in the last year were honoured recently at the 40th annual Landscape Ontario Horticultural Trades Association Awards of Excellence ceremony in Toronto.

The company won two awards in the residential construction category and two in the special interest category showcasing its ability to create classical, transitional and contemporary designs in a field that included 600 industry-leading businesses across the province.

It's an impressive run for Monarch Landscape, which opened in 1996 as a landscape maintenance business, and has grown to become an award-winning design and construction firm with multiple awards on the wall at its 550 Parkside Drive office.

Mike Mackinnon, the construction manager at Monarch, said their success has grown out of meeting clients' needs and helping them achieve their vision for an

outdoor oasis.

"If somebody is looking to do any aspect of their landscape, they can come to us and we can provide that service," he said.

"At the end of the day we're landscape architects and contractors and we take a client's vision and put it into parameters that allows them to see how it works in their lifestyle, and complements their architectural style and their home," said Dave Van Dam, landscape architect and general manager of Monarch.

Van Dam said the landscaping has to support the homeowner's vision of their exterior space, and often picks up cues from how they've designed and built their home on the inside.

And while some people might look at the restrictions they have on their space, Van Dam said their job is to show them the possibilities and help make it work. That includes phasing out a project and keeping it within their budget.

"People want their backyards to be a reflection of their personality," said Van Dam. "Right from the construction of the structural elements to the patio space, to what furnishings are they going to put in it, they want it to be their personal space."

"They want to be proud in their space and be able to entertain in their backyard

and that's what it's all about."

It's also part of the larger trend of people taking stay-cations, and using their outdoor space as a way to create a getaway at their own home.

"There are a lot of people who are certainly investing in their own property," said Van Dam. "They feel like instead of investing in a vacation property, they're going to be in their home seven days a week and how can they enjoy it even more."

The challenge for Monarch Landscape is to create that getaway, whether it's in a 22-foot backyard or a more rambling estate setting.

"Can you do something unique in their backyard that really creates a unique space, a unique atmosphere for these people?" said Van Dam. "It can be tough because you might have to single out one thing, but you have to make a difference in that backyard."

"It's an investment and now they're going to use this backyard for that stay-cation."

That success has Monarch Landscape trying something new by launching out a new design studio at their Waterloo office, which will give clients a chance to experience the materials and other elements first hand.

"That's part of what sets you apart from the competition that's out there, the unique-

ness, the difference you offer," said Mackinnon. "You're not just slapping down the next paver patio stone and moving on to the next project."

"So we'll be there right from the start to finish, and we'll be able to provide everything right down to the accents and furniture that goes down on the patio. Anything that finishes a project we'll be able to offer as well."

Monarch Landscaping has also added an interior designer to their staff with the understanding that a lot of people are looking to extend their inside space outside, to look at cues picked up in the design and choice of materials.

"Every client is entitled to a different design and a design that is about them and fits their personality," said Van Dam. "We can show them a myriad of materials that will bring together that backyard."

"People like to touch and feel things and they want to know if it complements the architecture of their home."

The public will get their first chance to see Monarch Landscape's new studio at the K-W Home and Garden Show at the Kitchener Memorial Auditorium March 22 -24. For more information about the garden studio, or for a portfolio of their work, visit www.monarchlandscape.ca.


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