

PORTLAND'S HOME GARDEN AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

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# FAIRWAY TO HEAVEN

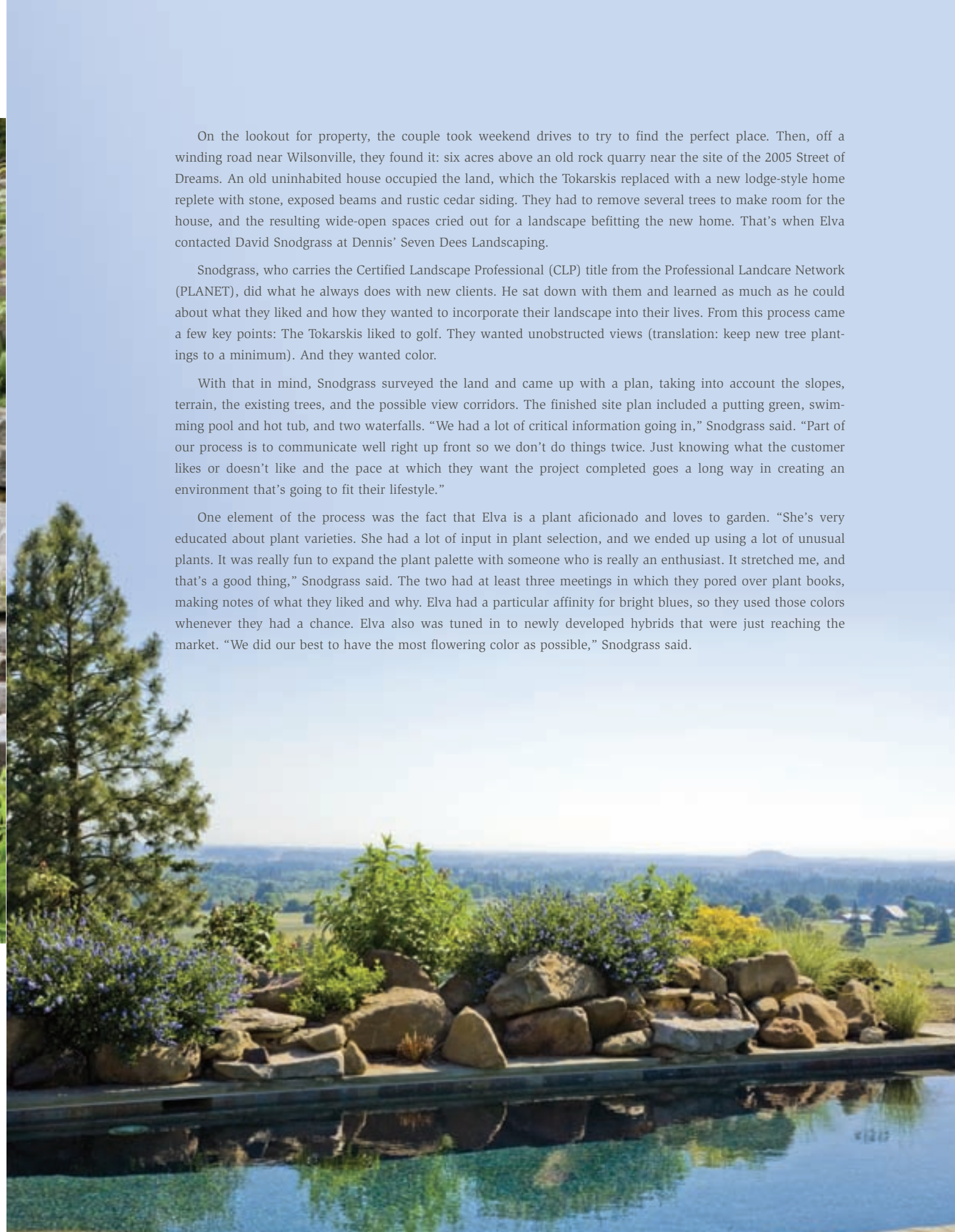
ELVA AND LARRY TOKARSKI MOVED TO LAKE OSWEGO FROM SALEM THREE YEARS AGO, AND ALTHOUGH THEY FOUND A BEAUTIFUL SPOT RIGHT ON THE LAKE, THEY HAD A NAGGING URGE TO DO SOMETHING THEY HAD NEVER DONE BEFORE: LIVE IN THE COUNTRY. IT JUST SEEMED LIKE THE PERFECT NEXT STEP IN THEIR LIVES. LARRY WAS A SUCCESSFUL REAL ESTATE DEVELOPER, AND THE COUPLE COULD AFFORD TO CELEBRATE THEIR SUCCESS BY BUILDING WHAT THEY WANTED. THEY DID A BIT OF ENTERTAINING, AND THEY LOVED HAVING THE GRANDKIDS OVER – SO WHY NOT DO ALL THAT ON SOME ACREAGE WHERE THEY COULD ALSO HAVE PEACE AND QUIET AND A VIEW?

On the lookout for property, the couple took weekend drives to try to find the perfect place. Then, off a winding road near Wilsonville, they found it: six acres above an old rock quarry near the site of the 2005 Street of Dreams. An old uninhabited house occupied the land, which the Tokarskis replaced with a new lodge-style home replete with stone, exposed beams and rustic cedar siding. They had to remove several trees to make room for the house, and the resulting wide-open spaces cried out for a landscape befitting the new home. That’s when Elva contacted David Snodgrass at Dennis’ Seven Dees Landscaping.

Snodgrass, who carries the Certified Landscape Professional (CLP) title from the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET), did what he always does with new clients. He sat down with them and learned as much as he could about what they liked and how they wanted to incorporate their landscape into their lives. From this process came a few key points: The Tokarskis liked to golf. They wanted unobstructed views (translation: keep new tree plantings to a minimum). And they wanted color.

With that in mind, Snodgrass surveyed the land and came up with a plan, taking into account the slopes, terrain, the existing trees, and the possible view corridors. The finished site plan included a putting green, swimming pool and hot tub, and two waterfalls. “We had a lot of critical information going in,” Snodgrass said. “Part of our process is to communicate well right up front so we don’t do things twice. Just knowing what the customer likes or doesn’t like and the pace at which they want the project completed goes a long way in creating an environment that’s going to fit their lifestyle.”

One element of the process was the fact that Elva is a plant aficionado and loves to garden. “She’s very educated about plant varieties. She had a lot of input in plant selection, and we ended up using a lot of unusual plants. It was really fun to expand the plant palette with someone who is really an enthusiast. It stretched me, and that’s a good thing,” Snodgrass said. The two had at least three meetings in which they pored over plant books, making notes of what they liked and why. Elva had a particular affinity for bright blues, so they used those colors whenever they had a chance. Elva also was tuned in to newly developed hybrids that were just reaching the market. “We did our best to have the most flowering color as possible,” Snodgrass said.







ABOVE The homeowners love to golf, so their landscape includes a putting green accessible from three different tee boxes. The tee boxes are made of artificial turf to preserve the lawn. The shrubs separating this tee box from the putting green below are dwarf red twig dogwood (*Cornus stolonifera* “Kelsey”) on the right and victoria wild lilac (*Ceanothus impressus* “Victoria”) on the left. UPPER RIGHT A driveway of colored concrete pavers meanders past a waterfall on its way to the main house. The structure on the right is the garage. The waterfalls were made by In Vision Landscaping, a custom landscape company based in Salem. Company owner Tom Payseno said the rocky terrain presented a challenge to his crew, who practically had to chisel the waterfall area out of the earth.



It’s one thing to create a landscape on paper, but quite another to make the land cooperate. Once the Dennis’ Seven Dees crews started shoveling, they had to contend with the fact that the entire property was covered in rocks, big and small. It wasn’t too much of a surprise – after all, there was a rock quarry nearby – but that didn’t make the job any easier. Holding the rocks in place was poison oak and soil that was too poor to sustain the lawn and beautiful plants called for in the plan. “I grew up in this business,” said Snodgrass, 55, “and this is one of the most difficult sites I’ve seen.”

Steep terrain compounded the challenges of the rocks and poor soil. In most cases, Snodgrass would have used retaining walls in a kind of terracing effect to create lawn areas flat enough to comfortably walk on. But this landscape plan called for the area to be worked, shaped and stabilized without using walls. Snodgrass accomplished this by putting down jute erosion-control netting over heavily amended soil and planting it with greenery to create smooth transitions between the different elevations. During excavation, Snodgrass and his crew uncovered parts of old foundations from structures – perhaps from an old farmstead – that had existed on the property more than a century ago. He ended up using all of them in the landscape. In one case, he extended the foundation walls with the native rock and built a hobby greenhouse.

Anderson Pool Works in Sherwood built the swimming pool on one of the newly formed leveled areas. Company owner Brody Anderson used a dark multicolored material called Pebble Tec – which includes black rock imported from Chile – as the pool surface to make it look like a natural water feature.

The total project was done in five phases over the course of two years. The completion of each phase allowed time for Snodgrass and the Tokarskis to step back and assess how the next phase should take shape. According to PLANET, the project came together quite nicely. In October, it honored Snodgrass and Dennis’ Seven Dees with a Grand Award in residential landscape construction.



RIGHT Snodgrass created this early site plan to show the general concepts of the landscape, then filled in with specifics later. To meet code requirements, Snodgrass had to make the 700-foot-long driveway wide enough to accommodate fire trucks, yet unobtrusive enough to be aesthetically pleasing. Part of the solution was to build a planted island for visual interest. BELOW One of two waterfalls in the landscape, this one shows off the intense use of color and plant variety chosen by Elva Tokarski and landscape designer David Snodgrass. Plantings included variegated willow, blue star creeper, Japanese maple, creeping roses, day lilies and big leaf gunnera.

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PUTTING GREEN All Seasons Greens

