

# DAC florists, landscapers bring flair to home design

By Mary Rodrigue

Smart landscaping and lush blooms do more than put flair into living spaces – they improve health and well being while giving homeowners a canvas for self expression.

As American botanist Luther Burbank once said: “Flowers always make people better, happier and more helpful; they are sunshine, food and medicine to the soul.”

According to researchers at Rutgers University, receiving flowers left study participants feeling less anxious and depressed, experiencing more happy emotions, and reporting a heightened sense of satisfaction and a positive affect on social behavior.

“Nothing is as sincere, real or appreciated as flowers,” said Andrew Adamo, a DAC member and third generation manager of Conner Park Florist, with locations in Detroit and St. Clair Shores.

Like Adamo, several DAC members who work with plants know that flowers are more than embellishment. Eye-catching landscaping details, brilliantly colored fresh blooms in a thoughtful arrangement, or the serenity of a placid water garden are soul soothing balms that help us de-stress and bond with nature.

From elaborately sculpted sprawling gardens to the simplicity of a bouquet of spring tulips, plants and flowers make home interiors feel more welcoming and outdoor living spaces warm and inviting. They give visitors an instant look at who we are, whether it be our prime residence, a small northern Michigan getaway or the DAC itself.

“What draws me to flowers, plants and landscaping is the beauty it brings inside and out, the grace and expression in dealing with scent, sight, texture and colors,” said Kerri Vizena, a floral designer and certified master gardener.

Vizena and her new business partner, DAC member Mary Ann Victor, are now operating The Silk Worm in downtown Rochester, specializing in fresh flowers and silk arrangements, garden accessories and home decor merchandise.



Flowers like this beautiful assortment have a positive affect on health and home.

A Rochester mainstay for 25 years, the women bring their own vision to this Main Street fixture. Victor is owner and Vizena store manager and director of floral design for the business which offers wedding and party planning services.

“When I retired last year I was looking for something new,” said Victor, former general counsel and chief administrative officer for a medical device company. “Kerri and I thought this was perfect for our combined vision: fresh flowers and permanent botanicals and boutique items.”

The shop was closed for remodeling in March and reopened on April 21, just before Easter.

“We refreshed the space to create the environment we wanted,” said Victor, a DAC member since 2008. “We added water elements and the fresh flower component. We love the living element. It broadens our ability to serve our customers.”

Wesley Berry II has had a lifetime to ruminate on why flowers are meaningful to people. He grew up in the business founded by his father in 1946 in a modest west side Detroit flower shop near Schoolcraft and Greenfield.

Today, some 65 years later, Berry oversees Wesley Berry Flowers with operations in five metro Detroit locations and an internet presence.

“Flowers act as a distraction more than anything else,” said

Berry, who runs the company with his wife, Mi Lee Berry. Even the couple's four teenaged sons have toiled in the flower shop on summer vacations.

"At a funeral, flowers are something beautiful to comment on," said Berry, whose main location is in Commerce Township. "It pulls you in a different direction. Sometimes you can't find the right words but flowers can express the sentiment."

Wesley Berry Flowers has won several Readers Choice awards and in 2009 was recipient of the Retail Florist of the Year award given by Florists' Review magazine and the Wholesale Florist and Florist Supplier Association.

DAC members can see Berry's design in the stunning display that graces a table in the main lobby of the Clubhouse, a living arrangement that changes periodically but always features an appealing mixture of fresh flowers and plants of varying shapes and textures.

"People have been using flowers to convey sentiment for a long time," said Berry, a DAC member for 13 years. "Flowers have even been detected as fossilized remains buried with Neanderthal skeletons.

"Flowers are like art. It allows you to transcend the day and think of the beauty it holds," he said. "They're fleeting; you appreciate the time with them."

Wesley Berry specializes in tropical flowers, plants, silk and dried floral arrangements, weddings, special events and funeral designs – serving over one million customers annually.

Also celebrating its 65th anniversary this year is Conner Park Florist, started by Andrew Adamo's grandfather, the late Vincent Adamo and his cousin Agnes Loweke in 1946 in a small freestanding shop on Conner in Detroit.

"We still have that location in addition to the St. Clair Shores store



Wesley and Mi Lee Berry in one of their shops. The company was founded in 1965 by Berry's father.

we built almost 11 years ago," said Adamo, an Intermediate member who joined the Club in 2009.

For 18 years the florist also had a Grosse Pointe Woods location but eventually outgrew that space and moved to St. Clair Shores. Andrew's father, John and mother Connie, continue to work in the business which serves several generations of the same families in addition to new clients.

Through the years Conner Park Florist has decorated for some major events – including the last Bush inauguration in Washington and the 1987 visit to Detroit by the late Pope John Paul II.

Founder Vincent Adamo, a florist for over 54 years and once president of the Society of American Florists, decorated for Ronald Reagan's second inauguration celebration. The Detroit Free Press in January 1985 ran a photo of Adamo, clipboard in hand, standing among 100,000 roses, carnations, mums and euphorbia stored in the National Armory in Washington.

Enshrined in the Floriculture Hall of Fame, Adamo helped decorate the White House for Christmas twice during the Reagan years – once festooning six 18-foot trees with preserved baby's breath and lacing mantels with greens and magnolia leaves.

"We still put the emphasis on service, but today customers can order in many ways," said Andrew Adamo. "We have a free app for the iPhone and Android phones and the internet allows our customers to see a menu before placing an order."

Adamo, who joined the DAC for the squash (he played at St. Lawrence University in upstate New York), says that flowers are something everyone can appreciate.

"It's one of those things you don't need to spend money on but when they're in the house you're glad," he said. "Flowers are a convenient way to thank someone, say 'get well' or 'happy birthday.'"



DAC member Mary Ann Victor and Kerri Vizona of The Silk Worm in Rochester.

New Club member Frank Janosz, an owner and vice president of English Gardens, has spent most of his life around plants and flowers.

“I began working in the nursery and flower shop at 16,” said Janosz, whose father-in-law was one of the founders of what is now the largest independent garden center in southeast Michigan. It opened with a single store in Dearborn Heights in 1954.

“People look at flowers as something to brighten their day. It makes them feel good,” said Janosz. “In our climate especially after the long winters there is pent up demand and excitement.”

Over the years that demand has been met by seven full service retail stores from Eastpointe to Ann Arbor. This year the company has added three seasonal shops in Rochester Hills, Sterling Heights and Royal Oak. Merchandise and services meld interior and exterior decorating.

“Our business is a feel good business,” said Janosz. “We deal with products that look and smell good. We’re not so much a plant store as we are exterior and interior decorator.”

Free seminars at each store explore flower arranging, caring for perennials, landscape design and house plant care, as well as diagnosing problems with trees, shrubs, plants and lawns.



English Gardens in Royal Oak features this waterfall design.

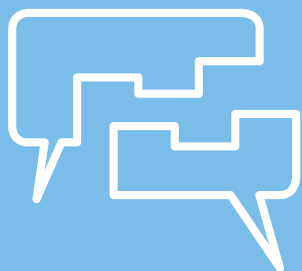
Landscaping design and installation is also offered.

English Gardens has earned numerous awards and recognition. Its sales floors look as thoughtful as a home interior, believing today’s carefully tended garden is an extension of one’s home.

Landscaper Greg Davis carries out similar themes in his day to day business.

“I try to push the limits of creativity each time,” said Davis, owner of Greg Davis Landscaping and a member of the DAC since 2000.

“Landscaping allows my creativity to develop and mature,” he said. “There are always new products every year, new plants



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that no one has ever heard of before. I like to come up with ideas based on new products.”

Despite earning a degree in mechanical engineering, Davis knew he'd work in the field of landscaping. He started his business in 1995.



A Palm Sunday open house at Conner Park in 1965.

“Ever since I was a little kid pushing a lawn mower in the neighborhood I knew this was something I wanted to pursue,” said Davis, who was raised in Grosse

Pointe. “Just being independent and being outside, and improving the conditions of clients’ yards, that’s the appeal for me.”

Davis participates in annual home and garden shows and has clients from West Bloomfield to Ann Arbor to the Grosse Pointes. He points to a recent project – a bluestone patio with large stones used for seating in the form of thick, multilayered limestone and mud layers – as one example of his innovation.

“I like making people happy; putting together a design from nothing and making them happy,” said Davis. “You can only landscape your own property one time; this way I can keep doing cool stuff and changing it each time.”

While that may be true for most homeowners, the DAC’s pleasing landscape changes seasonally. Some 1,500 tulips and 200 crocuses in-filled with



Connie and Andrew Adamo (right) receive an award for Conner Park Florist from a Telaflora representative.

pansies give visitors a giant burst of color from early spring. Flowering weeping cherry and pear trees, boxwood shrubs and yews complete the scenery.

The vendor, Brickman, Torre & Bruglio, plants the bulbs in fall and as spring eases into summer workers return to plant a vibrant array of annuals accentuated by roses. In the fall 250 sturdy mums, rich and lush in color, take center stage, helping to welcome guests in hospitable fashion.



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