



zensationalscapes

STORY JULIE SIMMONDS | **PHOTOGRAPHY** SANDY MACKAY

Nestled into the forest at the end of a long, winding laneway sits a grand, six-acre haven where one Sudbury-based family finds tranquility every weekend. *Continued on page 80*

The Landmark Group worked wonders on the gardens, ponds and meditative areas throughout this beautiful rural property. A *Tree of Life* sculpture brings the gardens together, a metal moose is a nod to the homeowner's northern roots, and a horse and buggy celebrate his French Canadian heritage.



The magic they discovered and built upon lies within a tiny Pretty River tributary that gently runs through the property, giving them peace of mind and a chance to forget about busy work schedules.

“The stress leaves the minute we get on the highway,” says the homeowner. “This has become our play area. We have a different group of friends and different activities here. It’s turned out to be a great place for us.”

The couple discovered the area when they first tried downhill skiing, which led to the purchase of a vacation property at the base of Blue Mountain, but a few years later, they discovered this weekend retreat, and embarked upon a complete overhaul of the property.

The house itself was in a state of decay, but the owners saw nothing but potential, and an opportunity to remodel a house their entire family could enjoy (including six children, grandchildren and visiting parents from Toronto and India).

“The home had good bones,” says the homeowner, “It had really nice features and good configuration. We left the house as is, and we made it work better with the area around it. “



RIGHT: With six kids in the family, and grandchildren and grandparents who spend the summer, this home bustles with activity. The side porch is where the family lives and dines under the stars.
BELOW RIGHT: When it rains, this family simply moves to another beautiful dining area on the sheltered front porch. Linen tablecloths were sourced at Victorian Values in Creemore.



The “area around it” is nothing short of amazing. The homeowners wanted to create a Zen-like garden inspired by *The Tree of Life*, a metal sculpture by Ontario artist Laval Bouchard. It would sit in the centre of the front gardens, which they hoped to blend into the natural surroundings. They also wanted functional family spaces, as well as a spot to just decompress. So, they called upon **The Landmark Group** to design, implement, and manage the large landscaping project.

“We came up with the idea of multiple destination points (for different purposes and times of day), linked together with walking paths and visual motifs (sculpture, plantings and water),” says **Darren Bosch**, Design and Client Services Manager with The Landmark Group, “so you can meander around and enjoy all the meditation gardens and reflective places in different ways, but in the same experience.”

Upon entering the property, clusters of large trees and unique metal sculptures, including a horse-drawn wagon and a glorious

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LEFT: The 6,000 sq. ft. home was a shell when the homeowners purchased it. **ABOVE TOP:** Limestone walkways lead to a variety of relaxation areas and reflective spaces. **ABOVE:** Out back, the covered porch is an ideal spot to dine at day’s end.





moose, greet guests as they arrive at this stately 6,000 sq. ft. home with an additional 2,000 sq. ft. in-law suite.

Strolling around the home, along limestone walkways and deck areas, visitors are invited to enjoy everything the property has to offer – thousands of plants, trees, a stream, two ponds, and sculptures everywhere, with relaxation stations around every bend.

Using over 3,500 native perennials, The Landmark Group created layers of colour and multiple grade changes to blend the gardens into the untouched forested surroundings. They also created various walk-out areas, shaded spaces and many gathering spots for friends and family. A fire pit, built near the waterfall and stream, allows guests to enjoy the symphonic sounds of nature just steps away from both the forest and home.

Working closely with the homeowners, The Landmark Group enhanced three acres of property and installed a programmable irrigation and lighting system.

“As with all our projects big or small, I went through extensive listening and “round-table” gatherings to assess the family’s lifestyle and needs, wish-list, design style, property challenges, site analysis, budget, etc.,” says Darren. “Together, we created a vision of how they

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LEFT: A functioning antique stove from the early 1900s is “a charming period piece that drove the feeling of the house,” says the homeowner.

BELOW: Cooking is a real family affair in this home, where everyone either sits around the island, or pitches right in! **BOTTOM:** In the winter, the family gathers by the wood stove in the dining room, which features a custom-made, built-in espresso unit fashioned by Sudbury carpenter Dan Caza.



ABOVE: The homeowners designed everything in their home. They love to cook, and focused the efficient kitchen design, which includes several prep areas, around the stove and cook top. **RIGHT:** Wood figures prominently throughout the home. Wide plank maple floors, solid beams and meticulously designed cabinets add richness and warmth to the space.





ABOVE: The sunken great room features colourful native art, generous windows, pony tables and plenty of wood, stone and leather accents. **RIGHT:** Folk art is tastefully displayed throughout the home, including this fanciful wooden “Simpsons” chess set.



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The homeowners refer to the cosy master bedroom as their “tree house” because the windows are so low. **BELOW:** A glass-topped coffee table houses cherished photos of family and friends. **BELOW RIGHT:** Inside and out, this home and property exude tranquility – from the serene gardens to the lovely soaker tub in the master en suite.



could use the space. From there, we gathered inspiring images and like-minded reference materials to get an alignment on the feel of things wanted.”

Inside the home, it’s evident the homeowners are fans of American architect and interior designer Frank Lloyd Wright,

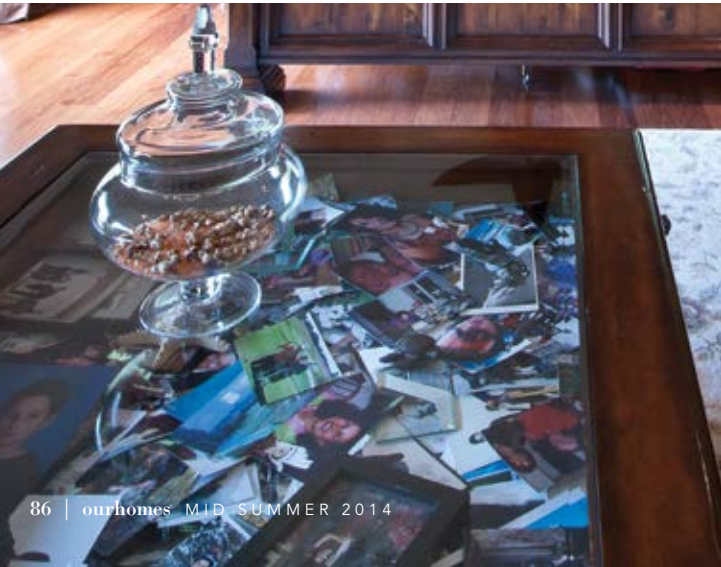
their source of inspiration in the home’s redesign. Adopting his philosophy to design in harmony with nature, the couple used many organic elements, including wood, stone and natural light, which floods the home through many expansive windows.

“I wanted everything to face out, so when

you looked at it, you would see wood going towards nature,” says the homeowner. “We used very quiet colours and let the wood take over, which leads your eye back out into the landscape.”

Entering the home from the front deck, the family’s warmth embraces guests in the

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LEFT: A second-floor games and media room is where the kids and grandkids unwind. **BELOW:** A skylight brightens up this bathroom, which leads to another outdoor seating area on the balcony offering a bird's eye view of the property. **BOTTOM:** Every weekend, the family drives from Sudbury to their private and peaceful oasis nestled in the country.



beautiful custom kitchen and dining area, just off the entryway. The kitchen features a very large island with stained-glass inserts and a vintage French stove, where family chef, “dear ol’ dad,” often cooks a fabulous Saturday morning breakfast. The kitchen and eating areas are large enough to treat family members and guests to a wonderful meal; the preparations are often a family affair.

Stepping down from the kitchen, a sunken living area boasts a fabulous piece of native art, which sits on the mantel of a floor-to-ceiling fireplace. The outside wall also features stone, which blends the home into the environment from the inside out.

Another deck area is accessed from the living room, a place to catch the late afternoon and evening sun as it descends through the trees. Through the kitchen's back door are tiered vegetable gardens with more seating areas, a hot tub, and a soccer field just beyond the outdoor living area. And, of course, the stream nearby is within earshot.

“This is where we live,” says the homeowner, stepping onto the back deck. “We have lamps everywhere in the evening. It's just magical.”

And that magic is everywhere, from the inside out and the outside in. This Pretty River paradise is simply zensational. **OH**

SOURCE GUIDE

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