

# Homes



## Garden rooms are sure to generate talk at Home & Garden show

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By Susan Banks,, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Garden rooms are hot at this year's Home & Garden show. While this trend has raged for several years on the coasts, it seems the 'Burgh is finally catching up.

Several landscaping firms have keyed in on the idea and will be displaying examples of ways to design exterior living rooms at the show. Though landscape design professionals are still in short supply here, about a dozen will be on hand this year, ready and willing to plan, construct and care for the landscape of your dreams.

Altogether, the show has about 190 vendors in the garden category, according to show director John DeSantis. They include wall builders, garden furniture dealers, landscape lighting firms and, of course, the landscape designers. As in previous years, their booths will be sprinkled throughout the first floor of the convention center.

Charlie Goetz, the owner of Brandon Landscape in Ross, has had a booth at the show for the past 10 years.

"We do everything from hard construction [walls, pavers] to the tree and shrub work," says Mr. Goetz, who also supplies designs.

This year, Mr. Goetz's display will demonstrate to visitors how to construct an outdoor room in a small amount of space. He also plans to include photographs that illustrate "different dimensions of jobs we have done."

"We have had lots of calls for outdoor rooms in general," encompassing things like barbecues, pizza ovens, planter walls, fire pits and an outdoor fireplace.



**Beds between brick and stone walls include verbena and cannas in a design created by Kevin Soergel. The landscaper will be paying his first visit to the Pittsburgh Home & Garden Show. Click photo for larger image.**



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**Brandon Landscape in Ross used raised beds of stacked stone to edge a patio made of pavers in McMurray. This year at Pittsburgh's Home & Garden Show the landscape firm will show visitors how to construct an outdoor room in a small amount of space.**

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video of finished projects.

He thinks people are more interested in their landscape these days because they are traveling less.

"They tend to come home and spend more time in the yard," he says.

Mr. Andresky also believes customers are better educated on plants.

"It's no longer the rhododendron here, the fountain cherry on the corner."

He advises potential clients to have an idea of what they want and how much they want to spend before they go shopping.

"I try to tell customers, 'If you want to buy a car, you have a general idea of what you want to spend. You have to have the same kind of idea of what your budget is [for landscaping], so you can get the most out of it.'"

Keith Morris, a landscape architect who owns K Landscape Design of Robinson, has been at the show for eight or nine years, the last two with his own firm.

He says the relatively small number of landscape design firms at the show works in his favor because there's less competition. His firm garnered 60 percent to 70 percent of last year's business from connections made at the event.

"We are a design-and-build company. We focus on high-end residential projects. We do complete designs and do all the installations as well," he says.

Mr. Morris believes that Pittsburgh still lags behind Cleveland and other parts of Ohio in terms of landscape firms that do it all. What you are more likely to find in Pittsburgh, he says, are more speciality contractors who do only one aspect of a job, like building walls, decks or ponds.

While Mr. Goetz says that most of the visitors to the show are "tire kickers," his firm realizes between 10 percent and 20 percent of its seasonal business from contacts made there.

While he concedes that Brandon Landscaping's clientele is mostly upscale, his company is willing to do design work for anybody. Design fees average around \$50.

Doug Andresky, owner of Andresky's Three Rivers Landscaping in Peters, is also making a return to the show.

Mr. Andresky, 38, has been in the business since he was 16. He, too, sees the trend toward outdoor rooms, and with it, a willingness to spend a little more on landscaping.

"We get a lot of people [at the show] who are very serious about doing something," he says. "They know what they want, and what they are looking for."

His display will incorporate some hardscape (walls and pavers), a water feature, which he specializes in, and a

And while his firms does it all, Mr. Morris says he is still quite willing to do a design for an ambitious do-it-yourselfer.

And then there is Kevin Soergel, owner of Soergel Landscapes in Pine. This is his first visit to the show, but his company, which was founded by his grandfather, has been around since 1936.

Mr. Soergel, who has a degree in landscape architecture, specializes in complete landscape designs, many of which incorporate large flower beds.

His booth will showcase a patio with pond, waterfall and fiber optic lights. Mr. Soergel, who is also a certified aquascape contractor, puts water elements in about half of his designs.

He says he's gotten "good word of mouth" from others who have participated in the show. He's hoping that the \$10,000 to \$15,000 investment he'll have to lay out for his booth display and rental will bring him lots of customers for the spring season.

To give prospective clients an incentive, his firm will offer show specials such as \$2,000 off the construction of a \$12,000 pond. Other contractors will also be offering show discounts. So be sure to ask. And enjoy the show.



**Kevin Soergel** is also a certified aquascape contractor.

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(Garden editor Susan Banks can be reached at [sbanks@post-gazette.com](mailto:sbanks@post-gazette.com) or

 412-263-1516 .)

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