



Fusing smart design, sustainable principles and classical elements of Japanese gardens – water, stone and greenery – James Landscaping transformed a small, suburban backyard into a stunning space that its owner can enjoy for years to come. The team took on the unique challenge with enthusiasm and expertise. The homeowner, who is of Japanese descent, wanted a space that would reflect her heritage and provide a retreat from the hustle-and-bustle of daily life.

The yard in question was not without its challenges. It had a significant slope from the fence down to the house and a swale running across the middle to manage rainwater. James Landscaping had to be innovative in their approach, and the homeowner’s vision of a Japanese-style garden provided the perfect inspiration for a design that embraced the natural elements of the yard while addressing its structural challenges.

GREEN & SERENE

James Landscaping, Inc. does it again with a tranquil, Japanese-inspired backyard



BORROWING SCENERY

"Transforming this backyard into a Japanese garden was a deeply fulfilling project. We wanted to create a space that not only reflected the homeowner's heritage, but also provided a beautiful, functional retreat for her to enjoy every day."

— Rhonda James, owner of James Landscaping, Inc.

One of the first tasks was to create a sense of separation within the yard, akin to mountainous landscapes often seen in traditional Japanese gardens. The concept of shakkei—a Japanese term that translates to "borrowed scenery," is an ancient garden design technique in which a distant view—such as a faraway mountain—is simulated into the garden composition. To achieve this, the team constructed a boulder retaining wall using moss boulders and planted patio holly trees on the upper level. This not only created a visual divide but also provided an elevated space that mimicked the peaks of a mountain range.

A dry creek bed was designed to run through the lower level of the yard, serving both aesthetic and practical purposes. During rainfall, this creek bed will channel water, preventing erosion and managing runoff. To enhance the garden's functionality and charm, two walkable bridges were installed—a wooden arched bridge and a stone slab bridge. These features not only added to the garden's beauty, but also ensured safe and easy access across the yard.

COVER PHOTO CREDIT (pictured l-r) Eva Lau, Rhonda James, Shannon Jeffrey Adam, Denise Taylor. (not pictured) Marie Weil, Priscilla French, Cassie James, Gayla Plichta.



INFUSING HARMONY AND CALM

In Japanese garden design, water symbolizes harmony and calm, so the thoughtful integration of water features was crucial in this space. For this project, the homeowner requested a boulder fountain that would attract birds by providing a natural bath and drinking spot. This feature became a focal point in the garden, bringing both visual and auditory tranquility to the space.

The existing landscape was thoughtfully incorporated into the new design. The homeowners had a cherished Japanese maple that remained a central feature. In addition, a Chinese Pistache tree that previously dominated a grassy area was encircled by a natural-looking walkway made from solid flagstone and decomposed granite joints. This flexible walkway design ensured that there was no mortar to crack over time, adding longevity and practicality to the aesthetic appeal.

To ensure year-round interest and color, the landscapers selected a variety of perennials and evergreen shrubs. This careful curation guaranteed that the garden would have vibrant hues in all four seasons. The need to reconfigure the sprinkler system was another aspect of the project, given the new two-level layout. A drip irrigation system was installed to avoid over-spraying walkways and to provide precise watering to plants, promoting their health and growth.

Lighting was another critical component of the garden's design. The homeowner, who has a small dog, wanted to ensure they could see their pet during evening walks around the garden. The strategically placed lighting not only met this practical need, but also enhanced the garden's ambiance after dark.

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"Our goal is to ensure that every landscape we create remains vibrant and healthy over time. By using organic fertilizers and carefully maintaining the plants, we can keep the garden flourishing and beautiful for years to come."

Rhonda James
owner of James Landscaping, Inc.



TAKING OUT THE GUESSWORK

Maintaining the landscape is a top priority for the homeowner. To meet those needs, James Landscaping also provides a comprehensive maintenance service. This includes the use of organic fertilizers, weeding, trimming and seasonal color changes in the front yard. James Landscaping works exclusively with organic fertilizers, noting that nurturing the soil's healthy microbes eliminates the need for harsh chemicals. This approach not only keeps the garden lush and vibrant, but also fosters a safe and sustainable environment.

The maintenance regimen also involves regular checks of the sprinkler system, ensuring that each plant receives the appropriate amount of water. This proactive approach helps identify and address any possible issues of over or under watering, keeping the plants healthy

and the garden in optimal condition. There's simply no DIY guesswork involved—with experts overseeing the watering and other maintenance matters, it's much easier for the homeowner to extend the life and beauty of her landscaping investment.

One of the most rewarding aspects of this project for James Landscaping was witnessing the homeowner's joy and satisfaction. She was ecstatic with the results, finding peace and pleasure in her beautifully transformed yard. The garden's ongoing maintenance ensures it remains a cherished retreat, where the homeowner can relax and enjoy her surroundings.

The project once again showcased the transformative power that a skilled, experienced and thoughtful team can bring to any land-



scaping project. By addressing the special challenges of the yard and incorporating the homeowner's cultural heritage, James Landscaping crafted a space that is both functional and beautiful. This project highlights the importance of integrating natural elements, sustainable practices, and personalized design to create a landscape that not only enhances the property, but also enriches the lives of those who enjoy it.

James Landscaping's commitment to maintaining the garden ensures that it will continue to thrive and bring joy for years to come. As the plants mature and the landscape evolves, the garden will only become more beautiful and valuable, proving that a well-designed and well-maintained landscape is a worthwhile investment in both aesthetic and financial terms.

For those looking to transform their own outdoor spaces, this project serves as an inspiring example of what can be achieved with creativity, expertise and a deep respect for nature and cultural traditions. Whether you're dreaming of a lush garden or an outdoor retreat to welcome friends and family, the key is working with skilled professionals who can bring your vision to life while ensuring the long-term health and beauty of your landscape.

James Landscaping
has been creating
personalized landscape
designs since 1989

- Landscape Design & Installation
- Ponds & Water Features
- Lighting
- Patios & Walkways
- Arbors
- Retainer Walls
- Irrigation (LI 5159)
- Drainage



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817-329-0528

JamesLandscaping.com

604 Katy Road | Keller, Texas 76248

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