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**Virginia**

# HOMEOWNERS

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# Nature made or Tharpe made?

by Oleta (Lee) Taylor

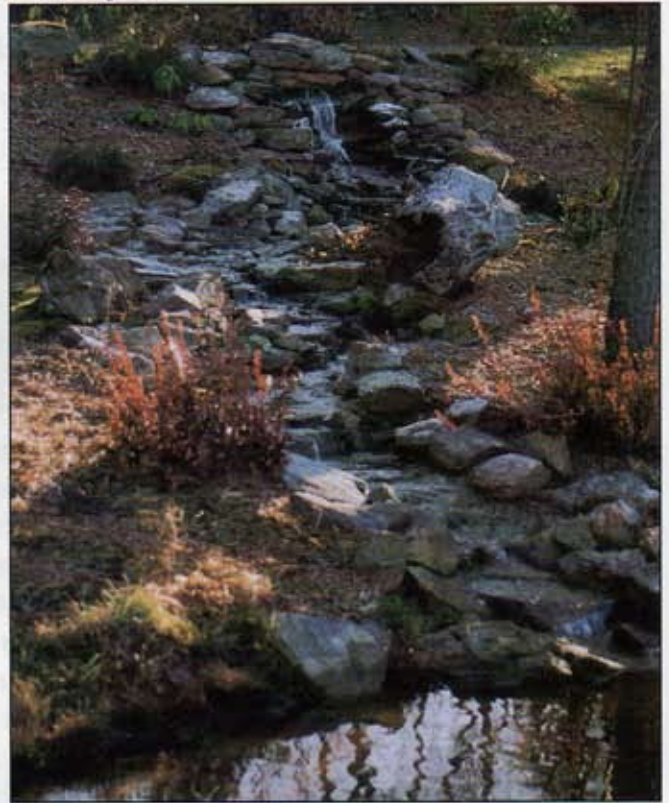
**U**nconventional? Maybe. Unique? Definitely; and oh so loved and trusted by all of his clients. This artist, Norman Tharpe, is storming our area.

Imagine a refreshing waterfall splashing down into a glorious clear-water pond filled with colorful fish varying in size from four to even twenty-four inch lengths. Fish that are pets, that often even surface and eat out of your hand. Then imagine this pond emptying into a curvy, cascading watercourse, stream or babbling brook in your yard.

This man takes water where it has never gone before. He'll take a barren patch of land and make it an oasis. Create a breath taking center-piece waterfall in a forgotten hillside and a stream to make you go "Ahhhh" stretching from one end of you property to the other. If it looks natural like it has been there forever; if it makes you feel like you never want to leave it, it's probably a Norman Tharpe Original.

"I have always loved working with water" says Tharpe. I really feel that the unique way I design and install these water gardens is a God-given talent", he adds, and right he is. But with that God-given talent, one has to acknowledge and appreciate the enormous amount of research and study he has applied himself to, that makes his work both unquestionably beautiful and enduring.

You're not likely to find cement or mortar bases



**Tharpe's creations hardly seem man made.**

used here. Such bases may eventually attract lime build up that ultimately kill the fish. They are also inflexible so they may crack and leak after weather changes costing you dearly. Neither are you likely to find pre-formed fiber glass, ceramic or even plexiglass tubs used in a Tharpe Original.

"If you want a tiled in, out-door fish bowl... call your pool guy" says Tharpe; "If you want

**The water garden process**



nature, call me”

Tharpe feels it is most important to find out what his customers have in mind first; how they plan to enjoy their garden and what they like best about other gardens he shows them. Then, with all of this in mind, he comes up with a design he really believes they'll love; but is always willing to alter it to match their dream. The addition of nightscape lighting makes many of these gardens enjoyed as much at night as they are in the day.

Tharpe's designs utilize a protective base covered with a 45 to 60 millimeter rubber liner. He then painstakingly settles each stone in its new niche and angles it to ensure optimum water flow. As with most artists, what is obvious to Tharpe, is not always obvious to everyone else. Hence the unbelievable speed with which he installs each masterpiece. Most water garden installers would need months to accomplish what Tharpe does in three to ten days.

“So where do you get your rocks from”, I asked, never expecting to hear what I was told next. “That depends on the rocks” he smiled. “These particular stones came from way up in the mountains. We dug them out. In fact, we often have to brave copper heads and rattlesnakes to get the stones we need. At times we can order them though. It's mostly the drift-wood and moss that keeps us in the woods.”

In some towns it is said “With Tharpe, nothing is impossible; he can make your garden dreams come true.” After visiting 15 of the 30 to 50 water gardens he installs each year, I believed it.



### Tharpe also creates patios and fountains.

From Old English styled lighted plant scapes with cobble stone creek beds— and from the well evolved Japanese styled, koi filled, bridged pond courses—to the most formal, meticulously plant and light scaped statue-watched fountain ponds, he designs what fits your lifestyle. If you're like me, you might simply want the down to earth, nature clad, park-like water fall and stream.

“We have to do one of these for my mom and dad”, I concluded. “Dad has always wanted to have a stream next to a weeping willow to rest beneath in his retire-



### This backyard setting is pleasing to the eye.

ment. Now learning that we don't have to wait to buy that special property to provide this for him, makes all the difference in the world.” As far as prices are concerned, Tharpe Originals are amazingly reasonable. With as little as \$1000.00 he can design and install either a small recirculating ornamental pond or a creek.

While his average project runs into the \$2,500 range, he has also had the pleasure of installing gardens of much greater value. His prices vary based on the excavation necessary, the design requested and the current cost of materials.

Watergarden's by Tharpe is located 9 miles south of Lynchburg on Route 29, with a full line of water garden supplies including fountains, fish, plants, etc. He also gives pond tours to pond club members, a membership which is automatic once he installs a pond for you; at which time you begin receiving information regarding pond tours, maintenance, etc.

In Japan, ponds with running water have always been a part of home gardens because of the tranquility they lend; but recently Americans are beginning to catch on and appreciate this particular stress reliever formerly reserved only for malls and public structures. When you consider what could be a sizeable increase in the assessment value of your property once a Tharpe Original has been installed, then you weigh its reported soothing effects against a stress filled environment... it may be a wise decision to look into this garden alternative for your property. For more information you can contact Watergarden's By Tharpe (804) 821-8619



One of Tharpe's trademark is the addition of the Japanese Walking Stick (plant) with his indirect lighting.