

in the green | entrepreneur finds healing within garden spaces



Salsbury-Schweyer Inc. founders Samuel Salsbury and Sabrena Schweyer: "We share in the design work," Schweyer says.

BY PAMELA J. WILLITS
PHOTO BY NICOLE BARTOLOZZI

Growing up on a farm, Sabrena Schweyer developed an early affinity for the land. While Schweyer's desire to live in harmony with nature seeded her interest in horticulture, it was studying architecture and the arts abroad that allowed her talents to take root.

"Gardens, as an art form, have been integral to English history," Schweyer says. She became intrigued with the connection between architecture and outdoor spaces; the relationship between inside and outside and how we live our lives.

Following a position with England's National Trust, Schweyer returned to the States and started her own business. In 1992 she met Samuel Salsbury, a violinist turned builder/developer. "He won my heart at a party as I listened to him play the violin," Schweyer says.

With a common vision of creating beautiful spaces, they merged both their business and private lives. Today Salsbury-Schweyer Inc. is a nationally recognized, award-winning landscape design firm located in Akron, offering residential and commercial design.

As members of the Association of Professional Landscape Designers and the American Society of Landscape Architects, both lecture on sustainability and water management, having presented at professional conferences, as well as to developers, city planners, home and business owners, and gardening clubs. Schweyer is also a guest columnist for the Plain Dealer.

"We share in the design work," Schweyer, while acknowledging both her husband's artistic abilities and business sense, says. As for her, it's about ecology and sustainability.

Permaculture embodies living in harmony with nature, and as more people are embracing outdoor living, Schweyer's green focus is being embraced by her clients.

"It's about how we can live within the natural world while letting nature take care of our needs and at the same time, mend the systems we have disturbed," Schweyer says. Imagine a colorful prairie transforming your front yard into a no-mow lawn, a lush garden pond filled with golden koi or a swimming pool free of harsh chemicals.

High-stress living has spawned a trend of gardens as therapy. One client recently told Schweyer his family's garden has become a healing sanctuary. "When he gets up in the morning, the first thing he does is throw open the windows to see what's blooming," Schweyer, who believes time spent outdoors also strengthens family bonds, says.

As a shift in consciousness has led more people to seek healthier and organic foods, the design firm is getting more requests for edible landscaping. It's no longer unusual to see Swiss chard or kale interplanted with perennials.

The client-designer relationship begins with a questionnaire, which allows Schweyer to understand their tastes and personalities. Then they walk the land together. Understanding the space is also paramount.

"We strive to create landscapes that are personal and meaningful to each individual client. Our clients are an integral part of the design process," Schweyer says. "They have to be engaged, so the final creation reflects who they are and fits their needs."

Visit the Highland Square Community Garden in Akron to immerse yourself in Salsbury-Schweyer's recent botanical creation. ■

For more information: salsbury-schweyer.com