



# DESIGNING BARRINGTON LIFESTYLES

Beautiful Outdoor Water Gardens Create a Relaxing Oasis and a  
Place to Gather in the City or the Country.

GARDEN DESIGN BY **LARRY CARNES / REFLECTIONS WATER GARDENS**  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **LARRY CARNES** | WRITTEN BY **LISA STAMOS**

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*Debby and Mike Piraino's new water garden is a beautiful and safe focal point around which they and their children and grandchildren gather to relax.*

## GARDENING WITH WATER

LARRY CARNES GREW UP near Barrington and as a young man, found himself interested in art, architecture, and landscape design while in school. Today, he uses those interests and honed skills in a business he owns that specializes in custom water gardens, ponds, waterfalls, and natural swimming ponds. He even creates manmade wetlands that are constructed with gravel and other natural substrates, wetland friendly plantings, and a water flow rate that keeps the ecosystem healthy.

Carnes started his business in 2010, after having worked for other landscape firms. His first natural pool was built in his home's backyard. The two projects featured here include a city dweller, Paul, who runs a business he owns, and is a firefighter, too. What better environment to return home to for a firefighter than a cool, lovely outdoor water pond surrounded by a variety of plants and trees and filled with koi!

For Paul, a water garden was always a dream, and now it has come true. His double lot in Chicago might seem an unsuspecting place for koi to swim freely, but today, a beautiful water garden with an above-water wooden walkway between the home, patio, and garages is in place. The patios and walkways are heated under the pavement to create a snow-melting system, as Paul's long hours keep him from doing much snow shoveling.

The other project was a complete re-creation of a South Barrington backyard, with an outdated and poorly functioning waterfall and pond that were original to the 28-year-old home. "We were updating the entire back yard area and wanted a more impressive water feature," homeowner Debby Piraino said. "We wanted

something unique, with several levels of dramatic waterfalls, that would blend with our landscape. Larry met, and then exceeded, our expectations, making this area of our backyard landscape look so beautiful and we are extremely grateful," Piraino added.

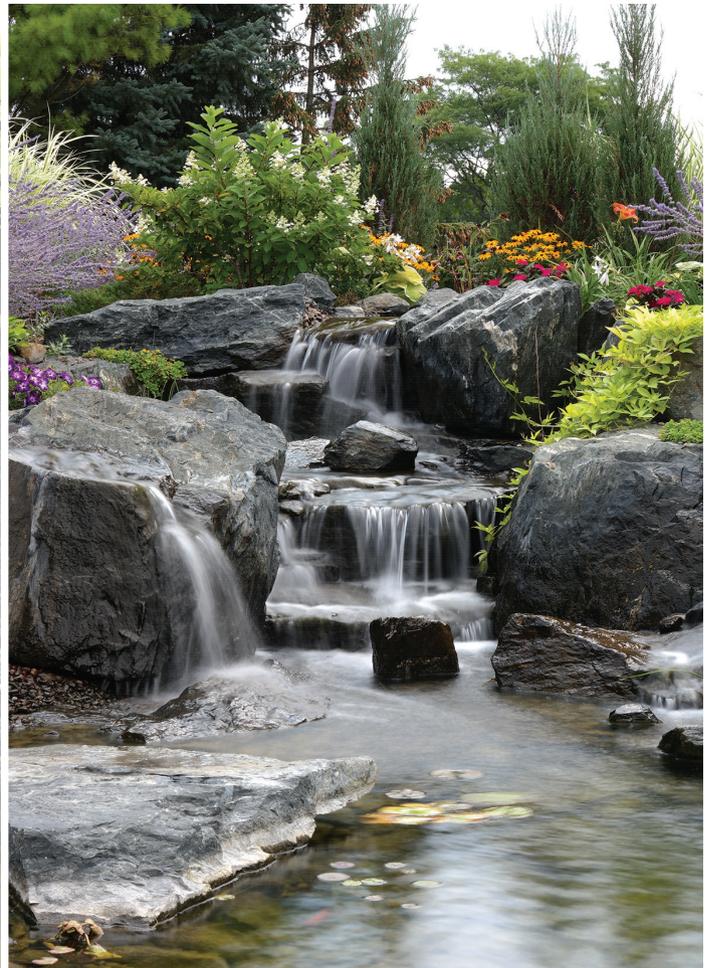
Carnes is often a part of larger home redesign projects, like the Piraino's, that includes construction and hardscaping of the property beyond the water feature. It's best for him to come in first to get his work done, so as to not disturb the other projects with the heavy the equipment he uses, crossing yards and patios. The Pirainos had heard about Carnes through another contractor who was fixing their leaking pool. The homeowners also didn't care for the look of the pool and pond, and they wanted to bring in larger fish, and would need more water for that.

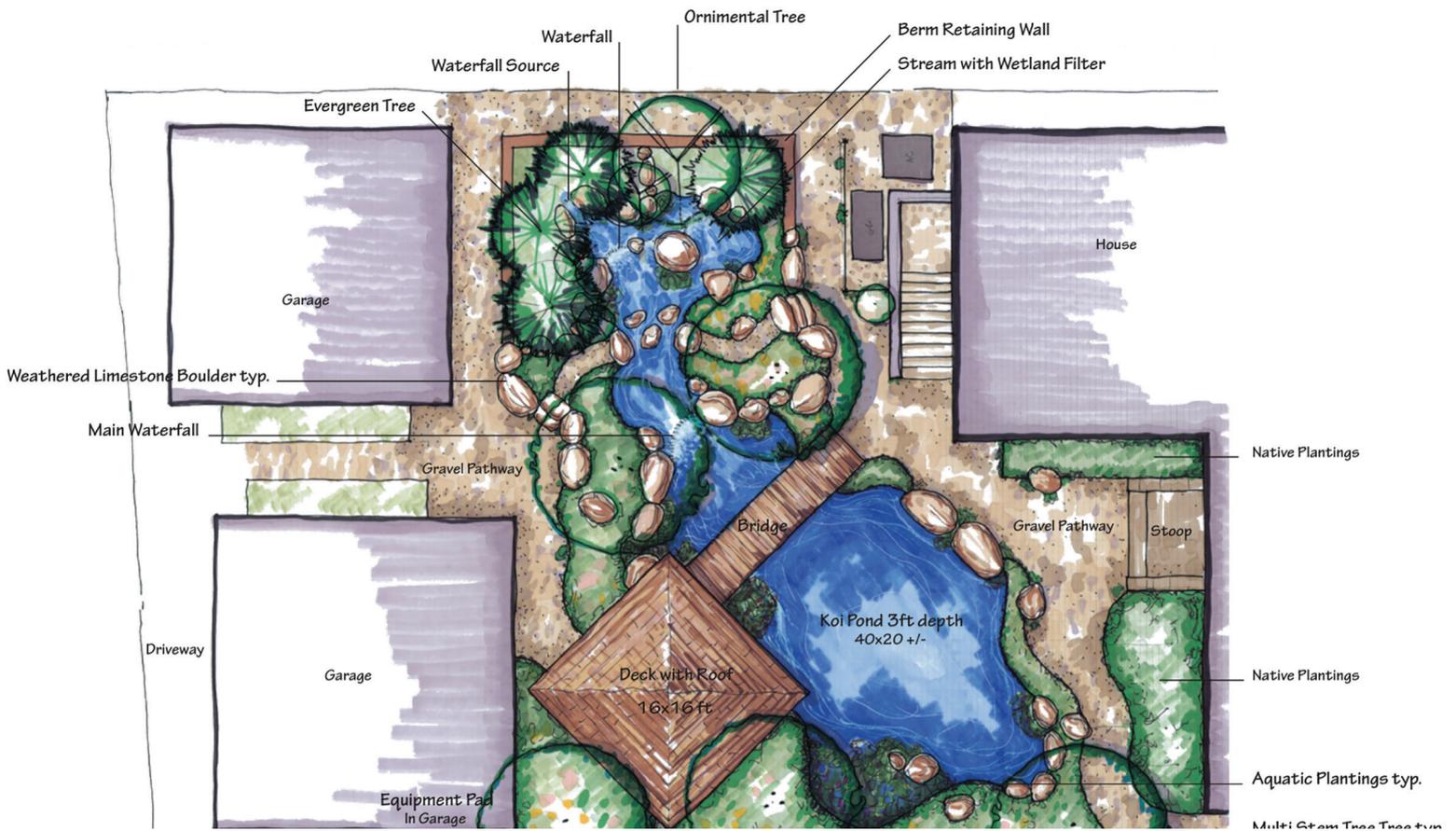
"We hired Larry because he came highly recommended," Piraino said. "He came up with a design after several discussions about features we wanted to see incorporated into the design. Throughout the building process, Larry was very accommodating. He was always open to tweaking the design here and there to make it look as awesome as it does."

For these projects—both in city and in the countryside—Carnes listens carefully to the homeowner and personally constructs custom illustrations and videos for his clients to review. "What is most important to me is to make elegant water gardens and ponds that look real," Carnes said. He hand-selects the materials for the designs and then creates an oasis of tranquility, the natural sanctuaries that his clients so desire. 

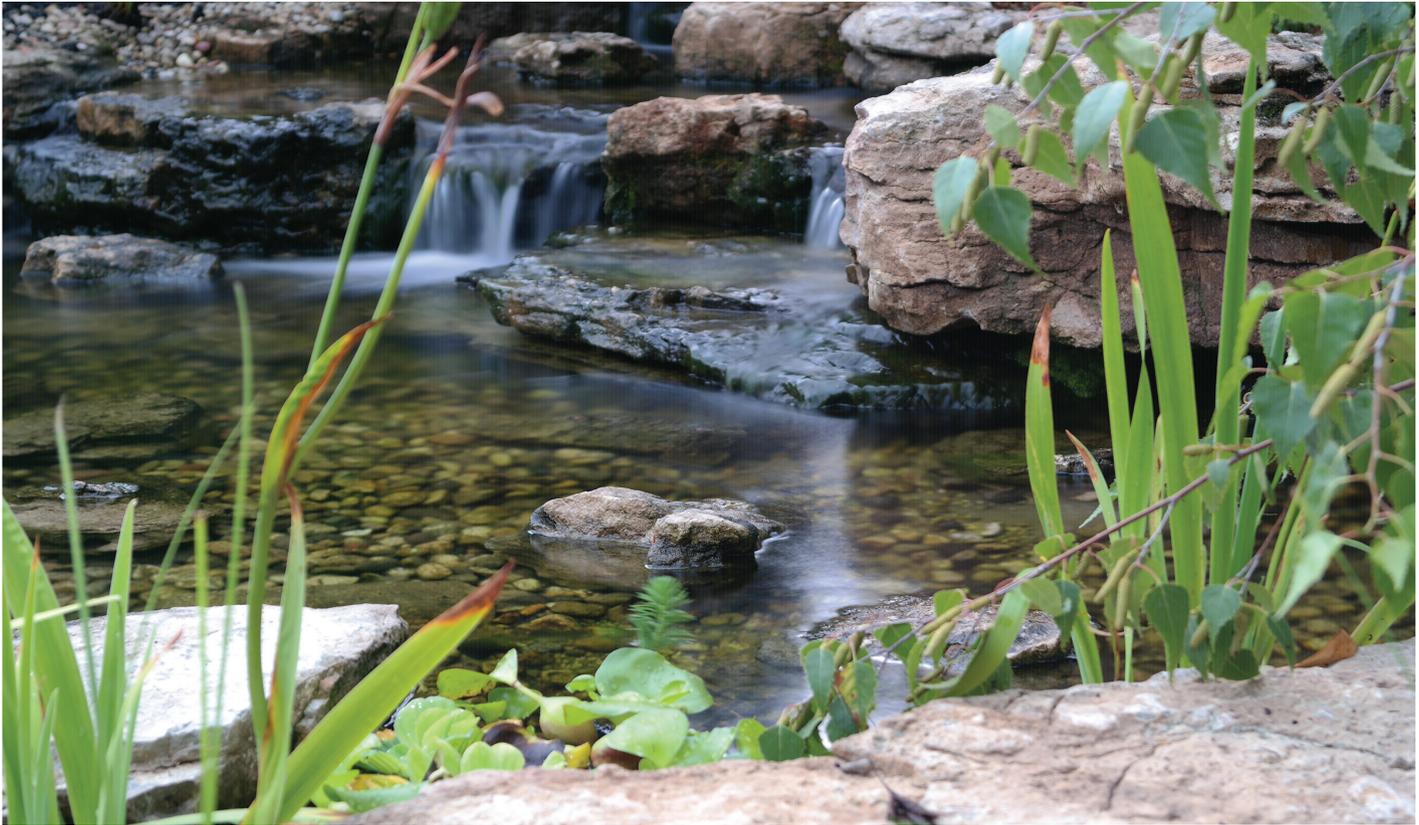


The pool and pond to be replaced were original to a home in one of South Barrington's first subdivisions. The pool was leaking and a remodel and rebuild was underway. The pool contractor brought Reflections Water Gardens in to meet with the client. Its owner, Larry Carnes, did a sketch that included darker stones, and a larger space with multiple waterfalls and features that would also allow for larger fish. The water garden project took one month. The client's concerns and interests were: no leaking, a place their grandchildren could enjoy, a safe perimeter around the installation, no unsecured rocks, and an aesthetically pleasing design that would also sound good—able to drown out nearby traffic, but also enable conversations. Carnes had to build a temporary bridge between the patio and the pond work area to move heavy equipment and the large, multi-ton aqua blue boulders. To avoid disrupting other projects, Carnes had to get in and finish his work first. All water mechanicals were secured and hidden out of view. A couple of years later, he added three more waterfalls to the scene upon client's request, without having to move any of the hardscaping. Today, the Piraino entire family gathers around the new pool and pond—a dream built with water.





Chicago resident Paul had always dreamed of have a koi pond in his backyard, a double lot in the city. He had seen the work of Reflections Water Gardens, and liked their natural-looking projects. The backyard that was to become a large pond was a wide, flat patch of sod that created open space between the home and its two garages. There were two conditions for the client. First, there had to be a snow-melting system for the patio and walkways, and the pond had to stay clean to keep the fish healthy. Site logistics created some challenges, mostly for getting in and out with equipment and materials within the 4-6 feet of space between the garages. With careful planning and navigation, soil was removed, other materials brought in, a berm was created, and numerous plant materials and trees were integrated in and around the waterscape. The entire front lawn was torn out as part of the project, now replaced with plantings designed by Larry Carnes. The challenge was to create a natural space in an unassuming city lot. Now completed, Paul can walk out to his pond and enjoy a sense of peace and relaxation.



**Larry Carnes** is the owner and principal designer for Reflections Water Gardens, a water garden and pond design/build firm based in Northern Illinois. Carnes also offers maintenance and consulting services. While much of his work is in the greater Chicago area, he also travels to Virginia, Georgia, and Florida to create custom water features, including projects from small ponds of 100 square feet, up to 20,000 square foot ponds and everything in between. His work features water gardens, natural swimming pools, and waterfalls, and is mostly residential, but he also has commercial clients whose outdoor water features he maintains in season. As long as Reflections Water Gardens builds and maintains a client's water project, he will warranty his workmanship in perpetuity; this does not include a warranty for mechanical parts that can wear out or break down, and are warranted separately by the manufacturer.

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