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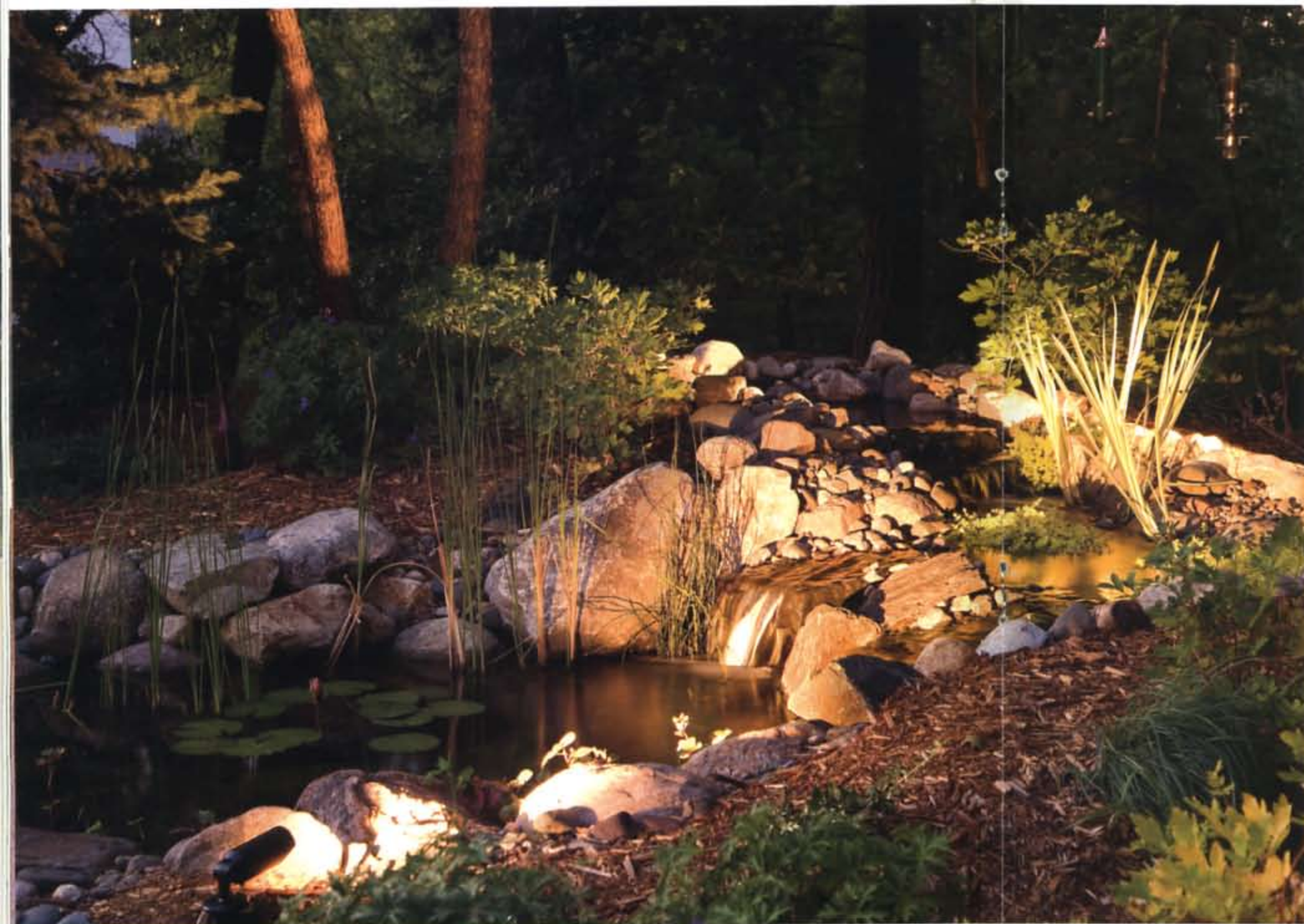


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Above: The pond, surrounded by a dry creek bed, features a mini waterfall.

A Small Backyard With Big Potential

Southview Design helps an Eagan family create a tranquil, private space.

TEXT BY MARCIA JEDD

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEVIN JOHNSTON, JOHNSTON IMAGING & INTERACTIVE



Above top: The 760-square-foot patio has three distinct living areas.

Above bottom: The gas fireplace and pergola blocks the view of neighbors and warms up a brisk fall evening.

A desire for a bigger and more usable patio prompted Tracy Meyer and her husband, Tom Mahowald, to call Southview Design landscape contractors.

"Over the 10 years we've owned the home, we've done a lot of remodeling. We knew we wanted to do something in the back," Meyer says, noting the family had ruled out adding a four-season room to the back of the home. So Southview Design transformed the family's backyard into a series of outdoor rooms to create a private retreat while

extending its living space.

"It's amazing how Southview Design was able to get so many features in what I consider a smaller backyard and not make it look crowded or too busy. It all flows naturally," Meyer says. The project included the addition of a paver patio to replace a small aggregate patio, accessed through sliding doors off the kitchen. The 760-square-foot patio features a gas fireplace with stone benches and two dining/gathering areas, including a pergola-framed socializing space.



Above: The outdoor rooms incorporate plenty of seating, including two boulders to the right of the fireplace that can be used as benches.

From the main patio, an inviting landscape beckons. A koi-filled mini-pond yields the gentle sound of running water, and stepping stones lead to an additional firepit patio with two lounge chairs.

Southview Design landscape designer, Josh Koller, notes the project accomplished a lot, given its small space. "We gave it a real open feeling. I wanted to make sure we were extending the seasons, so we put in a fireplace by the house for easy access and to keep things warm." Function helped dictate design in other ways, too, such as

facilitating better drainage with the use of lined dry creek beds to direct water away from the home, toward a natural drainage pond at the rear of the property.

Koller, along with design assistant Abby Martinek, and project manager Adam Koller, maximized the full potential of the woody backyard. At night, low-voltage lighting showcases these trees and other areas of the yard. Meyer adds: "There's a huge variety of hardscape, including a few accent boulders in the dry creek beds around



the property that are really standout pieces."

Meyer says the project greatly extends the family's enjoyment of the backyard to include the spring through late fall. "It's always within our sight line and the house feels larger from the inside." In warm weather, the family, including their two boys, often take their breakfast and lunch on the patio. Visitors to the home are delighted by the view of the pond from the front door.

The outdoor project process is similar to indoor remodeling, Meyer says. "You need to be

involved on almost a daily basis with things such as selecting plants and pavers." The Southview crew worked on site at the home for about two weeks, and the project was completed in August 2006. "Along the way, Josh educated us on the concept of outdoor living. All of the elements coalesce to make up more than the sum of their parts," Meyer concludes.

Marcia Jedd is a Twin Cities-based freelance writer and communications consultant.

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Pergola Construction:
Keller Residential
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Pavers & Stones:
Hedberg Aggregates
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Above: Cozy fires await in this inviting backyard space. Evergreen shrubs, hostas and hydrangeas contribute year-round interest.