



A custom-built, 45-foot-long waterfall/stream at nighttime, with accent lighting by Kichler Design Pro LED.

## Nature ... By Design!

Turning a natural environment into a man-made wonder

by **Jim Lewis,**

President of Lewis Landscape Services, Inc.

Our company does a lot of different kinds of landscaping, but water features are something we always look forward to doing. There are advantages and disadvantages to being an all-phases landscape contractor versus just being a water feature special-

ist. One of the advantages is that we can land really large jobs that we wouldn't have been able to do if we just specialized in one genre of landscaping. This is one of those cases. We landed this job specifically because we could handle the entire landscaping project, and it was a very big job: a quarter of a million dollars in all.

Part of this project involved making a functional streambed/waterfall feature that would go with the rest of the landscape and also blend in with the surrounding

forest area that this property backed up to. Our challenge was to make a water feature that was as natural as possible, sounded beautiful and fit into these surroundings. It was also imperative that the water feature match the scale of the project. Our clients wanted something that would really be a main focal point in their backyard. So even though water features aren't our only business, our goal was to build a water feature that was as good as if they were our main business.

To accomplish this, we had several key phases that were imperative to succeeding in our goal.

### The Design

The first thing we had to do was to come up with a design for our water feature. We work very closely with a local landscape designer, Susie Sonderen. We hired her to design this backyard landscape and water feature. After meeting with our clients and our project manager, Susie got busy creating a design where the water feature would be a main attraction but also compliment the rest of this amazing backyard. She designed a water feature that is 45 feet long and varying

in width by about five to 10 feet along the way.

### Inspiration

I really felt it was key for us to create a feature unlike anything we had done in the past. My inspiration came from reading a book called "The R.I.S.E. Method" by Rick Bartel. This book really changed my way of thinking when it came to water features. I felt it was important for everyone involved with the construction of this water feature to read the book as well. So I handed a

copy of the book to our project manager, Brad Steyskal. He read it and was also very impressed. He had our construction foreman and each of the members of our install crew read it as well. It was the methods that Rick teaches in that book that really helped us to think outside the box and create a water feature that looked very natural and unique.

### Unique Features

One of our goals was to add some unique features to this water feature that you wouldn't normally see in every water



A small footbridge (top, right) going over a stream with a light bar underneath. The landscape (above, left) before construction of the waterfall. A view of the water feature (above, right) from the top, looking downstream.



“A photo of the landscape (left) before construction of the waterfall and surrounding landscape. The client had a dry streambed effect previously. We were able to repurpose the large, drilled bubbler rock in the bottom of this photo and use it as one of the spillways in the new water feature. A view of the entire water feature (right) in the late afternoon. Fallen logs, islands and various sizes and types of rock were implemented to help the water feature blend in well with the surroundings.”

feature. We started by implementing a large rock bubbler that the client already had on site. This would be one of the spillways at the top of the water feature. But to make it even more unique and natural, we installed two more spillways as well, using hidden biofalls units near the top of the water feature. The installation of three different valves allowed us to increase or decrease the flow from each of the three water sources. When dialed in just right, it is difficult to tell where the water is actually coming from in this water feature, even when you are standing right next to it. So having multiple spillways was one of the things we implemented to make the water feature unique.

Next, our designer had the idea to install a small footbridge that would run over the water feature. This created a lot

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of visual interest but also allowed us an amazing lighting opportunity for the next phase of our water feature. We found a bridge online at [mastergardenproducts.com](http://mastergardenproducts.com) and installed it over the stream.

We then tied some of the natural surroundings into the water feature. We used fallen logs that were on the property

and had moss growing on them and placed these inside and around the edges of the water feature. Instead of bordering the water feature with only rock, as we had often done previously, we installed soil and mulch and logs right up to the edge of the stream, which helped it blend into the surrounding landscape well.

One final unique feature we installed was a variable-speed pump with remote control. It allows the owner to turn the flow of the water feature up or down with a little key fob. This was something that the homeowners were excited about because they would have something that none of their friends would have.

### Outdoor Lighting

After we had completed the project, our next phase was to add outdoor lighting. We installed an 18-inch LED light

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bar (Kichler Design Pro LED) underneath the bridge to shine down on the water feature. That turned out to be a very nice effect. In addition, we installed three accent lights on different sections of the water feature. Since there was a pathway next to the water feature, we also installed a few lights along the pathway that helped create a nice soft glow into the water feature area as well.

The final project was a result of all of our past experience, inspiration from Rick's book, a great design and some creative ingenuity on all our parts, all combined to create one of our

most successful water feature projects to date.

It took a little over a week for a team of three workers to install this water feature and the lighting around it. Our client ended up with a water feature that was natural, fit into its surroundings and was something unique that will serve as a talking point when entertaining guests. Our clients were thrilled with the end result and our workers learned a lot. We accomplished our goals and made good profit on the job. We now have another nice water feature to add to our portfolio. All in all, this was an ideal job. ☞

### About the Author



**Jim Lewis** is the owner of Lewis Landscape Services, Inc. in Beaverton, Oregon — a suburb of Portland. He started the company on his own in 1996 and in the 17 years since has grown the company to over \$2.5 million in annual sales. Lewis Landscape specializes in custom residential landscaping and water features. Jim's focus is now on running the company and assuring that his high level of standards and dedication to customer service is met with each project the company takes on. You can learn more about the company at [www.lewislandscape.com](http://www.lewislandscape.com)



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