

Selected Books from Main Street • by Margaret Waterson of Battenkill Books

Hardscaping: How to Use Structures, Pathways, Patios & Ornaments in Your Garden (A Selection of the Homestyle Book Club)

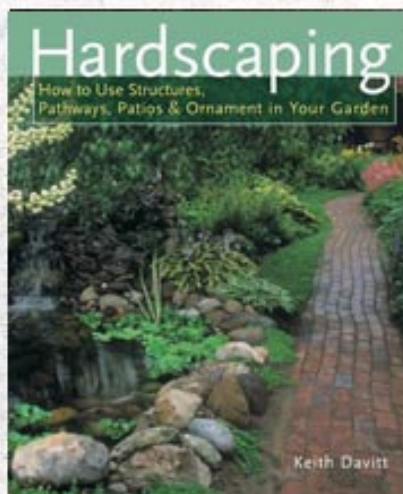
by Keith Davitt

(Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., July 2006)

Davitt begins *Hardscaping* with the suggestion that hard structures are often the "missing something" needed to turn a lovely patch of lush plantings into a well-defined, unique, and complete garden space.

Structures are placed in the garden for a variety of functional and/or aesthetic purposes. They differ widely in size, shape, style, and function—just as each garden, and each gardener, differs. *Hardscaping* takes the reader on a guided tour of exemplary gardens graced with walls, boulders, streams, pools, and fountains; arbors, decks, benches, garden sheds, and tree-houses; sculpture, pots, planters, bird-baths, and urns. Many of the gardens shown were designed by the author, but many more reflect the work of other designers from across the United States and Europe.

The key to this book is that the author gives a real *guided* tour of these gardens. Davitt demonstrates and explains the design principles that produce the desired effect in each garden. He writes persuasively that understanding basic design principles "equips us for those times and situa-



tions in which inspiration fails to supply us with a design that satisfies.... It's fine to design by instinct or some quality of emotional cognition. Most of us do. But knowing, intellectually, the principles behind successful designs can only assist us in furthering our comprehension and leading us to greater achievements in the pursuit of creating beautiful gardens."

I think Davitt must approach writing one of his beautiful garden books the way he approaches designing and installing a gar-

den. *Hardscaping* is obviously designed to be easy to use and lovely to peruse. Almost 250 photographs, most by the author, illustrate and support the text. In addition to the usual "before and after" shots, some photographs have been digitally altered to demonstrate the effect of placing a hard structure in a specific spot.

The format of each chapter is consistent, introducing the reader to relevant design principles, then proceeding with commentary and analysis of the gardens pictured, and ending with detailed instructions for building garden structures discussed in the chapter. The entire book has a liberal scattering of boxed sidebars containing "A few thoughts on..."—interesting, tangential tidbits which, I suspect, would otherwise have been buried and lost in the text, or under the editor's desk.

Davitt's prose style suits his dual role of teacher and artist in this book. His writing is clear, direct, and instructive throughout, yet it is equally graceful, personal, and inviting. There are also some flashes of the poetic. For example, I love the insight and the language of his final reason to include hard structures in the garden: "...Finally, structure provides permanence. A garden consisting only of plants tends to vanish with time. The space remains, but the individual elements that make that place special often succumb to eras of neglect and

the indifference of time. Structure helps a garden to endure...."

Davitt has been designing, building, photographing, writing, and speaking about gardens nationwide for more than two decades. He contributes to numerous magazines, such as *Fine Gardening*, *Garden Design*, *Gardening How-to*, *Horticulture*, *Period Homes*, *Traditional Building*, and *WaterShapes*. He was a major contributor to *Fine Gardening*'s "Gardening in Small Spaces."

Davitt is frequently asked to teach landscape design in various venues, including botanic gardens; to give presentations and to conduct seminars and symposiums; and to appear on television shows. He lives in Cambridge, NY, with his wife, Jacqueline McKannay. He can be contacted at 518-677-8357 or through his portfolio website: www.gardenviews.com.

Other Garden Books by Keith Davitt

- *Small Spaces, Beautiful Gardens*
- *Beyond the Lawn: Unique Outdoor Spaces for Modern Living*
- *Water Features for Small Gardens: From Concept to Construction*