

Setting High Quality And Artistic Standards Pays Off For Tenino Firm

Stone People have fun and success with rocks and water



Everyone likes to play in the dirt, including Todd Harris (left) and Stone People employee Nathan Poe.

When Todd Harris started Stone People, LLC in 2003 doing its first job in a highly-visible spot on the west end of Olympia, lots of people stopped by to pick up cards and admire the wall they were building. Stone People spent most of their first year working in that neighborhood, gradually building up equipment and resources.

Within a relatively short time, the staff had grown to nine. But Harris realized it was taking too much time to train employees to meet the firm's quality and artistic standards, so he made a conscious decision to downsize. Today, the four-person staff keeps things moving along at a manageable pace while maintaining high standards.

Our employees are highly-skilled, motivated, and trustworthy," Harris says. "We look for people who have the same passion, artistic drive, and knowledge as we do. We spend a lot of time ensuring our employees are trained to their job efficiently. We also pay them a sustainable living wage to support them and their families as a career."

A native Californian who grew up in Issaquah, Todd says the mission of the Tenino-based company is to create beautiful, functional, ecological, and interesting land and water-scapes that promote biodiversity and help people enjoy their yard as an extension of their living space.

Todd is joined in his effort by his wife, Kari, who came west from International Falls (brrrr), Minnesota, before getting married four years ago. Kari keeps the office running,

does some cad work, and generally combines the skills she acquired with a business technology degree from St. Cloud State University in her home state.

"We get our job satisfaction out of making people happy and exceeding their expectations," Harris notes. "Along with that, I would say we enjoy seeing the transformation from start to finish on projects. There is a lot of satisfaction in seeing all the hours of hard work come together in a beautiful work of art to be enjoyed by people and wildlife."

Wildlife and animal habitat are also passions of both Todd and Kari. They have donated three waterfeatures to Wolf Haven International, a non-profit wolf sanctuary, and Kari serves on the organization's Board of Directors. In addition, their community service efforts also benefit the Sound to Harbor Headstart Program.

One recent installation that brought a lot of job satisfaction is the Byers project that involved construction of a 110-foot creek and pond complete with waterfall. The boulder placement, flagstone patios, and plant design all combined with the water feature to create a spectacular result.

"The customers were as passionate about having a waterscape as I was about creating it for them," he said. "We developed a great rapport and were given a great amount of design freedom to create the vision I had for the space."

Stone People, LLC is ICPI certified, NCMA certified, and also is a Certified

Aquascape Contractor. In addition to their WALP membership and participation in the Thurston County Chapter, they are active members of the NW Ecobuilding Guild, Olympia Master Builders, and the Washington Koi and Waterscape Society.

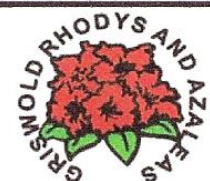
When asked why he is active in WALP, Harris counts continuing education, networking with other professionals, knowledge, and legislative power as chief motivators. "Membership in trade organizations has also helped to differentiate our company from the many other contractors in business," he adds.

Congratulations to Stone People, LLC. For more information and more examples of their work, you are encouraged to visit their functional and attractive website at www.stonepeoplellc.com.

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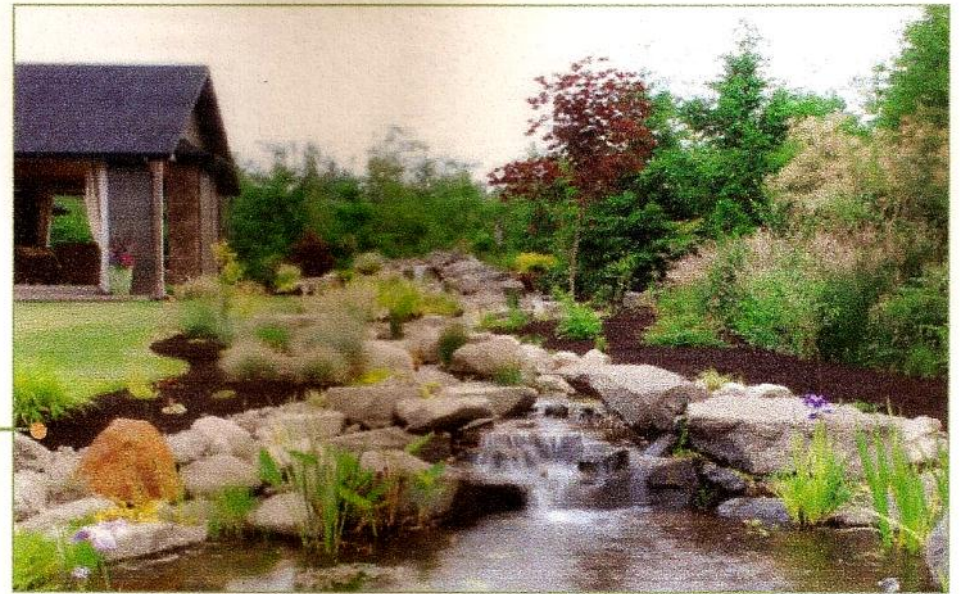
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This urn waterfeature creates a tranquil feeling in an aquascape created by Stone People.



This 110-foot creek and pond on the Byers' property transformed the landscape and is a source of pride for Stone People.



Two streams merge into a pond on this outstanding project by Todd Harris and his crew.