



# Seasons

OF THE FARMINGTON VALLEY™



MEET WORLD WAR II VETERAN CLAYTON "BILL" COOKE



THE POLLAN FAMILY TABLE



SUMMER NIGHTS AT THE DRIVE-IN



TIMOTHY SHRIVER AND SPECIAL OLYMPICS CONNECTICUT ATHLETES





**SLICE OF HEAVEN:** At the Asensio home in Simsbury, Creative Contour installed an outdoor space where the family can dine al fresco.

# Backyard Makeovers

To transform outdoor spaces, Creative Contour combines high technology with the human touch

**W**atching Jennifer Noyes, owner of Creative Contour Landscape Design, do a virtual makeover of a client's yard is fascinating: She sits at her twin 24-inch computer monitors before digital images of the client's property, and moves plants in and out of beds and borders with the click of a mouse. She might lay down a patio or a new walkway – or perhaps add a pergola – and then expertly selects perennials, annuals, shrubs and trees that are likely to

thrive in the conditions presented by that particular yard. In this way, Noyes is not only able to create before and after pictures of a client's property – she is able to create a “pre-after” shot as well, which allows her to show clients what their redesigned yard will look like before any soil is touched. “It's been said a billion times, but a picture is really worth a thousand words,” says Noyes. “People have an instinctual need to know exactly what they are purchasing.”



Written by **Lori Miller Kase**  
Photography by **Tony Reynolds**

New technology has had a huge impact on how landscape design companies like Creative Contour do what they do. “Sophisticated design software has dramatically changed how we do landscape design,” says Noyes. “Digital imagery is an absolute must to our business – it’s used in 100 percent of our jobs. It is simply irreplaceable in terms of allowing clients to visualize what we’re recommending.” Still, it is the creativity and human touch that Noyes brings to each project that keeps clients coming back for more. According to Noyes’ business manager – and fiancé – Steve Frank, Noyes produced 140 designs last year and installed 38 projects. (Some property owners take Noyes’ plans and do their own planting, while others rely on Noyes, Frank and their crew to do the entire installation.) “Some of our clients end up having us come back to do more of their property,” Noyes says, “because they are so happy with the results.”

### **A Passion for Art and Gardening**

Noyes, who has been designing landscapes for more than a decade, has been gardening for most of her life. She grew up in Westminster, Vermont, where she developed a passion for gardening at a young age. When she was only 10, a neighbor – and avid gardener – let Noyes work in her garden, and gave Noyes her first lessons in horticulture. By the time Noyes reached high school, she was working in nearby Putney for renowned landscape architect Gordon Hayward, the father of one her friends, helping to maintain his gardens. Noyes ultimately obtained a degree in landscape design and ornamental horticulture from Vermont Technical College, her father’s alma mater. She loves art, and has been drawing and painting flowers and plants since she was a child, so her chosen field unites her two passions.

Noyes left Vermont to intern for Hertzog Associates, a landscape design firm in Stockton, New Jersey, but couldn’t stay away from New England – and her family – for long. She moved to Connecticut in 2002, and worked as a designer for other companies for a few years before venturing out on her own in 2007. Frank, who left his job with the City of Hartford last year to join up with Noyes, oversees all of Creative Contour’s installations.

### **Imagination Meets Technology**

Noyes’ backyard makeovers begin long before the installation of a project. The first step is the consultation: Noyes visits a client’s home, takes a slew of photographs, and interviews the property owners about their color and plant preferences, their lifestyle, and how they plan to use their yards. “All these questions help me to design better,” she says. Noyes will often set up shared Pinterest pages with her



**FIRE IT UP:** Susan and Bob Asensio enjoy their new outdoor fireplace year round - even in winter.



**"PRE-AFTER" SHOT:** Noyes created this digital rendering of a front yard in Litchfield to help a client visualize her plan.

clients – where they can both post photos they find online for inspiration – and gets to work drawing up detailed plans. Using photographs of the client's existing outdoor space, Noyes then produces the digital re-imaginings of the yard that help clients to better "see" her visions.

As Noyes drives along the winding roads that lead to her Middletown home and studio, she can't help redesigning her neighbors' yards in her mind. But she says she has even more fun when she's hired to implement her ideas and transform someone's outdoor space. Cynthia and Phil Ritola of Cheshire contacted Jennifer and Steve four years ago, because they wanted to clean up a hillside behind their home. However, when Noyes saw their property, she immediately had ideas for beautifying the entire prop-

erty. The Ritolas were so taken by Noyes' digital makeovers of other parts of their yard, they put the hillside project on hold and asked her to tackle a completely different project – then another, and yet another.

"Jennifer was able to show me that rather than having a scraggly patch of grass on the side of the house, I could have a walking path with bushes, making it look like a walk through the woods," says Cynthia Ritola. "She also showed me what it would look like to replace my scraggly deck with a stone stairway and patio – and how much it would open up the property to take down some of my trees." Noyes and Frank have returned every year to work their magic on different parts of the property but have yet to tackle the hillside. Says Frank, "It's a joke amongst the four of us."

Though homeowners can find an array of computer software geared toward helping them design their own gardens virtually, Noyes says the professional-grade software is much more sophisticated (not to mention pricey). And it takes a local professional to realize the vision that is right for a particular property's landscape and climate.

"I've had garden centers come and plant a tree for me, hoping they would know exactly where to plant it," says Simsbury resident Susan Asensio, who later hired Noyes to redesign her backyard. "But they said, 'Where do you want it?' And, then of course it didn't do well in the spot that I chose." Noyes ultimately installed a bluestone patio with a sitting wall and stone fireplace on Asensio's property, and surrounded

the "outdoor room" with a variety of flowering shrubs and trees that were well-suited to the yard's light and soil conditions. They not only survived, they flourished.

Learn more about Creative Contour Landscape Design at [www.creativecontour.com](http://www.creativecontour.com). Jennifer Noyes also appears monthly on NBC-TV Channel 30 in Hartford, offering gardening tips. 📺

*Lori Miller Kase is a freelance writer living in Simsbury.*

Though homeowners can find an array of computer software geared toward helping them design their own gardens virtually, Noyes says the professional-grade software is much more sophisticated.

**SUMMER SERENITY:** Creative Contour designed and installed this bluestone pool surround in Milford.



Regular guest on the Kerri-Lee Mayland News program on NBC.



*A full service landscape design and installation firm*

LANDSCAPE, GARDENS, WALKWAYS, PATIOS, WALLS,  
FIRE PITS, OUTDOOR KITCHENS AND MORE



*"We are grateful to have found Creative Contours. The owner Jennifer Noyes is a true artist and visionary. Our first meeting was extremely productive. Jennifer worked with us in the exchange of ideas. Her experience coupled with her creativity and foresight developed a phenomenal plan. Not only is Jennifer Noyes professional, her staff is as dedicated to their craft as she is. The finished product is our own five-star backyard retreat.*

*Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!"*

Susan and Bob Asensio

**Call us today to schedule an on-site consultation  
Creative Contour in Middletown, CT  
860.398.0802**

**Visit [www.CreativeContour.com](http://www.CreativeContour.com)**