



PHOTOS COURTESY OF D.A. GRACEY & ASSOCIATES

The most unique aspect of this garden design is the stone waterfall going down the slope ending in a small pond. From the bottom, you can view the waterfall, which is surrounded by perennials.

# Steep slope turned into outdoor living space



**Elaine Carey**  
Lessons in Landscaping

This downtown Toronto backyard was completely unusable to the owners because of the steep downhill grade from the back door.

Designer Adam Gracey of D.A. Gracey & Associates rebuilt it to make the slope a positive feature.

From the back door, the ground was level for only about 10 feet, before dropping down nine feet, then it flattened out at the bottom into a bigger area, he said.

Gracey built a small sitting area at the back of the house but decided to put the patio and the eating area at the bottom, partly because of the space but also for privacy in the busy neighbourhood of small lots.

The most unique aspect of the design is the natural armour stone waterfall descending down the slope ending in a small pond. The waterfall becomes



At the bottom of the sloped garden there's a cozy sitting area.

visible as you descend from the Owen Sound limestone steps that curve around it. From the bottom, there is a beautiful view up at the waterfall, which is surrounded by perennials.

"As you walk down from the house, the waterfall follows you but you can't see it from the house — you can only hear the sounds of water falling," he said.

The bottom area is private and cozy but big enough to hold a group of people without seeming crowded. One corner holds a children's sand play area.

Around the perimeter, Gracey built an elegant cedar fence, designing the Japanese-like hori-

zontal boards to match the woodwork in the house.

The Japanese theme continues with the plantings, which include a weeping Japanese maple that accents the start of the stone staircase, as well as ornamental grasses, vines and other delicate perennials. Shrubs and other perennials were added for year-round interest and colour.

Small city gardens are "really tricky to design," he said, but the homeowners are thrilled with their new outdoor living space.

If you have an interesting landscape project, email [ecarey@thestar.ca](mailto:ecarey@thestar.ca).