

A photograph of a garden at night. In the foreground, a curved stone patio leads towards a gazebo with a dark roof. To the right, a house with warm interior lighting is visible. The garden is filled with various plants, trees, and decorative elements like stone pillars and outdoor furniture. The scene is illuminated by warm, golden light, likely from the house and garden lights.

Enchanted Entry

NARI MINNESOTA – 2026 ROTY AWARDS

Project Overview

Project: Enchanted Entry

Category: Residential Landscape Design/Outdoor Living \$100K - \$250K

Before, guests bypassed the front door entirely, drawn instead to the side service entrance past a cluttered, high-maintenance yard with little sense of arrival, an abundance of high-maintenance plants, no lighting, and a failing water feature. Enchanted Entry turns that forgotten approach into a true, inviting and charming one. A curved walkway winds past a saved Ginkgo tree, to a reimagined front stoop up to a front door that finally feels like the home's heart. A sitting nook rests quietly off the path, and soft light glows beneath the stone caps, carefully integrated into the new lighting scheme. What was once an afterthought is now the first impression — warm, welcoming, and a little enchanting.

Client Needs & Wants:

- Orient visitors to the front door instead of the side service door
- Create a lower-maintenance, more open and appealing space
- Create a cozy and beautiful sitting space
- Keep the Ginkgo tree they had planted a few years prior
- Add lighting for safety, drama, and ambiance
- Increase the beauty, decrease the maintenance
- Compliment architectural style of the home better than previous, dated, design

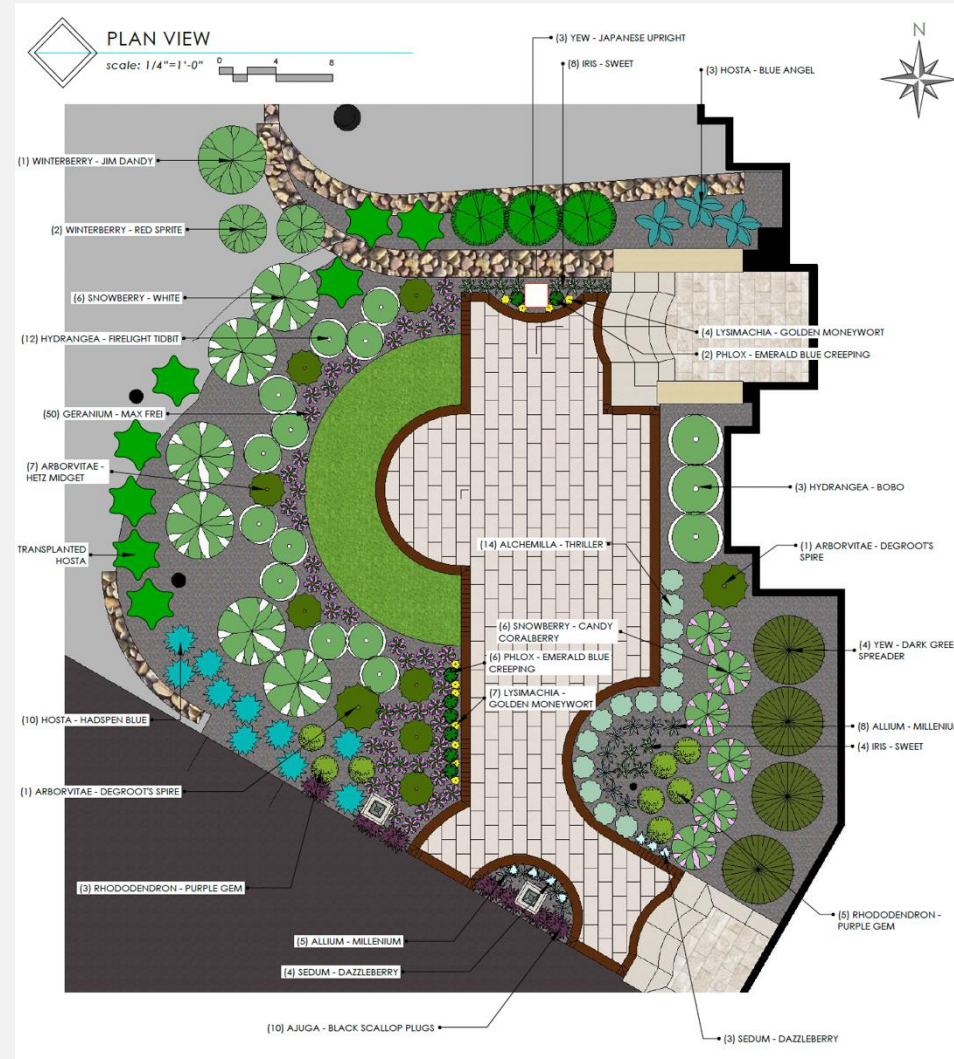


3D Rendering



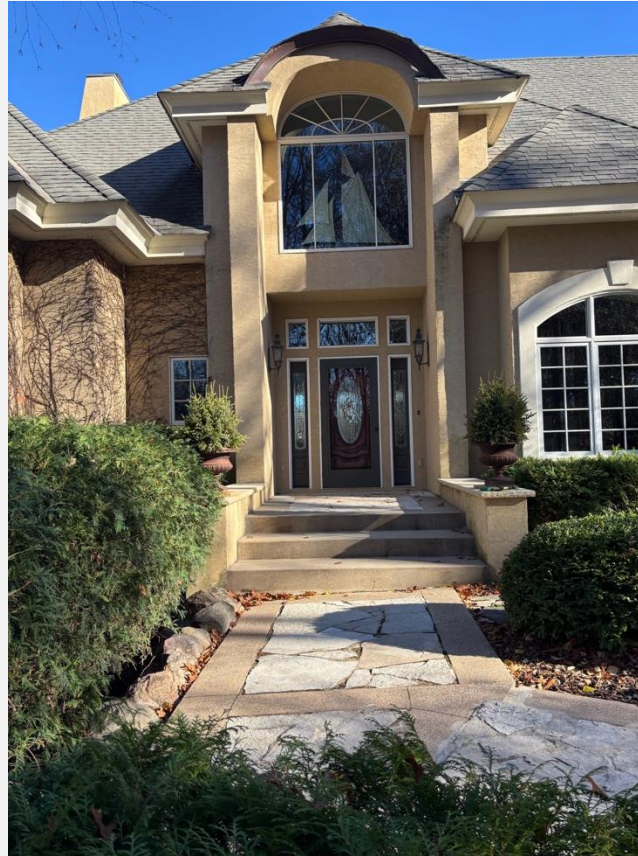
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Planting & Build Plan



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Before & After



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Before & After



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Functionality

- Moved the walkway entrance up the driveway, closer to the garage (the previous entrance was much farther down), and added a semi-circle marking both the main walkway entry and the service door entry, flanked by monuments on either side
- Removed all plantings, the water feature, and other elements from the main open middle space, widening it into a more welcoming walkway and patio leading to the front door
- Cut back the front stoop's side wall and extended the steps around the corner, creating a more inviting opening to the front door
- Created a sitting area on axis with the middle of the dining room window, positioned off the main walkway as a cozy vignette



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Aesthetics

- Refaced both stoops with natural stone that complements the walkway and added curves to the steps
- Selected walkway and veneer stone to work with the home's freshly-done stucco and existing antique limestone caps
- Added a strip of synthetic turf behind the sitting area to minimize planting space, keep maintenance low, and add a texture change
- Chose low-maintenance plant varieties suited to shade that don't require regular trimming, in a color palette of green backdrop with pink, purple, and hints of chartreuse
- Focused lighting on path and spot lighting for a mellow ambiance — swapping lantern-topped monuments (which would have been blinding at night) for strip lighting tucked under the caps
- Repetition of arches in the stoop changes, walkway rhythm mimics the architectural details on the home

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Craftsmanship/Innovation

- Combined natural patio stone, brick, custom-made treads, stonework, turf, and plantings into one impeccably cohesive design
- Hand-fabricated steps to fit the new curved shape of the entry, requiring extensive cutting and rebuilding of the existing stoop
- Layout precision was critical to success; every cut and placement had to be executed exactly right for the design to come together
- Relied on string lines, precise measuring, and math alongside excavator and skid steer work, backed up by good old-fashioned muscle

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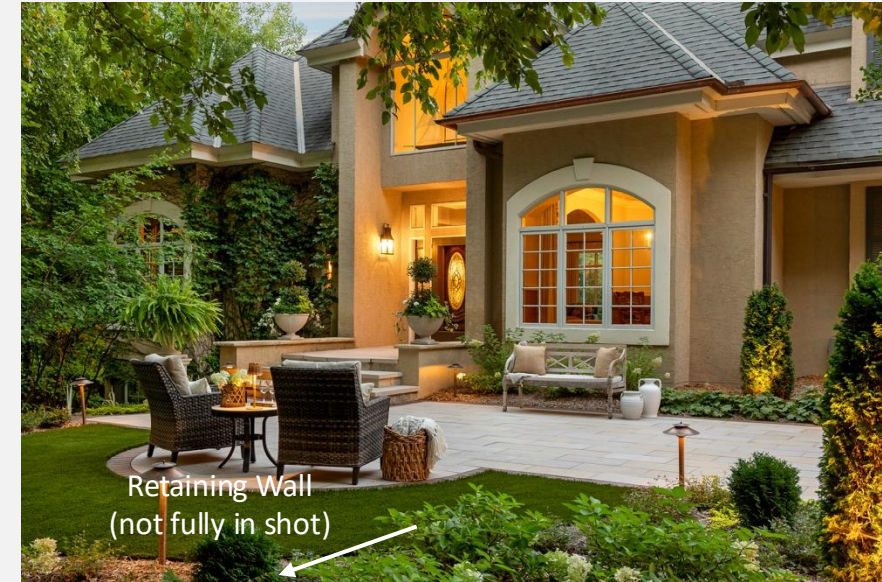
Project Challenges

Problem: An existing retaining wall abutting the front stoop couldn't be changed, preventing the patio from aligning with the end of the stoop.

Solution: Shifted attention to the opposite end of the stoop, wrapping the bottom step around the corner to serve as the more functional entrance. The walkway's curve accommodates a large pedestal planter, which acts as a visual barrier over the retaining wall drop without requiring a railing the homeowners didn't want.

Problem: The existing Gingko tree had been placed in an awkward spot, complicating the connection between the driveway, service entrance, and front entry.

Solution: Introduced a series of arches to balance the walkway from one end to the other — starting at the driveway entry around a monument, continuing around the Gingko tree, and finally extending out to the sitting area and synthetic turf.



A photograph of a modern, two-story house with a light-colored stucco exterior and dark shutters. The house features a large, arched, multi-paned window on the left, through which warm interior lights are visible. A paved courtyard with light-colored stone tiles occupies the foreground. A wooden bench with cushions and a striped throw is positioned on the left. A large, leafy tree stands in the center-right, illuminated by ground lights. A dark garage door is visible on the right. The scene is lit with warm, ambient lighting, creating a cozy and inviting atmosphere.

The Enchanted Entry Project



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