

Robert Haldane – landscaper

“Landscaping is not about what you see, it’s the experience you feel. I reveal the hidden grace of the landscape, by taking the landscaper’s touch out of it,” said Robbie Haldane of Craryville.

Haldane moved to our area from Ireland in 1987.

He had previously worked for the Park’s Department in Ireland, at the Ulster Museum in Northern Ireland. He worked on a Mesolithic site there, where there are 9,000 year old fire pits.

“The soil there is marked and changed forever, with salmon bones, and hazelnuts,” said Haldane.

“It gave me an awareness of landscape – of what has always been there and how important that is. There is always a narrative in a landscape, to be used.”

“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder – they say. A garden is to be experienced with all the senses one possesses. Not just a visual feast as is so commonly found in gardens today.

According to Haldane, his kind of landscaping – he often uses existing stone on sites or builds with locally quarried stone – is about where you come from. He doesn’t impose his Irish ideas on someone. He uses what is there in their own landscape. It would be the same, he says, if you did a landscape in Brazil. Use what’s there.

“It’s not about ‘you’, whatever you do should be, to some degree, about what has been before, the historical footprint.”

What Haldane brings to a garden is his training, knowing in particular what isn’t good.

“I don’t need a big pallet or outside influences. I am not looking to be inspired from the outside, just inside,” he stressed.

“So when you’re decorating a garden with plants that aren’t indigenous, you’re not landscaping. You’re creating ‘candy’ for the eye. That’s not landscaping as I see it.”

“A garden should neither show the eye of the designer nor the desires of the owner” stressed Haldane.

“My work is so understated that it looks like it was done 100 years ago. It doesn’t look like people ‘had it done’ or have a landscaper. It’s design, not decoration.”

Sun Dog Solar

SunDog Solar, the first incubator business to launch at the site of Solaqua Power & Art on Route 295 east of Chatham NY (the former Columbia Corporation), is a full-service solar consultation and installation company offering residential and commercial renewable energy systems and services that help consumers improve energy efficiency, reduce energy spending and increase building performance. SunDog designs and installs solar electric systems, solar hot water systems and bio spray foam insulation.

“Interest in renewable energy has increased dramatically with better federal and state incentives helping to make solar more accessible to our customers,” said Jody Rael, President and Founder, of SunDog Solar.

“Solar energy systems are environmentally friendly, save money and are virtually maintenance free.”

SunDog’s trained professionals walk residential and commercial customers through the *entire* process of choosing and installing renewable energy systems.



Haldane integrated a pool environment with plantings that include currants and blueberries as well as fragrant flowers that impart the “landscape experience” he talks about.

Left: Natural stone creates a stairway to outer gardens.

“We’ll visit your site, review your energy bills and recommend a system that meets your needs and your budget,” said Rael.

As an initial step to determine the best renewable energy system for a home or business, Sundog will look at the site via satellite imagery and discuss energy usage. Next SunDog dispatches a trained professional to perform an on-site evaluation. Once the evaluation is completed, a proposal is generated with recommendations which often save the home or business owner up to 40% on energy costs.

“Our business is growing weekly with residential contracts in place through the end of the year. The more we install solar systems, the more we’re helping our community by saving energy, creating green collar jobs and hiring,” commented Rael.

One of the newest services offered by SunDog is a bio-based spray foam insulation. Safe and effective, bio spray insulation is applied as a liquid and quickly expands to fill every nook and cranny helping prevent air filtration. The word “bio” refers to the oil from plants used in creating the product. The oil is derived from natural renewable sources like soy beans and castor oil beans. The oil is formulated into the foam mixture to create a natural and effective alternative to conventional foams. Unlike fiberglass, bio-foam insulation has no off-gassing, no fibers, no dust, and it prevents mold and mildew while reducing noise, according to Rael. ~



A solar panel array helps power this bungalow.