

# The Sag Harbor Express.

## Designing With Water

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By Marianna Levine

Ray Smith and Associate's aqua garden designer, Ed Drohan is so enthusiastic about his work that he relates his wife has been awoken by his "giving gardening instruction in my sleep. In Spanish! I'm very passionate about what I do. Ultimately I think everyone could use some sort of water garden feature in their yard."

Drohan's desire to educate and display the beauty of a water feature in one's garden led him to turn an old and broken pond at Agway's gardening center into a naturalistic, cascading waterfall, or as the guys at Agway jokingly call it "Niagara Falls."

The idea came to Drohan as he was shopping at Agway. He explains "I always try to find public display sites" and this site seemed to need some love and care and one thing led to another including an interesting coincidence.

"Once I started working on the site I found out the owners of Agway happened to be neighbors of mine," said Drohan.

Drohan isn't a newcomer to what he calls "aqua gardening." Although he started out in traditional landscape design, his love of water and natural landscapes surrounding water, which he attributes to his living along a river in upstate New York, turned him into a designer of water landscapes. He has since earned a degree in aquatic biology, and has been a certified Aquascape contractor (CAC) for over ten years.

Drohan explains that CACs are an elite group of 285 contractors world wide, and that his association with this group allows him to bring in other contractors to work on a project with him instead of hiring regular laborers. This was the case when he built Agway's rocky waterfall.

"I hired Charlie Holland and Brian Speed, guys who own their own companies in New Hampshire and Bethpage, New York to come and work with me on this project. We can work very well together, and it just makes sense to have the most qualified people working," Drohan recounts.

The Agway waterfall reflects Drohan's love of creating naturalistic rock formations and waterways, but he has also designed the modern and minimalist black reflecting pool at LongHouse Reserve. He was able to create this specific design he had in mind for several years thanks to Ray Smith, the horticultural director of LongHouse Reserve, and Jack Lenor Larson, it's founder.

Drohan, who has graced the cover of *Architectural Digest* and been featured in *Newsday*, relays "That was a fun project. I created a 20x20 reflecting pool and I dyed the water black in it. It has a reverse negative edge, the opposite of a pool's infinity edge, so the water drops away in a unique way."

The effect of the black water and black mirror underneath it is of an infinite abyss rather than a traditional shallow reflecting pool.

Although Drohan is currently working on a Ray Smith and Associates' project designing and building a half million dollar water garden, he maintains that anyone can afford some kind of water feature on their property.

"There's everything from an entry level fountain or urn that costs around \$1,500 to projects that can cost millions. Some people want to have a large pond on their property. In the end I'm very connected with what's natural and take an organic approach to a given situation. I create ecosystems that maintain themselves over time."

However, Drohan adds that if a water garden needs some maintenance, he can do that as well. Often ponds do need up keep despite being natural.

For now, for those who want to see a sample of Drohan's work for Ray Smith and Associates, they can view his water garden at Agway's in Bridgehampton