

## Designing with S. Kalki Winter

S. Kalki Winter, is the owner of eScape Landscape Design and a proud resident of Cooper-Young. He designed his gorgeous, grass-less yard at 1979 Oliver. When their daughter attended Peabody Elem., Kalki was involved in beautifying the school grounds. Thank you! He can be reached at 901-232-5600 or [kalki@escapelandscapesthemphis.com](mailto:kalki@escapelandscapesthemphis.com) . Additional information can be found at [www.escapelandscapesthemphis.com](http://www.escapelandscapesthemphis.com)

q. There are many titles (landscape designer, garden designer, horticulturist,) that can describe the kind of work you do. Which title do you prefer, and why?

I feel that each title describes what I am and what I can offer my clients. I have a passion for nature, art, and science that keeps me studying all disciplines related to my field.

q. Tell me how you chose this business; how the idea was developed; how long you have been in business; your greatest accomplishment; and your greatest hope.

This business is a perfect blend of so many things that I enjoy. I have been in business for five years, and working in this industry for sixteen. My greatest professional hope is that I inspire people to enjoy their outdoor spaces, and that those spaces inspire others to create their own gardens.

q. How would you address the challenge of designing for our small, urban gardens?

I focus on drought-tolerant, native, and shade-tolerant plant varieties. I usually recommend more beds and less grass, which reduces water usage, works better under our trees, and allows for more variety in a small space.

q. What is the starting point for creating a functional and beautiful design?

The first thing I want to know is how a person uses the space. A good design will accommodate the needs of the entire family. Dogs, kids and guests may be using the space, so it's good to get a feel for what will likely happen in the landscape.

q. What do you consider to be the most frequent mistake made by urban gardeners?

Improper pruning and focussing on having grass when it just doesn't work.

q. What plants do you think are overused in our area? Under used?

I think native and drought-tolerant plants are underused. The risk of overusing any plant is attracting pests that will find an abundance of food. Think bagworms on leyland cypress or the recent crape myrtle scale. Those pests are devastating to landscapes that are not diverse. Additionally, some invasive plants remain popular, but there are safer alternatives.

q. What are the advantages of hiring a professional designer?

It's good to get an idea of the real possibilities for your landscape. A well-executed design will have higher plant survival, multi-season interest, and fit one's unique needs. I've been doing this long enough to learn from failure and success and can put that expertise, and time, into translating dreams into reality.

q. Describe how you partner with the homeowner to create and execute a design.

I find out what specific ideas inspire them, and then look for ways to include those elements into their unique space. I also try to help them be realistic about their own capacity to care for their landscapes and I collaborate with them to create something that relaxes, inspires, and feeds them instead of being a burden.

q. Do you have a specific, inexpensive tip that would help our neighbors create a "wow factor" or dial their gardens up a notch?

A well-defined bed that is free of weeds and has an even layer of mulch will make up for a relative lack of plants and/or less than perfect lawn. Finding unusual plants to showcase will add to the wow factor.

q. Urban gardeners are often busy people. What is your best advice for high-impact/low-maintenance gardening?

"More plants, less grass," is my advice to those who don't have a lot of time. Trees, shrubs, and perennials require less water, fertilizer and maintenance than most lawns.

Q. Have you designed a garden in Cooper Young? If so, can you share the address?

I have had quite a few clients in Cooper Young, but my toughest client would probably have to be my wife, Wendy. She has an artist's eye, and knows just enough about landscape design to be dangerous! We've always had a pretty amazing backyard where we entertain, and spend a lot of our time. In the last couple of years, though, I've really invested some time in my front yard, 1979 Oliver. My daughter is a lover of butterflies and so I created a beautiful butterfly garden that has been successful in attracting Monarchs and the Tiger and Spice Bush Swallowtails. My wife says that our front yard finally doesn't live up to the "cobbler's children have no shoes" trope.

Q. What else would you like for Cooper Young to know about you, your business, and gardening in general?

I like to think that the gardens and landscapes that I help my clients create will live on beyond us, continuing the legacy of beauty that this neighborhood possesses. A garden is an optimistic enterprise. It's bigger than us, and expresses a belief in beauty and in life itself. I'm proud to be able to bring things to life and nurture people's enjoyment of their spaces.

A favorite quote: "The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture a garden is to feed not just the body, but the soul." - Alfred Austin, 19th Century Poet Laureate of England