

LUX LANDSCAPE DESIGN, INC

UNIQUE DESIGN CONCEPTS SUPPORTED BY HIGH-QUALITY MATERIALS AND INDUSTRY LEADING EQUIPMENT

By Brian Hoover, Editor



Left: Lux Landscape Design's Cat 303E CR mini excavator performs a difficult cliffside pool excavation in Fallbrook.

Above: Finished Fallbrook pool project where excavated dirt was reused to build up surrounding area in order to increase pool size.

The landscaping industry has come a long way from the conventional designs of yesteryear. Landscape design firms and homeowners alike have learned that the right design cannot only increase the value of a home but can also dramatically improve the way people live. Dominic Ramirez is a landscape designer by trade, and he spent several years designing beautiful landscapes and hardscapes for other well-known firms. When Ramirez first went out on his own, he did so

with a partner under the name Landscape Masterpiece. After five years of building up the business, the company was sold, and Ramirez went on to work for a new landscape construction startup venture. Before long, Ramirez got the itch to go it on his own once again with more complex and innovative designs on the drawing board ready to take to the marketplace.

Dominic Ramirez started out again in 2014 under the name Lux Landscape Design, Inc., and as the sole owner, CEO and

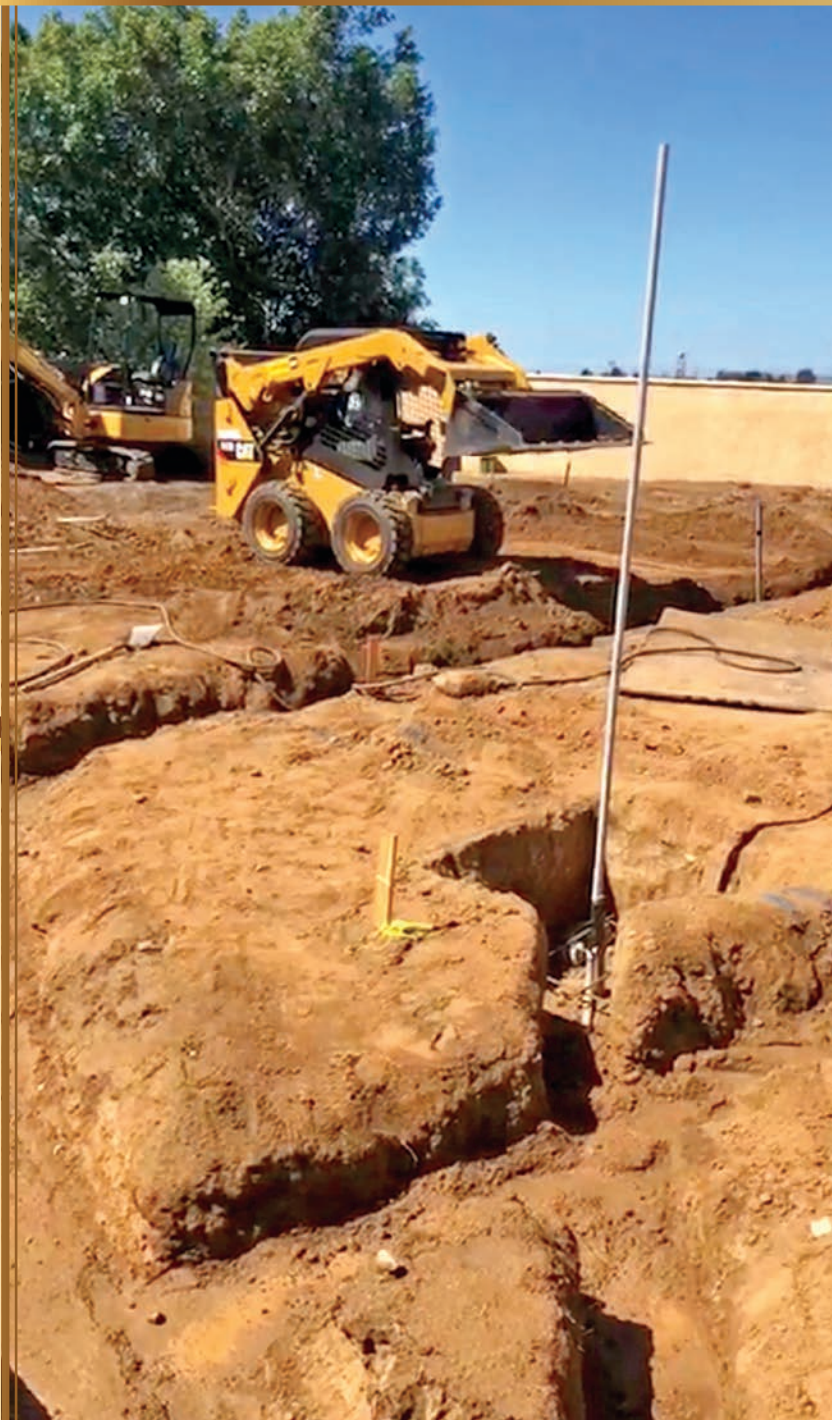
President, he wanted to do it his way, with new ideas and concepts that he was excited to present to his clientele. "What we are doing here at Lux Landscape Design is decidedly different from your typical and conventional landscape design," says Ramirez. "The functionality is the same as everyone else, but the aesthetics, look and feel are noticeably different due to the materials that we use." Metals have become an important and unique component in Ramirez's designs, and this is one of the things that has set

him apart from the sea of other everyday landscape firms. "We can do so much with metal, and our clients love our unique, artistic designs. We always want to create curiosity in our designs, so that an observer will ask, 'how did they build that?'" says Ramirez. "We want to grab their attention, with our floating

steps and countertops, or our modern patio covers that are uniquely supported. Modern design is trendy right now. I take that style and bring in warm elements like metal, wood or concrete. Those are our three main pallets."

Ramirez explains that many of his designs are inspired by

restoration hardware style. "We use our plant design in a way that softens the hard edges of our hardscape designs. Clients want low maintenance, drought-tolerant landscapes, and so we use plant design sparingly," says Ramirez. "The fabrication end of our business is growing and very much in demand. This has



Left: Lux Landscape Design's Cat 242D skid steer loader backfills trenches for utilities on a custom backyard resort in Fallbrook.

Above: Completed Fallbrook backyard resort included landscape, hardscape, raised deck, balcony cable railing, modern fire pit and a custom water feature.

Right: Lux Landscape Design's Cat 303E CR mini excavator removing and replacing retaining wall in San Diego County.

Far Right: Lux Landscape Design's Cat 303E CR mini excavator trenching for irrigation in San Diego County.



Above: Lux Landscape Design reconditioned and upgraded retaining wall to create open space for multi-purpose grass area and playground structure in San Diego County.

Right: Dominic Ramirez (left), Scott Hilton and Robert Machado of Lux Landscape Design.



helped us cut our turnaround time on projects that previously took close to a year to fully complete, where we can now complete the job in three months. We prefabricate most of our features in our shop, including metal fire pits, barbecues, cabanas and entire outdoor kitchens."

Ramirez acquired his general contractor's license and pool license a few years back. He began by offering basic designs but has grown that end of his business to where they now offer unique and more complicated designs to match their other exclusive offerings. "Our projects almost always call for much more than just a pool design and install. The pool is just one part of the overall backyard living space that typically includes spas, barbecues, kitchens, televisions, sound systems, kegerators, and a variety of other outdoor living design components," continues Ramirez. "We come in with our crew and machines and begin moving dirt, installing irrigation and drainage. We build retaining walls and offer a long list of concrete flatwork."

Lux Landscape Design performs their unique work throughout San Diego County and into South Orange County. They primarily serve residential customers from high profile upscale custom homes to smaller, more conventional projects. "We have seen an influx of calls from homebuilders and other construction firms lately that are impressed with our designs and want to hire us on to their projects. We don't have the workforce to do everything that comes our way, but I will bring some select independent contractors to help fill in when I need a larger crew," says Ramirez. "We are currently on several jobs right now, including a spec home where we are working out a concept for a pool and a complete landscape design. Part of our job is to make existing funds go as far as possible and remain within budget, and we excel in that arena. The spec house in Poway is in the beginning stages of design and when completed, it should come in at between \$200,000 to \$400,000."

Lux Landscape Design just recently completed a job in San Marcos for an upscale track home. "The owners wanted something

special but were limited by the small amount of backyard space. We began the project by cutting out the entire undesirable slope area to create a two-tier retaining wall system," says Ramirez. "The client was looking for a modern design, and so one of the main components ended up being an amazing patio cover that we fabricated in our shop." Ramirez explains that he designed the patio cover so that one of the corners floated in the air. "We wrapped and plastered the metal skeleton to make it look like a house and then installed a spa with a wrap-around deck, a concrete countertop, a custom cabinet for the sound system, along with a massive water feature and a 10 foot by 4-foot fire feature," continues Ramirez. "We essentially constructed a huge L-shaped outdoor kitchen with a metal frame arbor over top. We installed custom lighting, privacy fences, created an entryway with floating steps and craned in two large olive trees. We also installed low maintenance, drought-tolerant plants, ornamental grasses, a magnolia tree, and created numerous elevation changes through the use of metal planter boxes. The job

began at the cost of around \$250,000, but that grew by another \$100,000 by the end of the project due to several additions to the original plan."

Most of the work Ramirez takes on requires the use of compact construction equipment, and he relies on Hawthorne Cat to keep him up and running strong. "We own a Cat 242D skid steer loader and a Cat 303E CR mini excavator that we purchased from Hawthorne Cat and their sales representative, James Billburg. We owned another brand that needed to be replaced after numerous breakdowns, costing us both time and money," says Ramirez. "We rented for a while, but soon realized that owning made more sense. I got together with James and took a look at the options and numbers, and we just love our new machines. Everyone at Hawthorne has treated us great, and you just can't do better than Cat equipment."

According to Ramirez, they use their new machines for demolition of driveways, retaining walls, patios or old hardscape, as well as for excavating or moving plants. "Our Cat machines are our muscle out on

the jobsite. We are preparing for a new job in La Mesa where we need a large excavator and wheel loader, and for that, we also turn to Hawthorne," says Ramirez. "We went with another common name in the industry before talking to a friend of mine in the business who told me that Cat is the way to go. You get more power, control and maneuverability. Cat equipment is what my guys wanted, and we are very satisfied with our Cat machines."

Dominic Ramirez has been designing and building residential landscapes for 15 years, and he not interested in allowing any grass to grow under his feet. "I feel like it will soon be time to graduate to another level and continue to grow our business model. I have thought of getting into purchasing and flipping homes, or even do some residential development on a controllable scale," says Ramirez. "We have the equipment, warehouse and fabrication shop, along with the skilled operators and technicians. We have worked hard and earned the reputation for thinking outside the box and offering unique materials and designs, and I am looking forward

to continuing to serve our future and current loyal customers, with an eye toward growth in the future. Ramirez says that the success and growth of his company would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work on a daily from each individual team member. "My wife Nicolina deserves a lot of credit for everything she does from the inside. She takes care of the books, payroll, billing and all of the administrative duties and I could not do this without her," continues Ramirez. I also want to recognize Scott Hilton, who we depend on for his landscape architecture expertise. He has worked very hard to help us build our brand, and together we have developed the fabrication end of our business, which has gained a lot of traction and is now in high demand. Robert Machado is like my right hand, and he always comes through with his tremendous knowledge and experience and as our main operator." For more information on Lux Landscape Design, please visit their website at www.luxlandscapedesign.com or call their San Marcos offices at (760) 214-8880. **CG**