

# Area landscaper's work on national TV

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**Pauline Chandra**  
CORRESPONDENT

Brian Essig is not really an alpine gardener, but he plays one on TV. The owner of Essig Tree and Landscape, Inc., Carver, Brian has been appearing on the Travel Channel as part of their "Passport to Design" series. Essig's shot at stardom happened in a six-degrees of separation sort of way. He had met local television personality, Bobby Jensen, a garden guru with KARE 11 TV. He also connected with members of Two by Four Productions, a company that produces shows for cable television. All the connections came together



PHOTO BY PAULINE CHANDRA

**On a recent day Brian Essig, left, visited with owner Brian Turner after checking out the winter appearance of the garden.**

when Brian and Lori Turner of New Hope made plans for converting their backyard into an alpine garden. Essig and his crew were filmed by Two by Four during various stages of install-

ing the garden where Bobby and his KARE 11 co-host Belinda also alighted for a visit. The resulting show has aired several times and has a few more scheduled airings. The half-hour show is dense with shots of Essig excavating, placing rocks with his crew, and interacting with the show's host JoAnne Liebler.

Before shots of the Turner backyard illustrate a pleasant yet nondescript midwestern environment where the family spent many enjoyable summer hours. But barbecuing in an ordinary backyard gave way to elaborate dreams of an alpine garden once Turner's wife, Lori, visited her grandmother in Salzburg, Austria. Lori was charmed by the hills that came alive in "The Sound of Music." In the television program she talks about the carefree feeling of roaming around in such beautiful scenery. "I wanted my children to experience that," she said.

Although a garden expert appeared in the show, Turner said he and his wife "pretty much designed the project." Most of the labor was performed by Essig and his crew.

The dominant feature of the garden



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**The Brian Turner backyard in New Hope has been turned into an alpine landscape complete with stream, waterfall, pool, and rocks.**

is a serpentine stream that runs into a swimming pond that everyone calls "the water feature." Essig and his crew accomplished this by massive excavation, carefully installing a liner and individually placing 60 tons of Dresser Trap Rock to create the feel and sound of the mountainside. Though it appears random in the TV show, Essig said, "There is a strategy to placing the rocks so they're stable." Owner, Turner said he enjoyed watching the crew individually place the rocks. "It's like they were communicating on a sub-text level," he said. Someone else might say they were one with the rock.

Turner emphasized the importance of secure placement of the rocks. "I jumped on each rock to test it out," he said. Though the idea was to make the rocks appear as if they naturally tumbled down a hillside, Turner and Essig didn't want actual rocks turn-

bling into the pool while people are swimming.

The sound of a rushing stream is music to the ears of anyone watching the television show. It's the result of 96,000 gallons of water being pumped through the system on an hourly basis. Turner said it has the sound effect of a mountain stream. Mountain in the alpine sense of the word is not what the Turner backyard looks like or aimed for. But Essig and his crew did create a sloping scape that evokes a mountain with rocks and a stream. And that was the goal. They completed the alpine garden by planting Edelweiss, strawflowers, a weeping pea shrub and some evergreens. The Turners plan to add bulbs, hostas and other local garden plants in the future. They don't feel constrained to adhere to the alpine dictum in their Minnesota garden.

Brian Turner said they procrasti-

nated with their winterizing chores, extending garden enjoyment through November. During the summer months, Turner, a disc jockey hosting the morning show on Cities 97, said he spends the predawn hours preparing for his show by spending time in his alpine garden. He may just sit and listen or swim along in the chemical free pool with the 60 or so fish that reside there.

Essig said the project was a lot of fun. He especially enjoyed his role in bringing the Turners' dream garden to life. "That's where the satisfaction is," he said. It's also cool being on TV. He's called relatives in Florida and Texas to check out the show. Next scheduled airings of 1 he show are: March 4 a' 9.30 a.m. and March 6 at 2 p.m. local time. These may change and there may be other airings o/the show