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Business of the Week

By [Robin Collins](#) | [Email the author](#) | June 14, 2011

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Business of the Week: Dig Your Garden Landscape Design

Designer and owner Eileen Kelly creates beauty, harmony and sustainability in your garden.

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[Dig Your Garden](#)

25 Timothy Ave., San Anselmo

(415) 602-6282; digyourgarden.com

What do they offer?

[Dig Your Garden](#) offers landscape design, scaled drawings (CAD), landscape and garden consultation, hardscape design, planting plan design, installation site observation, and maintenance consulting.

“The right plant for the right place” is the mantra of designer owner Eileen Kelly. Working with our Mediterranean climate and the environment, she knows what to plant in shade, sun, and windy areas. Though she refers installers who build hardscapes, arbors and structures, she is onsite to oversee the process so that

the integrity of her design is carried through and planting is done with proper soil amendments and irrigation.

Who are they?

As a little girl, Kelly remembers being fascinated with gardens in her hometown in New Jersey. When she became an advertising executive in New York's concrete jungle, she needed to have living breathing plants in her apartment.

Moving to Marin in 1988 because her closest friend lived in Fairfax, Kelly continued her career in advertising. Twenty-two years ago, she met and became partners with Tom Gehrig, who is both creative director at the advertising agency, [Gehrig & Kelly](#), and also a [fine artist](#) whose work has graced magazine covers. Agency partner became life partner when they married.

"We moved to our Sleepy Hollow home sixteen years ago and my goal was to create a wonderful outdoor space on the hillside," Kelly said. "I spoke to a few garden designers but decided to do it myself, primarily to save money. I made many mistakes along the way. For years, I kept replacing plants that didn't make it because I had put them in the wrong places or didn't properly amend the soil."

After the dot-com bust, Kelly spent more and more time working on her garden. "I was so frustrated by my dying plants and by wasting money that I decided to take gardening classes just to learn for myself." That education eventually led to a new career.

Starting with environmental landscape courses at the College of Marin, she went on to the horticultural program at Merritt College and still takes classes.

Kelly is now a board member of the [Association of Landscape Designers](#), an international organization dedicated to promoting the highest professional standards for landscape design, and also a Bay-Friendly Certified Eco-Friendly Landscape Practitioner.

How long have they been here?

Dig Your Garden has been in business for ten years. "I was lucky to be immediately embraced by friends who liked my work and referred me to their friends," she said. Several of the gardens created by Eileen Kelly have been featured in Marin's [Eco-Friendly Garden Tours](#).

Why are they business of the week?

"I have a real passion for landscape design," Kelly said. "I live and breathe plants."

She prefers a collaborative approach and has a process. To help clients define their thoughts, they fill out a questionnaire that covers likes, colors, plant preferences, lifestyle, how they want to use the space, etc. Then Kelly creates a design.

"It makes sense to have a master landscape design plan," she said. "You don't have to do it all at once. You can execute it one section at a time as finances allow."

Dig Your Garden's consulting fee ranges from \$125-200. Design fees with scaled drawing plans start at \$1,200.

Anybody can say they are a garden designer, but Kelly learned first-hand the importance of hiring a professional. "In the long run it pays off. Mistakes cost money," she said.

Much like remodeling a room in your home, landscape design increases your property value and also uses those HGTV buzz words, "curb appeal" and "outdoor rooms."

"It is important to use plants that thrive in our Mediterranean climate and also to conserve water. Flowers come and go seasonally. I consider color, structure and texture, and am especially interested in leaf color which provides an eye catching garden all year long," Kelly said.

"I like to create communities of plants grouping those with the same needs of sun, shade and water." Even now, there is one succulent she uses often -- one her parents had in their garden.

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9:09pm on Thursday, June 16, 2011

Working with Eileen was both helpful and rewarding. She listened thoroughly to what it was I wanted to achieve in my garden. Not only did she guide me in choosing the correct plants for the environment but managed to create a beautiful design for the space. I feel truly fortunate to have found her.

Janet - San Anselmo

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