



# One on One

## with Debbie Caffall

**Owner-operator of Design Services in Woodland**

By **JULIA ANDERSON**  
*Columbian staff writer*

**Design Services is just what it says, but what is the actual scope of your work as a landscape designer?**

Most of my work comes from word-of-mouth client referrals. My services include everything from shopping for plants and having them delivered to yard design consultation. Many existing clients have me do an annual walk-through to answer their landscaping questions or place the plants they bought on impulse.

**What can that be like?**  
I meet with clients, assess what's there, ask what they want to

do with the space ... do they want privacy, a vegetable garden? ... then I pull it all together. Design a plan and often let them do the work themselves.

**How did you get started?**

I was going to college to become a teacher and wanted something practical out of my science classes, so I took horticultural. I decided I didn't want to be a teacher, went back to school and started landscape design classes. I already was a master gardener and had the horticulture. I've always loved gardening and growing things and I love to rearrange stuff.

**What's the most challenging aspect of the job?**

The scope of work I do is so broad. Right now I'm working on a denuded 5-acre parcel. It's a challenge sometimes to solve the problems clients might have within the budget they have. It's also challenging to follow someone who's been ecologically irresponsible. Soil and water erosion can create frightening situations.

**What was your first job?**

Weeding. My parents paid me. After pulling up all my parents' pansies once, I learned that you needed to be able to identify plants, study the leaf structure.

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*One on One is a weekly feature profiling Clark County business people.*

### *Vital statistics*

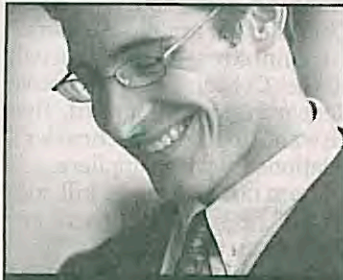
- **AGE:** 55.
- **EDUCATION:** Horticulture science classes, landscape design, Portland Community College.
- **PERSONAL:** Has grown children, loves gardening and doesn't have time for vacations.

# One on One:

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## What's changed about your job?

People want something different than 10 years ago, and with smaller lot sizes, there



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are new challenges. They need something that's not going to overwhelm the space and that makes them feel comfortable.

## What's your biggest career mistake?

Not having a Web site. I still don't have one. I hope to get one going in the next year.

## What's the best business advice you ever received?

I'm not sure this was advice as much as an observation from a man I worked with years ago. He always said I had another goal. That's when I began to recognize that I had ambition, I could set goals and assume I would get to them. He pointed out that I was tenacious.

## Is the American Dream alive?

No. We're all struggling to maintain, right now. The (economic) ground is shifting. People are going to center back into their homes, enhance their spaces, grow stuff and make themselves as comfortable as possible.

## What did you dream about doing when you grew up?

There were lots of kids and lots of chaos in my family growing up. I would imagine a tractor plowing a field on a hill, going back and forth, back and forth. I dreamed about tilling the soil, working the land, smelling the earth. It was soothing to me. Now I can look out my windows and almost have that scene ... the field with the tractor, working

in the distance.

## What advice would you give someone considering your kind of work?

I would say get started when you're young. Work for a big company, learn everything you can and be active in your community ... volunteer, be active in relevant organizations, where the mission is something you agree with. Invest yourself.

## Vacation?

Nope. There's too much to be taken care of here.

## What's the most you have ever spent on shoes?

I like good, sturdy shoes. I'd say \$160 on hiking boots.

## What business decision are you most proud of?

Doing it on my own. I mostly work through referrals and work hard to do a good job for my clients.

## What advice would you give those seeking your kind of services?

If the person is not charging you anything, you might question the quality of the end product. Ask for recommendations. That's how people find me.

## Providing Insurance and Financial Services



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