

Ancient Beauty in our Fern Passage

December 17, 2015

by Rebecca Perkins

This Christmas, our [Fern Passage](#) provides a natural twist on our fountain-inspired theme. To accentuate the subtle beauty of this ancient plant family, we have installed some very unique [igneous](#) stone fountains.



Artisan Robert Wertz installing an igneous rock fountain in our Fern Passage. Photo by Rebecca Perkins.

Robert Wertz is the artist and owner of [Igneous Rock Gallery](#) in Mechanicsburg, PA, and the creator of this special display. Robert obtains his stone from a small lava deposit in the remote [Beaver Canyon](#) located in the Okanogan Highlands of Washington State. The stone of Beaver Canyon is a vibrantly-colored columnar [andesite](#) that formed as a result of a volcanic eruption some 45 million years ago. It is unique in the world, and though Robert occasionally works with other types of rock, the Beaver Canyon columns are his preferred artistic medium.



Robert at Beaver Canyon, Washington, where the igneous rock is quarried. Photo courtesy of Igneous Rock Gallery.

Robert forged his family business with an artistic vision focused on this incomparable natural stone, which is shipped across the country to his workshop in Mechanicsburg, PA. There he painstakingly fashions these stones into fountains and candle holders so that the extraordinary stone can be experienced and appreciated.

His artistic inclination is to leave the stone as untouched as possible. The process of building these fountains requires a hole to be drilled through the length of the stone, a very specialized operation that requires a laser-guided drilling apparatus. Robert then cuts and polishes the top of the stone so that the water will fall smoothly over the edge and trickle down all sides. When the surface is saturated with water, the real magic and color of these stones shines. Bright gold and rust shades glisten, creating a mesmerizing view. Robert accentuates the colors further with careful lighting.



The tops of the stone pillars are cut and polished so that the water flows smoothly over the edge. Photo by Duane Erdmann.

The Beaver Canyon spires on display in Longwood's Fern Passage range from one foot to six feet tall and are arranged into four clusters near the center of the Passage. One of these, Robert's favorite grouping, consists of two unusually tall columns nestled almost perfectly together. They remind Robert of two people embracing, and he jokes that perhaps the columns have been in love for 45 million years, but concedes they may have met recently at his shop. He calls this display "Eocene Romance" in honor of the geologic age when this material formed.

Robert was a landscaping contractor before he created Igneous Rock Gallery. "I am so thankful to have found something I love to do. I wouldn't want to work this hard on something that doesn't inspire me."

These unique fountains will be on display in our Fern Passage through January 10, 2016 and are available for purchase through Robert's [gallery](#). [Tickets to A Longwood Christmas](#) may be purchased on our website.



Today's Events

9:00 am to 10:00 pm
A Longwood Christmas
Garden Railway

2:00 pm
Organ Sing-Alongs

3:00 pm
Organ Sing-Alongs

4:00 pm
Organ Sing-Alongs

7:00 pm
Christmas Performances

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