



VT Nursery & Landscape Association 2026 Industry Awards Application



PURPOSE - The purpose of the Vermont Nursery & Landscape Association (VNLA) Industry Awards Program is to bring recognition to outstanding landscape design, installation, and maintenance. The objective of the program is to promote our membership by highlighting their excellence and encourage greater public awareness of the aesthetic and environmental benefits of landscaping.

ELIGIBILITY - The Industry Awards Program is open to current VNLA members actively offering professional landscape services. Members may submit up to three projects per year. All installed landscapes or maintenance properties are eligible. In addition any specialty type projects related to horticulture will also be considered. There are no set categories and no project is too small or too large. Each project will be judged on its own merits. The judging criteria is listed below.

ENTRY DEADLINE AND FEES - Return completed entry forms with a \$120 processing fee for each submission by Monday, **January 11, 2027**. Entries can be submitted electronically (contact the VNLA office) or by mailing your entry (postmark date of 1/11/27) to PO Box 92, N. Ferrisburgh, VT 05473. Contact the VNLA office with any questions. Projects that do not meet entry guidelines will be disqualified.

ENTRY GUIDELINES

Landscape /Project Plan - Landscape plans **are not** required but they do greatly enhance the judging process. If submitted, the landscape plan shall indicate plant material, hardscaping elements, buildings, roads, ponds and other pertinent features. Please Include north orientation and scale. If applicable, all entries must include a **complete plant list**, including name, quantity and size. It is helpful for photos submitted to be located numerically on the landscape plan but it is not required. Submit your landscape/project plan **as a digital file only** (jpeg or pdf) and exclude any reference to the name of your client or your business. **Also Include a digital file of your plan with your labelled photos if applicable.**

Project Goals/Description - Be clear and concise when stating the client's goals and objectives for this project. Emphasize any notable attributes and challenges of the project, including the site conditions and environmental responsibility. Include the budget for the project, what parts were completed by subcontractors or other parties, client involvement, and any special needs or concerns. Convey your project's story and uniqueness. Submit the project description, **not to exceed 650 words**, as a Word document or pdf.

Photos - Be aware of the importance of good photographs. Submit a minimum of 12 to 20 jpeg photos. Photos must be at least 2,048 x 1,536 pixels. Submit photos by mail or electronically. Label your submission with your company and project names. Make sure that each photo corresponds with the photo descriptions on the entry form and with the number on the landscape plan. **Limit your photo description for each photo to 20 words or less.** The entrant assumes all responsibility for copyrights, photographic fees, and client permission for further use of photos by the VNLA. No limitations can be placed on photos.

Client Permission/Signature Release - Obtain the property owner's signed permission on the entry form; we cannot accept entries without this signature release. All entry materials become the property of the VNLA and will not be returned.

GENERAL RULES

- Entries must be postmarked and received by **January 11, 2027**. Electronic entries are also acceptable and must also be received by January 11, 2027 (contact the VNLA office).
- Entrant must be a VNLA member in good standing.
- All projects by VNLA members are eligible.
- There are no categories. Each project will be judged on its own merits.
- All entries will be reviewed from the photos the entrant submits. There are no site visits.
- All contractors who worked on the project should be listed on the entry form.
- Each project should be submitted with the entry form, work responsibility chart, a landscape/project plan if possible, the project description, photos with descriptions, the entry fee and client release signature.
- **Each project submitted must be free of identifying names, people or logos.**
- The Industry Awards Judging Committee Chairperson will make decisions when eligibility criteria that are not covered in the rules become an issue.

JUDGING

A panel of industry professionals that includes landscape designers, nursery workers, and horticultural educators is assembled to judge the entries. The judging process is blind: the identity of your business and the client is not revealed to the judges. All reference to your business name, identifiable people, and client name will not appear on your entry during the review process.

Projects are judged on the following criteria wherever applicable:

- Client / Project Goals
- Design and Creativity
- Degree of Difficulty
- Overall Effect

Submissions are judged on their own merits and are reviewed and judged by their landscape plan, project description, photos and descriptions, and work responsibility chart. Each entry is scored individually with a total of 100 points possible. Please refer to the Basis for Judging section below.

AWARDS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Judging Committee will review all submissions and notify the award winners by **January 25, 2027**. The winners will be announced to the state and local media after winners are notified. The awards are as follows: Excellence- (scored 95-100 points), Honor - (scored 85-95 points), and Merit - (scored 75-85 points).

Award winners will be honored and promoted in the following ways:

- In media press releases and social media announcements.
- An award trophy is provided for each winning entry.
- A display board is created for each winning project.
- On the VNLA website, (including a slideshow of the project).
- At the VNLA Winter Meeting & Trade Show; winners will give a presentation of their project.
- Featured in a 4 page publication in the Seven Days Newspaper.
- Display boards on view at the next Vermont Flower Show.
- Display boards on view at the VNLA Summer Meeting & Trade Show
- Feature article in the *The Dirt*, the VNLA quarterly newsletter.

GENERAL PROJECT/ENTRY TIPS

Mature projects make the best presentation. Judges cannot always imagine a design's intent in its early phases. If submitting a newly completed project clearly state the project/client's goals and be elaborative with the description. Be sure to claim and/or disclaim all site work and features that the photos and landscape plan evidence. Distracting or unsightly elements may affect the impact of your project. Be sure to include the project's budget parameters and phases. Expound upon restraints and restrictions and elaborate when siting the re-use of existing materials or materials gathered from the property or elsewhere. Take actual work in progress photos. Be sure to address all the judging criteria throughout your submission.

PHOTOS

It is very important that your photos be high quality and cover the scope of the entire project. Submit a minimum of 12 photos and up to 20 maximum. Photos should illustrate enough detail to allow the judges to determine the quality of the work and/or the intention of the design. Here are some tips:

- Take photos before, during, and after from the same vantage point.
- Take photos from overhead- from an upstairs window or balcony.
- Take close-up photos of construction details.
- Include people in photographs to give a sense of scale.
- Take actual work-in-progress photos.
- Some photos should be from a distance to allow judges to see how the project fits into its surroundings.
- **Do not include photos containing logos, company names, or identifiable people- such photos will be excluded from your entry.**

Photo Descriptions - Descriptions should be concise and are limited to 20 words or less. The description on each photo should provide the Judging Committee with a clear understanding of what the photo depicts and where it was taken on the landscape plan.

CLIENT

It is important that the judges have a clear understanding of the client's goals and concerns. Create a client profile by weaving the information below into your project description.

- Include the client's wishes/goals/limitations in your project description
- Are they full-time residents or part time?
- How long have they lived on their property?
- What were pre-existing conditions? What kind of resources were they able to commit to the project and how long did the project take?

JUDGING CRITERIA:

Submissions are judged on their own merits and judged individually. Judging is based on the below criteria:

Client / Project Goals - 25 Points

- As completed, does your project meet the client's goals and objectives?
- Is the project sensitive to the environment and the site's potential?
- Will the client's goals for maintenance be realized? (if applicable)

Design and Creativity - 25 Points

- Are the design elements (scale, balance, unity, etc) used appropriately?
- Is the space creatively transformed?
- Does the design harmonize with its surroundings (architecture & landforms) or is it clearly separated intentionally?
- Are the plant choices horticulturally and aesthetically successful and do they enhance the design? (If applicable)
- Are natives or edibles used where appropriate?
- What is the quality of the hardscaping materials and craftsmanship? (If applicable)
- Is the hardscape to-scale and appropriate? (If applicable)

Degree of Difficulty - 25 Points

- What was the degree of difficulty and how was it addressed/solved?
- Does the choice of materials enhance the design?
- How well were the hardscaping details executed? (exp.: elevation changes, stone cuts, finished carpentry, etc.) (If applicable)
- Are best management practices used throughout the property/landscape (where applicable for plantings, pavers / hardscaping, irrigation, stormwater management, sustainability, and ecological impact/mitigation).

Overall Effect - 25 Points

- Is the overall quality and appearance of the project successful?
- Does the project display professionalism?
- What is outstanding about this project, and/or what are the project's drawbacks?
- Why would you either award or not award this project?
- What is the overall success of this maintained property/landscape? (If applicable)

Projects will be individually judged based on the above criteria. Awards are as follows:

Excellence - 95-100 points

Honor - 85 - 95 points

Merit 75 - 85 points

Please review the General Project / Entry Tips in preparing your submission!

PROJECT NAME: _____

What was the budget for your project: \$ _____

PHOTO DESCRIPTIONS - Submit w/Entry Form

Photo Descriptions: Submit photos in the order that you want them to be viewed by the Judging Committee. In the table below, please provide a name and description of each photo. Photo descriptions are limited to 20 words or less. If additional space is required, attach a separate sheet to this form. See p. 1 for more details/tips on submitting photos. A minimum of 12 photos is required; maximum of 20. Make sure when you submit your digital photos their titles correspond with this photo description form.

1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____
9.	_____	_____
10.	_____	_____
11.	_____	_____
12.	_____	_____
13.	_____	_____
14.	_____	_____
15.	_____	_____
16.	_____	_____
17.	_____	_____
18.	_____	_____
19.	_____	_____
20.	_____	_____

If your project should win, please indicate which photos to publish:

First Choice _____ Second Choice _____ Third Choice _____

Industry Awards Entry Form

Please fill in all information requested below. Type names and addresses as they should appear on the award. A \$120 fee should be included with each entry. You may pay on-line at www.vnlavt.org or make checks payable to the VNLA. The entry form and photos should be submitted to the VNLA, PO Box 92, N. Ferrisburgh, VT 05473 no later than **January 11, 2027**.

Name _____
(entering designer, installer, or project manager)

Name of Project _____ Address _____

Business Name _____

Business Address _____
City/State/Zip _____

Phone-business _____ Phone-home _____ Phone-cell _____

Fax _____ Email _____

Website _____ Facebook _____

Completion Date or Period of Project Management _____

Location/Address of Project _____
City/State _____

Applicant is (circle all that apply):

Registered Landscape Architect

Landscape Designer

Landscape Contractor

Professional Gardener

Vermont Certified Horticulturist

Other (please list) _____

Please list the names of the other parties and subcontractors (if any) who you worked with: _____

Project Description: See page 1 of Application - Project Goals. A description of the project goals, details, and objectives must be submitted with your entry. Submit the project description as a Word document or pdf not to exceed 650 words.

Work Responsibility Chart: A chart that specifies the work performed by the applicant, other parties, and subcontractors. This must be submitted with your entry.

Payment (please circle):

My check for \$120 is enclosed

Credit Card

_____/_____/_____/_____
Credit Card Number CCV# _____ Expiration Date _____

Signature _____

Client Permission/Signature of Release - Required for submission:

I, who own or control the right to permit taking and using photographs of the following property:

_____ property address

hereby grant _____ and the Vermont Nursery and Landscape Association the right to photographs for advertising, trade, or other purposes. I agree that printed material may be used with said photographs and waive the right to inspect or approve the finished product. No reference to the location of said property or the owner's name shall be included in any public use of the photographs. I have the capacity to contract for this property, and have read the above statement and understand it.

Property owner's signature _____ Date _____

Property Address _____

To complete your entry the Work Responsibility Chart must be filled out entirely.

Work Responsibility Chart

Please check at least one box for each category	Designed	Installed	Project Management	Maintained	# of years on project/maintenance	No Responsibility	Please specify the work performed by you, other parties, and subcontractors in the categories below. Do not include the names of the parties involved.
Lawns							
Shrubs							
Trees							
Mulches							
Annuals/ Perennials							
Irrigation							
Decks							
Driveways							
Walks							
Walls							
Terrace/Patio							
Water Features							
Structures							
Other (please list)							



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www.vnlavt.org



Your application should include:

- ✓ Project Plan(Optional but highly encouraged)
- ✓ Project Goals/Description Sheet
- ✓ Project Name Form (p. 4)
- ✓ Photos and photo descriptions.
- ✓ Entry Form (p. 5)
- ✓ Client Permission/Signature of Release (p. 5)
- ✓ Work Responsibility Chart (p. 6)
- ✓ Check/Charge payable to the VNLA