

# Five Under Forty: Joshua Ruppert

Meet the Senior Residential Designer for Lifescape Colorado in Littleton

July 14, 2020 by Alison Gwinn (<https://www.coloradohomesmag.com/author/alison-gwinn/>)



(<https://www.coloradohomesmag.com/content/uploads/2020/07/Screen-Shot-2020-07-14-at-2.04.44-PM.png>)

Portrait by Jennifer Olson

Making a landscape look beautiful is all well and good, but for Joshua Ruppert, it also has to have meaning. “Early in my career, I just wanted to make things look pretty,” he says. “Now, everything has to have a purpose. I don’t believe in straight paths. I like to

have a series of focal points—as simple as a boulder, a tree or a water feature—that attract your eye, something that takes you from point A to point B.

It's about the experience of moving through a space." Ruppert, who grew up on a lake in the Midwest, has always loved the outdoors. After earning a bachelor's in landscape architecture from The Ohio State University, he moved to Denver to work for the firm DHM Design, where he did a number of projects for the National Park Service, in such well-known "national backyards" as the Grand Canyon, Glacier National Park and Yellowstone. After a stint at Designsapes Colorado, he moved to **Lifescape** (<https://lifescapecolorado.com/>) in 2015 to do residential design.

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These days, he sets his alarm clock early in the day, so he can get into the office to do design work before heading out into the field, juggling five to seven jobs at a time. Always, he says, the goal is to create meaningful outdoor spaces. "People naturally feel this connection with their environment, and landscape enhances our lives and lifts our mood. We live in a world that's go-go-go, so we need to have places to feel relaxed, to entertain and connect."



([https://www.coloradohomesmag.com/content/uploads/2020/07/EMR\\_6969.jpg](https://www.coloradohomesmag.com/content/uploads/2020/07/EMR_6969.jpg)).

Photo by Emily Minton Redfield

### **SERVICE TO THE PARK SERVICE**

"Doing projects for the National Park Service, I learned some of the true concepts of landscape architecture, mainly about stewardship of the land and what grows where. It goes beyond aesthetics; you also have to be aware of the environment. I've been lucky to be able to use those same principles at Lifescape, which gave me the opportunity to do residential work."

### **WINTER, SPRING, SUMMER AND FALL...**

"Gardens change with the seasons, so you have to think about what the landscape will look like year-round. You want to appeal to the senses of touch, smell, sight and sound. You might put in a fire feature, so you get the texture of the flame, and then add water to get that soothing sound. Then you might add in lilac, so you have that sweet smell in the spring; a maple to get the red leaf color in the fall; and then, for the winter, a plant that collects snow or has berries left behind."



*“Gardens change with the seasons, so you have to think about what the landscape will look like year-round. You want to APPEAL TO THE SENSES of touch, smell, sight and sound.” — Joshua Ruppert*

### **ACCLIMATING TO COLORADO**

“My mother-in-law has a Colorado bumper sticker that says, ‘I’m not native, but I got here as quick as possible.’ A lot of us feel that way. When I came out here for my first job interview, I called my wife, Betsy, who truly is my rock, and said, ‘It’s really dry. All I see are a lot of root tops.’ But I went hiking in Golden, and in one direction I saw thick forest, and in the other, skyline. I called her back and said, ‘Let’s do this.’ That was 2006.”





Feature-Web.jpg)

Photo by David Patterson

## PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES

“Your property doesn’t stop at the property line. You have to think about the views, whether it’s of the mountains, the prairie or the street. Denver is a dense city, with a real community feel. You need to incorporate those city views into designs. If someone has a Wash Park view, the last thing you want to do is enclose that yard so the owners can’t see people running, walking their dog, biking. People want to feel connected to their community.”

## A TOUCH OF WHIMSY

“I’m not a formal designer—straight boxwood hedges, very defined spaces, everything nice and tidy. I like a bit of that, but let’s also throw in a splash of color, let’s have the grass droop over the patio space, and if there’s a walkway, let’s add tall, ornamental grass to run your hand over. My son Nathan showed me a YouTuber named Casey Neistat, who said, ‘To be successful, you have to be different and do it well.’ That idea resonates with me.”

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