

# Niantic Neighbors

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**ROOTED IN TIME...  
LINDA AND BILL LILLIE**  
*Celebrating 30 Years!*

POWERED BY



PHOTO BY  
CAMERON COOKE

# ROOTED IN TIME... LINDA AND BILL LILLIE

## *Celebrating 30 Years!*

By Cameron Cooke | Photo by Cameron Cooke

*Sprigs  
& Twigs*



**I**f you spend enough time around gardens, you begin to

understand that the most important work happens quietly. Roots stretch long before branches are visible. Soil changes slowly. What appears effortless in full bloom is usually the result of patience, attention, and years of care.

Bill and Linda Lillie understand that kind of work.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Sprigs & Twigs, the landscaping company they built together. For them, the milestone feels less like a business anniversary and more like a reflection on a shared life shaped deliberately over time. Over three decades, they have blended families, navigated career shifts, mentored employees, and helped neighbors create outdoor spaces where birthdays are celebrated, grandchildren chase each other across lawns, and quiet evenings settle in around patios and gardens. What ties it all together is intention.

"We didn't do it all at once," Bill said. "It happened a little at a time."

### FINDING THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Neither of them began adulthood intending to run a landscaping company. Linda grew up in New Jersey and found her way to Connecticut through education and service. After high school, she joined the Navy in part to earn the G.I. Bill. She began studying chemistry, determined to build a career in science, but eventually realized she was heading in the wrong direction. "I went as far as I could," she said. "Then I said, that's enough."

Through Connecticut College's return-to-college program, she discovered botany, and the turning point was immediate. "As soon as I walked into the greenhouse, I knew what I wanted to do." Plants made sense to her in a way lab formulas never had. They required observation, patience, and respect for natural systems. She raised her daughter, Sarah, locally, tending gardens at home and gradually building confidence in her understanding of how things grow and why they sometimes struggle.

Bill's early path was more mechanical. He grew up outside Philadelphia, studied at Penn State, and came to Connecticut in the late 1960s to work for Electric Boat. His career would eventually include assignments connected to missile defense, work defined by structure, process, and long-term planning. Before Sprigs & Twigs, he even ran a baseball card store in Gales Ferry, where Linda's daughter worked as a teenager. "I hired her at 14," Bill said with a smile. Two years later, he met Linda.

### THE START OF SOMETHING SMALL

Their early life together was practical and grounded. Bill was at Electric Boat and, in 2001, he transferred to Washington, D.C., to work for the Missile Defense Agency. Linda had been working as a dental assistant, but in 1997, she started working on landscaping full time. Her business, Sprigs & Twigs, grew from a simple observation.

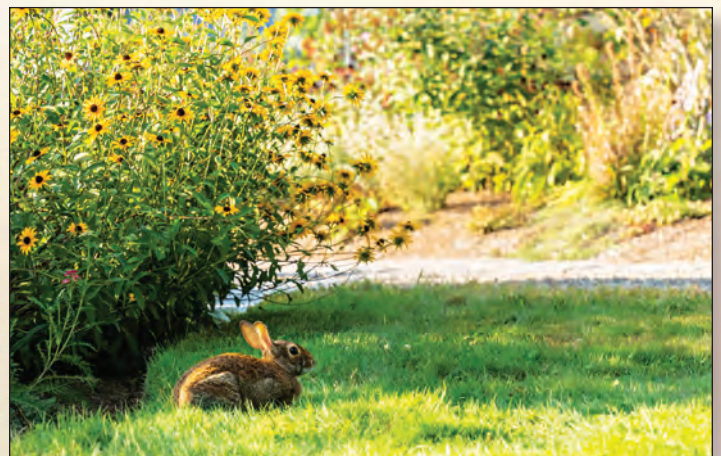
Bill had noticed the landscaping Linda had created around her home and asked who had done the work. "I said I did," Linda recalled. "He said, 'You can make a business out of this.' I said, 'Get out of here.'" The suggestion felt unlikely, but it also felt possible.

They began with one aging pickup truck, a few tools, and a name Linda sketched that felt friendly and unassuming: Sprigs & Twigs. They initially imagined focusing on interior plant care and secured one small job. "That was the first and only interior plant care job we ever got," Bill said. What neighbors truly needed was help outdoors. Overgrown beds, new construction, properties that had slowly become unmanageable — one project led to another. Growth was steady and largely fueled by word of mouth. Clients trusted them because they listened.

For several years, Bill commuted between Connecticut and Washington while Linda ran the business. During winter months, she brought her computer south and completed design work there before returning north in spring. It required flexibility and commitment, but the foundation was strengthening. In 2005, Bill retired early from Electric Boat and joined the company full time. The partnership became more clearly defined. Linda brought creative vision; Bill brought structure and systems.

"She's very gifted at design," Bill said. "I could see that right away."

"You build the business," Linda says of him.



## DESIGNING FOR THE LONG TERM

When Linda designs a landscape, she does not think only about how it will look on installation day. She considers what it will look like in five years, or ten. She accounts for mature plant size, air circulation, winter structure, deer pressure, and drought. She spaces plants according to how they will grow, not how they appear in a nursery pot.

"You have to know your plants," she said. "And where they will thrive and where they will not."

That long view shapes the company itself. Over time, Sprigs & Twigs expanded thoughtfully. They added stonework and carpentry to create cohesive outdoor spaces. They developed drainage solutions because water problems can undermine even the most beautiful design. In 2010, they launched their own tree division to ensure quality from start to finish.

Central to their philosophy has been a commitment to organic practices and native plants. Decades ago, that approach was uncommon. Today, it is often what draws clients to them. "People call us and say, 'I want organic,'" Linda said. Bill admits he approached organic methods carefully at first. "I wanted to understand it before I believed it," he said. "It's not just pop science."

Their lawn program focuses on soil health rather than cosmetic perfection. By feeding soil organisms and encouraging mowing practices that support natural growth, they allow lawns to become resilient over time. "The focus is healthy soil," Bill said. "The byproduct is a nice lawn."

## GROWING PEOPLE ALONG THE WAY

Thirty years in, Sprigs & Twigs employs roughly two dozen people during peak season. What Bill speaks about most readily is not scale, but loyalty. "The thing that inspires me is the number of employees that we have that are career employees," he said.

Several team members have been with them for more than fifteen years. The company operates transparently, sharing financial information with staff and practicing profit sharing. Education is encouraged and supported. Employees pursue certifications, expand their skills, and build careers rather than temporary jobs. The culture mirrors the way Linda designs a garden: provide structure, leave room to grow, and invest in the foundation.

Family remains part of the story. Both Sarah and Bill's daughter Kathy worked in the company's early years. Today Kathy teaches in Massachusetts and runs a small landscaping business during the summer, a quiet continuation of what she learned early on.

## A LIFE THAT CONTINUES TO BLOOM

When they are not working, Bill and Linda share a love of antique



cars. What began with a Model A grew into a deeper appreciation for craftsmanship and history. It is another expression of their shared temperament: respect for things built to last and an understanding that quality reveals itself over time. Linda still finds her greatest satisfaction in her own garden. "I love being out there," she said. "For all the insects and plants."

Thirty years ago, Bill saw possibility in a yard Linda had shaped herself. Three decades later, what they have grown together extends far beyond that first patch of landscaping. The properties they have designed now hold the rhythms of other families' lives. Children grow up in those backyards. Trees they planted cast shade over gatherings they will never attend. Employees they mentored build futures of their own.

The measure of their work is not just in clean lines or healthy lawns. It is in continuity. It is in trust. It is in the quiet understanding that when something is planted with care and tended with patience, it endures. And after thirty years, that endurance is visible everywhere.

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