

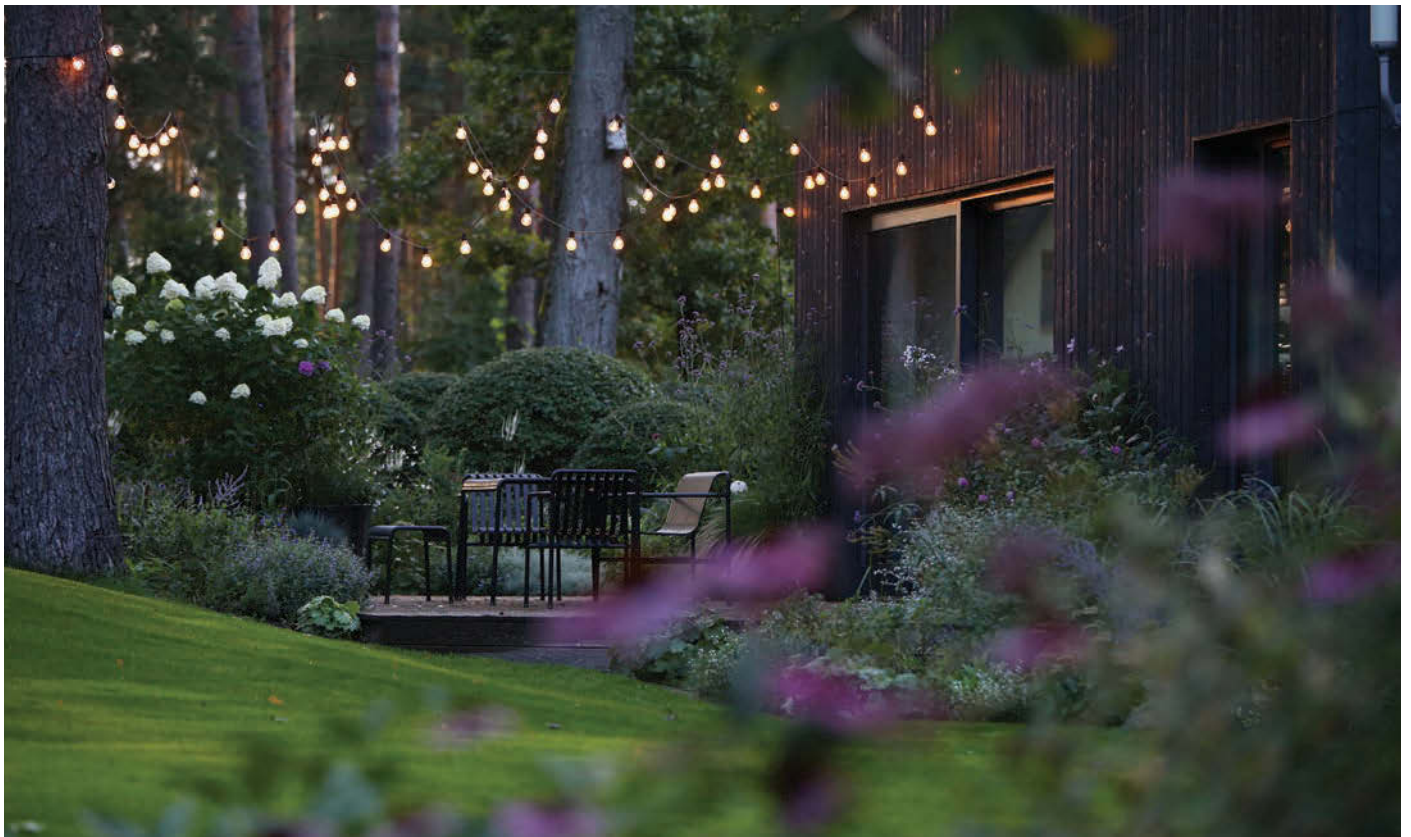


GALANTUS: *25 years of nurturing nature's beauty and growing passion*

In the delicate artistry of the garden design, *Galantus* stands as the epitome of enthusiasm, experience, and a deep-rooted love for nature. As the company approaches its silver jubilee next year, we delve into *Galantus* founder, Ansis Birznieks perspective on the intricacies of perfect garden creation – a process that takes time, dedication, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. We explore the profound question of whether a garden possesses a soul and unveils *Galantus* mission, which extends beyond aesthetics to sustainability, reflecting the values of those who cherish these green sanctuaries.

Text by MARIANNA HODASH





What initially drew you to the garden design, and what were the major turning points on *Galantus* path?

My parents have been gardening all their lives and taught me the appreciation of nature as well. I grew up in the Vidzeme region, surrounded by beautiful nature and many fruit and flower gardens. My father collected and grew tulips and daffodils, and my mother grew roses. People from different places attended our garden for training. The most important things I have learned as a child are the nature's proximity, the feeling of its greatness, and the broad spectrum of its perception.

In the 90s, we lived in the information vacuum, and for quite a time, the only inspiration was looking over the neighbours fence and thinking, «If he has it, then I need it». Therefore, we at *Galantus* started with ordering gardening magazines and books about garden design from Great Britain. The second crucial moment was when I built my own house with a garden. Only then I started to deeply understand the importance of the garden design as an art of creating an outdoor space.

I have always said that I would not entrust the creation of a house to an architect who lives in a city apartment. The same goes for the garden. Moreover, a person should have a garden and understand it from the inside. By the way, I am always happy to invite future *Galantus* Clients to my garden to introduce my vision and see the many design solutions, plant combinations and the effectiveness of various technical solutions to create cosiness and uniqueness of the outdoor space.

My garden became a space for experiments, which has influenced the number of exciting projects we have engaged in over the past years. Finally, another vital moment was when we realised that even the most beautiful gardens in static images would give a poor understanding of how these gardens were created and more important, how one is feeling to live there, to be there. I wanted us to have an inspiration and a vision of where to go next. So we started to go on field studies — trips

during which our team visited dozens of the famous gardens in Great Britain, France, Holland and other European countries – different in style, time of creation and purpose, location and environment. The most inspiring of them were for example *Sissinghurst castle* Garden in UK, *le Jardine Plume* or *Les Jardins d'Étretat* in France, *Piet Oudolf's* own Garden in Holland and many more.

Gardening is much more than just planting plants in a specific order. How can the additional value of *Galantus* work be expressed in a more profound understanding?

What is gardening? The science of nature, including botany, ecology and soil as well as climatic aspects, and geography. And not only that. Also, architecture, the space's microclimate, design conformity, other aesthetic issues, and the Client's individual values, needs, and dreams. We help people streamline the environment, help them to choose optimal solutions, and work together through every detail, including colour schemes, getting together styles, garden lighting, irrigation systems, security and other technical issues. Being kind mentors and mindlike partners, we go through this process together from A to Z.

If you delve into the philosophical aspect of gardening, do you think the garden has a soul? If so, where to look for it?

Definitely, the garden has a soul. Why do people start gardens in the first place? It is a complex feeling of faith and hope, a longing for the lost paradise and the desire to find it again, at least to some extent, bringing it into a living space and thus touching the highest form of goodness through it. How else can we perceive that people have been striving for this beauty since immemorial times ?

After all, a garden is an idealised nature, more dense and concentrated. The soul of the garden manifests itself in our feel-





ings when we are in the garden. This is a sense of deep satisfaction, calmness, and harmony. At the same time, the idea of a «garden» will differ for many people so there is probably no unambiguous answer to such a complex question. But a garden is undoubtedly a space to receive different sensations and emotions.

How long does it take Galantus to create «the perfect» garden? And how many people usually work on each project?

Projects are very different, but *Galantus* team usually is invited to gardens, which are time-consuming, with many implemented ideas. Our Clients does not come from a category of people who want everything to be done «yesterday». We are approached by those who understand the importance of the outdoor space and realise that its arrangement takes time. The company has the garden design team of three great landscape architects, construction process is provided by 3 teams, on average, four to seven people work on site. designers, gardeners, builders, pavers, horticulturists, arborists, and technical workers. I am also directly involved in every stage of the process, starting from the first meeting and our relationship almost never ends. In addition, we also have a fantastic team of gardeners who take care of the gardens. In total we have team of 30. The approximate duration of the project from the development stage to the final touch takes about nine months plus. In one year time we can create just about 3-5gardens. It's a hard work!

When to get started? It really doesn't matter. Construction work is carried out throughout the whole season, usually beginning in March, and continue to go on till December, but the design process could be done at any time of the year. The only condition under which we begin a project in case of a newly build property, is that it should have at least the frame of the house ready. If there is only an idea and an empty plot of land,

then we can brainstorm together and discuss various future options and directions, but we can only start real work when buildings appear physically. Only then one can feel the defined space and scale, which is really important.

Is every Galantus project unique? Have there been cases of repeated projects?

Yes, the projects are unique, and it's our main aim to be so! Each garden will differ in feeling and detailing. We only implement projects of our own and don't give them out, so they usually don't «wander» around. Although I came upon such projects of ours constructed by another companies couple of times. But you know what? The difference in implementation was striking! The general feeling could be lost easily. Our mentality is a holistic approach from scratch to the last detail like a garden bench. I'm taking all our projects as my own with the greatest attention and responsibility.

You said that the company has a garden care team. After completing the projects, do you keep in touch with your clients?

Each of our acquaintances with the new customer is a long-term relationship, lasting several years, at least or even decades. Our creations are like children, so we always remember them and are willing to continue caring for them. Usually, Clients see it the same way and are focused on cooperation. The team comes to the Client's garden if and when needed. It may be once a month or every two months, depending on the garden's needs and Client's expectations. The main thing is knowing what you want; everything will work out how it should.

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