

Design considerations for your garden

There are many different things to consider when looking at your outdoor space. One of the first things to look at is what do you have, secondly, what do you want to use your garden for, and thirdly what do you want it to look and feel like?

What do you have?

Looking out at your garden to be may be daunting but it is not something to be scared about. You may have the complete blank canvas with only a flat area of soil or grass. You may have quite the overgrown jungle and no room to swing a cat. Whether it is an open wild field, or small forest, it is yours. Deciding what you want to keep and what you want to remove depends on a number of factors - this decision making process is the site analysis.

- Look at what you have in terms of plants, trees, grass and their condition along with any structures eg shed.
- Decide what you want to keep, or what is worth keeping (this may be a feature, trees or planting)
- Look at any site problems including exposure to the elements, drainage issues, poor drainage and poor soil.
- Is there a lack of sunlight at any time of the day, especially paying attention to the evening sun for the patio area?
- What views do you have, both good and bad?
- In the front garden is there enough parking space and simple access to the front door (is a ramp needed)?
- Think about the junction of the house and garden. Would patio doors help bring the garden into the house better?

What do you want to use your garden for?

This is where the 'wish list' comes in to play. At this stage you shouldn't be limited by anything but your imagination. If you have at some time flicked through a garden book or magazine, or even glimpsed some of the array of options that pop up on tv you will be more than aware that every single garden is different and every client has different requirements. To make sense of the bewildering variations and options you can bring it down to taking a look at what you have in terms of plants, trees, grass and their condition.

- Do you want to be able to bring your friends over for a BBQ or just relax on your own in your own hidden sanctuary?
- Is there a need for children's play area and equipment?
- Are flowers and growing vegetables your passion or is attracting wildlife a main focus of the garden?
- The need for utility space for the bins, lawn mower and other associated tools. Boring, but it's an important necessity!
- What features will give your garden the completed look: water, mounded lawns, hidden pathways, lighting, fire pit?
- A garden office or covered structure will allow the garden to be used at all times of the year.
- There are rooms in your house, so why not apply the same principles to your garden eg dining, lounging, entertaining.

What style suits you and the garden?

When thinking about the style of the garden it is important to take into account a few factors including the architecture of the house, your personal taste and the amount of investment that you are going to put into the space. This decision making process in the end comes down to personal choice. In order to narrow it down it may be more useful to think mainly about the materials selection.

- Are lots of plants your thing with less emphasis on the hard landscaping elements like paths and patio?
- Do you love the feeling of timber on your bare feet on a summers evening?
- Do you want separate spaces to explore and discover, or a couple of larger more open spaces?
- Look up images on the internet of spaces, materials and plants that you like as well as spaces that you don't like.
- Will ripping out the hedge and replacing it with clean new fencing give you more space and a more finished look?
- Are painted walls going to give you that injection of colour your shady garden yearns for?

No matter what your wish list includes, remember it is your garden. Thinking of all of these things before the design is started will ensure that nothing is left out and that Ian can help to give you the garden that you deserve.