

What goes into a design?



A qualified garden designer has huge variety of knowledge and skills, based on years of training, research and engagement with industry bodies. Below is a summary of all the things that are accounted for at each stage of the design process:

- 1) Consultation: The designer finds out through meetings, questionnaires and by sharing ideas online exactly what the client requires from their new garden. Based on this conversation the designer writes a detailed brief for approval, at which point work on the design can commence.

We take into account...

- Budget
- Use of the garden
- Style and Planting preferences
- Maintenance factors

- 2) Site Analysis: The designer notes down at all the different factors in the existing garden.

Eg...

- Current condition of fencing, hard landscaping and plants
- Problem areas such as wet or dry soil or lawns, excessive shade, large trees, eyesores etc.
- Position of sun and how it moves around the garden
- Prevailing winds
- Planning or other legal restrictions
- Traffic noise
- Privacy issues
- Access issues
- Disputes with neighbours and their impact
- Surrounding landscapes and buildings

3) Site Survey: The designer carefully measures the entire site to produce a scale drawing from which to work.

This includes...

- Placing elements such as trees and boundaries in their exact location
- Measuring angles and level changes
- Noting the site of drains, manholes, water and electrical points
- Drawing the position of the house, windows and doors and their relationship to the garden

4) Master Plan: With all the above factors taken into account, the designer will produce a master plan showing the suggested layout of the new space. Once this has been approved, many hours are spent producing the plans, documents and images that enable the design to be realised.

These may include...

- A 3D image to show the design in full
- A setting-out plan for contractors to follow to lay out the garden correctly
- Detailed construction drawings of complex elements
- A lighting and/or irrigation plan for contractors to follow
- Simple or complex specification documents to ensure that construction work will be carried out to a suitable standard using appropriate materials
- A schedule of works for the contractor to follow
- Health and Safety Assessment documents

...Meanwhile, a series of conversations happens between designer and client to determine exactly which materials, furniture and other elements will be specified in the design. Once the project is underway the designer can monitor the development to ensure it is being carried out to a good standard, usually by making site visits at an hourly rate.

5) Planting design: Plants are a costly but important part of the design. They bring the garden to life and bring joy to its users. The designer has to take a huge number of factors into consideration to produce a planting scheme that lasts well and invokes the spirit of the place.

Considerations include...

The suitability of the growing conditions:

- Soil type
- Soil condition
- Soil pH
- Light levels and Aspect
- Temperature fluctuations
- Microclimates created by plants and buildings
- Moisture levels
- Exposure to wind

If these are not considered plants may suffer and die and the client has to spend more money in the long term.

Other elements considered

- Planting style preferences
- Interest in flower and foliage at different times of year
- Eventual size of plants
- Maintenance requirements
- Screening effect
- Allergies and toxicity

Additional documents can be produced for the client to detail the following:

- A bulb planting scheme
- A plant buying list with named suppliers for sourcing of the plants listed in the design
- A maintenance schedule for the client or a gardener to follow
- Recommendations for future additions/renovations

There are few design disciplines that have so many factors to take into consideration as this, and the process takes time and dedication on the part of the designer to get everything right. For the client, the pleasure and satisfaction - not to mention the increase in property value – gained from investing in a design makes it a very worthwhile decision.