

# GOOD GARDEN DESIGN



## In the garden with Wendy Matheson

Creating a new garden can be a very rewarding experience. A good design will stand testament for years to come, and not only add to your lives, but also add value to your property.

Implementing a full garden redesign is a significant investment in your property – much of the work involved in constructing the garden will be comparable in terms of labour, materials and cost to building an extension. As such, clients might budget between 4–10 per cent of the value of the property for this service, depending on the quality of finish they require. A good garden design can add up to 10–22 per cent to the value of the property. Gardens can be transformed into exciting and functional spaces for much smaller sums, and one of the jobs of the designer is to maximise the effect of the available budget. Design services can range from a concept design, or a planting plan to a comprehensive service encompassing everything from initial survey to build and planting.

Redesigning outside space can be a minefield, and there are many implications to consider regardless of budget and scale of project.

This article will hopefully help in deciding whether to tackle a redesign yourself or to seek professional advice.

If a project involves hard landscaping, recontouring of land, new outdoor building and so on, it is advisable to employ the skills of a qualified designer to oversee the project. They will take you through a set of design

stages and then help to procure the appropriate contractors and liaise with them until the completion of the project. This is a similar process to that of an architect. In fact, many architects work hand in hand with garden and landscape designers when creating a new property.

There are numerous reasons why we think about designing or redesigning our outdoor space:

- A new property or an extension where the builders have just left
- Moving house and making your own mark
- Children now grown up and no need to have a recreation ground in the back garden
- Retirement, looking to do either more or less gardening
- Looking to sell and to make the property more marketable
- Privacy issues from neighbours or new developments



If you are using the services of a design professional they will take you through some or all of the following elements:

- Initial consultation – meet with your designer to view the garden and identify your requirements, outlining problem areas and discussing the possibilities of the site within the budget in order

to develop a design brief. Some designers charge for this but offset it against the final design fee

- Site survey and analysis – if the scale of the project is quite large or complicated then a landscape surveyor may be required. If the plot is quite small with few level changes then the designer should be able to survey the site

### Gardens to visit in January

Cambo Estates, Kingsbarns – wonderful snowdrop walks

Leith Hall and Garden, near Huntly

Threave Garden and Estate, Castle Douglas

including house dimensions, boundaries, window and door levels and level changes within the site. Soil samples should be taken at this stage to ascertain what plants are likely to thrive

- Outline design proposals – based on the brief and the site analysis your designer should present a set of drawings which may include a sketch plan, 3D computer modelling and perspective drawings to help visualise the proposed design

- Masterplan – once the proposal design has been agreed a detailed and accurate set of plans will be produced on which the landscape contractor can base their quotations. Setting out plans, construction drawings and specifications should all

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be included. At this stage any necessary planning approval should be submitted

- Construction – once a suitable contractor has been found and construction is under way you may dispense with the designer’s services until the planting stage. It is, however, advisable to have them make regular site visits to monitor the job and ensure the project is running smoothly, particularly if there are any amendments to the original plans. If the project is very large or the budget requires the design to be staged over a period of time it would be



necessary to have the designer project manage the contract

- Detailed planting plan – if a complete overhaul isn’t what you are looking for and you just need a redesign of your borders and beds this may be the only design stage you need. The designer should provide full planting plans for each area along with plant schedules, quantities and sizes and a maintenance schedule with notes on future care. Some designers have preferred nurseries that they work with. This can be beneficial if looking to broaden your repertoire of plants other than those supplied at the local garden superstores
- Finishing touches – such as lighting, sculpture, planters,

**This month’s must-have book**

*Flora Mirabilis* by Catherine Herbert Howell – How plants have shaped world knowledge, health, wealth and beauty, lavish illustrations – National Geographic ISBN 978-1426205095 RRP £19.99

**This month’s must-dos**

- Prune fruit trees, soft fruit, wisteria and vines – unless hard frosts are forecast
- Prevent your pond from freezing over by using a floating ball or pond heater
- When ground not frozen – plant bare-root plants, fruit, roses, hedging
- Take hard wood cuttings of Salix, Ribes, Elaeagnus, Escallonia, Hydrangea and Rosa
- Start off very early crops of lettuce, radish, spinach and salads in glasshouse or windowsill
- Clean old pots and seed trays in readiness for the spring
- Start to prepare any new areas in the garden, dig where possible – it will help to rid Christmas excesses!
- Look at ideas for revamping beds and borders

pots and outdoor furniture. Most designers will have a comprehensive library of suppliers for all of these details and will know where to source a particular style. Provision must be made at the construction stage for outdoor lighting; this adds another dimension to the garden extending its use and its character

drawings to the local planning officer on your behalf.

There are scores of companies and independent contractors selling a multitude of skills, and it can be a minefield deciding which one to go with. Along with most trades, any affiliation to a skills-based trade organisation can be a good indication of the quality of work if a portfolio of completed jobs isn’t available to view. Some of these organisation can be expensive for small operators and are not always necessary if they have a proven track record. Always check that they have appropriate indemnity insurance in case things go wrong. Small works contracts can be easily obtained if they are not offered automatically by the contractor.

If you have decided to tackle a project on your own, it is important to take into account any legal implications such as planning consents and restrictions. This is particularly important in conservation areas and when dealing with listed buildings and TPOs. There are also new restrictions on the disposal of surface water for patios and hard landscaping.

If you are unsure if any of these or similar issues apply to you then it is always advisable to seek the professional help of a qualified garden designer who will send the appropriate

This may all seem a bit daunting, however, a well-constructed garden can give you years of pleasure as well as adding value to your property. Good luck!



**CONTACT WENDY**

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