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# WHEN TO PLAN A GARDEN

Above: The exterior of this property was created by Claire Merriman Garden Design ([clairemerrimandesign.co.uk](http://clairemerrimandesign.co.uk)) to include zones for relaxing, dining and soaking up the sun. Kimmeridge limestone paving, £125 per m<sup>2</sup> from Artisans of Devises ([artisansofdevises.com](http://artisansofdevises.com)), enhances the stone facade of the building and is complemented with Amaya tumbled limestone flooring in the kitchen, providing a good flow from inside to out

**Your outdoor space may not be the first thought when you're busy getting your new home built, but put effort into both early on and your surroundings will perfectly complement your architecture**

It's not unusual for the garden to be an afterthought in a house build, but there is merit in a tandem approach. "Designing a house and garden together creates a more harmonious living environment. An integrated approach strengthens the character of the site, using a consistent palette of materials to blur the boundaries between indoor and outdoor spaces, with the garden forming an outdoor room," says Robert Myers, landscape architect and director of Robert Myers Associates. "Your house's architectural style will often set the tone for the garden layout and detailing. The materials and colour palette can influence elements such as paving, plant selection, and outdoor furniture."

By planning the spaces together, you can also achieve good flow. Hiring a garden designer in line with your build team means windows, doors and other glazing can be positioned with views, access points and lifestyle needs factored in. "Clients are increasingly in search of outdoor spaces that take on similar functions to those once preserved for the house," says John Law, creative director for interiors at Woodhouse & Law. "This can be outdoor

kitchens or a pared-back bar and stools that doubles up as a space for those wishing to work outside on their laptops." When setting a schedule, there are practical benefits to planning landscaping in parallel to a build – the construction is contained to a single timeframe and upheaval happens all at once, while access and tasks can be coordinated and prioritised. Professional landscapers work year round, but certain jobs such as brickwork and paving cannot be done in very wet or cold conditions.

## Taking cues for the design

As well as the architecture, look to the surrounding areas – both immediately outside of your house and the wider landscape – as a starting point. "Create a sense of repetition," advises Robert. "If you have rounded trees in the surroundings, repeat this with rounded shrubs as well as trees. This will soften the boundary between garden and wider landscape. If you have the luxury of expansive, naturalistic views beyond the garden then you can borrow these as a backdrop, making sure that these views are as visible as possible – maybe framing them

as part of your garden's design – so that your own outdoor space feels part of a larger setting.”

If the surrounding landscape isn't appealing, make the boundary a feature in itself. Look at materials used for hardscaping, particularly if there are historic or characterful properties nearby, and reflect this in your brickwork, paving, driveway and other stonework.

Interiors can offer guidance, too. “We often use a floor finish internally that complements the materials used in the garden,” says John. “Many types of limestone can be used inside and out with the right treatment. This can help unify the spaces. Where this isn't possible, a material in a complementary tone can be successful. Millboard, for example, offers a wide range of composite timber-effect boards that can sit well with carpet, stone and timber flooring for interior schemes.” Colours used inside can be echoed through planting, pots, decorative pieces and outdoor furniture and vice versa. CorTen steel beds can mirror bronze kitchen handles or frames, rather than larger features.

### Planning views

“Views into the garden can be important in creating a sense of retreat and privacy,” says James Scott, managing director and principal designer at The Garden Company. Consider the positioning of glazing to maximise the vistas and factor in the internal layout, too. You may like to overlook the garden while at the kitchen sink or enjoy an indoor-outdoor feel from the dining table, particularly where sliding doors open up to a patio. “A common pitfall is placing garden furniture immediately across the main entrance into the outdoors, creating a barrier visually and practically,” says James. “Instead, a furnished terrace set deeper in the garden creates a focal point and entices people out further.” Don't discount views of the house when in the garden. “Especially on the approach along a drive where the picturesque technique of concealment and surprise is often effective,” says Robert.



#### HOW LONG DO POPULAR PLANTS TAKE TO BED IN?

**James Scott, managing director and principal designer at The Garden Company, offers these tips on when to plant different elements:**

**GRASS** can be laid at any time of year, as long as the weather is not too hot or cold. In the summertime, new grass needs lots of watering so it's best not to lay it just before a planned holiday.

**HERBACEOUS PLANTS** establish very quickly in the right conditions and, given a suitable watering schedule, they can bed in after one season.

**SHRUBS AND TREES** take longer to establish than other plants. They can take several years to fully bed in and during that time they need additional care, including staking and watering.



### Working with what's there

Trees should only be removed if they are dead, dying, dangerous or unsuitable. A structural engineer and arboriculturalist should inspect trees on site and assess how construction work might impact them. If you live in a conservation area or a listed building you also need to check with the council before doing any tree work, as planning restrictions may apply. “Trees provide us with oxygen, store carbon, stabilise the soil conditions and provide shelter for wildlife,” says James. In many cases, an arboriculturalist will recommend that protective measures are put in place to safeguard trees during construction, ensuring the canopy and roots are safe. Aside from trees, you may wish to retain established planting by carefully digging out at the root and relocating them into new beds, or reuse materials such as paving.

### Developing a scheme

Much of the hard landscaping will be tied into functions such as walkways and patios, so it's wise to begin with the structural layout and develop planting from there. Investing

Above: Garden, architecture and kitchen design work in harmony in this extended property where a focus on indoor-outdoor living was a key driver for the project. The extension was designed by Marek Wojciechowski Architects ([mw-a.co.uk](http://mw-a.co.uk)) and built by New Wave London with a kitchen by Halcyon Interiors ([halcyoninteriors.com](http://halcyoninteriors.com)), where kitchens start from £40,000

Left: Take inspiration from the wider landscape, including surrounding buildings, like in this project by Robert Myers Associates ([robertmyers-associates.co.uk](http://robertmyers-associates.co.uk)). The hardscaping is in keeping with the picturesque church view, while the planting echoes that of the trees and bushes outside of the boundary



PHOTOGRAPHY: JOHN HAN BUCKLEY

## GREEN ROOFS FIVE THINGS TO KNOW...

- 1 A green roof can be** a roof garden with raised beds and pots, have a low-maintenance sedum carpet, or feature a roof containing planting cells filled with compost and planted with low perennials and grasses. Each requires different levels of maintenance and substrate, as well as structural foundations. A sedum-based green roof is usually the simplest to install and maintain.
- 2 All green roofs can add** a layer of insulation to a property and reduce noise pollution.
- 3 Beware that green roofs** are susceptible to drought and water logging, so care and attention should be paid. However, they can also reduce problems with water run-off.
- 4 Wildlife can also benefit** from a green roof, especially in urban areas, as the planting matter provides habitats for a variety of birds and insects.
- 5 Consult a structural engineer** or surveyor to ensure the structure can take the weight of a green roof before confirming any decisions. An architect can draw up plans, while specialist green roof suppliers will be able to advise, too.



Left: James Scott, managing director and principal designer at The Garden Company, designed this garden to sit comfortably within a farmland setting while maintaining a modern feel. Trees and clipped hedges were used to strengthen the geometry before the areas were over-layered with softer, more naturalistic planting. Grasses provide clever screening and a wildflower meadow is good for local wildlife. This garden cost around £50,000 ([thegardenco.co.uk](http://thegardenco.co.uk))

Top: Maintaining one theme is a more dependable and effective way to stay on track with garden planning and design. But by taking elements of both traditional and contemporary planting, the garden at Sarah Raven's ([sarahraven.com](http://sarahraven.com)) Perch Hill oozes interest and character throughout the seasons

in mature plants will allow you to create a more instant result, but this will be expensive. A more cost-effective option is to buy younger plants and allow them to naturally bed in. "Rather than considering it a waiting game for a new garden to mature, we would remind clients that one of the greatest joys of a garden transformation is to watch it develop," says James. Another option is to carry out planting early in the schedule or in advance of a long build so plants have time to grow prior to construction being completed. "Coordination between the landscape and building teams is crucial to avoid damage," advises Robert.

### Choosing planting

It's a good idea to enhance biodiversity with your choices. "Incorporate native plants, pollinating plants, water bodies and wildlife habitats to promote biodiversity and attract beneficial insects, birds, and other wildlife," says Robert, who suggests low-water demand varieties and those resilient to heat, flooding and other effects of climate change are increasingly important.

"Consider the type of wildlife that comes into a garden. If you're looking to help bee colonies, plant bee-friendly flowers in a window box or a pot by the door," says author and gardener Sarah Raven. "Angelica Gigas has beautiful aromatic flower heads that are loved by bees, butterflies, and birds, which also love the purple-blue flowers of *Lavandula Angustifolia* 'Hidcote'. The most floriferous

of the compact lavenders, it is incredibly reliable and rich in pollen and nectar for much of the summer. *Verbena Bonariensis* creates a haze of purple flowers at head height from late summer to autumn, attracting butterflies. Leave the dead stalks until spring as this helps protect seeds from finches and offers protection from cold, wet weather. "The preferred style of garden and soil type will influence planting, too. Low-maintenance grasses, plants and flowers such as Foxgloves and wallflowers are good for beds in a contemporary design, while a cottage garden mix of zinnia, cosmos and malopes will create a more traditional look. The style of your garden comes down to the property's style, surroundings, and your preferences.

### Setting a budget

The price of landscaping, materials and design fees varies depending on project scope, location, plot, specification and work required. Discuss budget allocations with a garden designer early on. As a guide, consider allocating your garden budget as follows:

<b>Hard landscape and structures</b> .....	<b>30-40%</b>
(including driveways, dining terraces, pergolas, pathways etc)	
<b>Trees and planting</b> .....	<b>20-30%</b>
<b>Grass</b> .....	<b>10-20%</b>
<b>Furniture/finishes</b> .....	<b>10-20%</b>
<b>Design fees</b> .....	<b>10-15%</b>
<b>Other</b> (irrigation, lighting, maintenance).....	<b>5-10%</b>