

Drawing a plan

Begin by drawing up a basic survey plan of the site on graph paper. If you use a scale of 1:100, meaning 1cm on your plan represents 1m in the garden, you will find a conventional ruler adequate.

Take several photocopies of your completed site plan and begin sketching designs directly onto a copy, maintaining the same scale. Allow adequate space for basic functional requirements, such as access, path widths and direct routes.

When satisfied with your layout of the *hard landscaping* (paths, patios, lawn, shed etc), take further photocopies and begin a *planting plan* (to include trees, shrubs, bulbs etc). Once completed, take a further copy to act as reference when in the garden or shopping in the garden centre.

A leaflet such as this can only touch briefly on the most basic considerations when designing a garden. Entire books have been written on the subject. Many designers study for years to become competent. Therefore don't expect to "attain perfection" on your first attempt. Use it simply as a starting point for a fascinating experience.

Further reading

Gardeners World Practical Gardening Course
by *Geoff Hamilton*
ISBN 0-563-55163-1

John Brookes Garden Design Book
by *John Brookes*
ISBN 0-86318-638-6

Designing Your Ideal Garden
by *David Stevens*
ISBN 0-7112-0892-1

Constructing a Garden
by *Steve Bradley & Tim Newbury*
ISBN 1-85585-605-0

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Haskins West End

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Haskins Roundstone

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Planning

Planning is the key to creating a beautiful garden - with a sense of style, unity, harmony and proportion - *a relaxing, yet stimulating place to calm the mind and escape from reality.*

When designing a garden from scratch or adapting an existing plan, the aim must be to fulfill the needs and tastes of all who use it on a regular basis. In many ways, designing your garden should be approached in a similar way to planning the interior of your home. Unlike your house however, a garden never remains "static" - it is constantly changing, from week to week, year to year, which is a point worth remembering when drawing a plan. There are three main principles to consider:

Practicalities of the site

Proposed use

Personal taste

In addition to these, you may like to add the period of your house or garden, its size and maintenance.

Taking the time to survey your garden and plot a simple scale drawing, gives the opportunity of making dramatic changes - on paper - without the need for unnecessary mistakes.

Minor alterations can be made at any stage and should be regarded as improvements to an evolving idea. But the position of important features, such as garden buildings, trees, paths and patios, needs to be thought through carefully.

Planning the entire garden or re-thinking an existing area creates the opportunity for providing continuity within a "New Design". Though individual areas may be successful in their own right, the difficulty is in linking them fluently.

A budget should be considered from the start, but remember it can be flexible. There is no need to complete the entire project in one go. Tackling the building work and planting in stages gives the opportunity to spread the expense.

Assessing the site

Scrutinise the site thoroughly - it will prevent costly mistakes later on. Discern soil type, pH, orientation and climate - all of which are important factors when deciding which plants to buy and where to site them.

Resist the temptation to charge ahead and clear what appears to be a jungle of weeds and overgrown shrubs. *Proceed with caution!* There may be concealed treasures within. The opportunity to include a few mature specimens within a new garden will provide instant "structure" and a degree of maturity.

View natural features, such as slopes, banks and changes of level as a blessing in disguise. Work *with* the conditions, not against them. They could provide the opportunity for terraces, rock gardens or a watercourse.



Requirements

Draw up a "wish" list of needs and wants for your garden. For example, will you need somewhere for the children to play? Space for a washing line? Or room for dining out? Include as many thoughts as possible, consulting all those who may use the garden and keep as a reference when constructing your plan.

Choosing a style..

Personal taste is often the main deciding factor when considering the style and layout of your garden. This is very individual and often difficult to discern or perceive with certainty. However, style can be classified into three general categories - *Formal* (geometric and regimented), *Informal* (organic forms and flowing curves), or *Themed* (Mediterranean, tropical, beach etc.)



Whichever style you settle on, there are a few basic principles that should be observed, for a harmonious result:

Select features that "work well" together - that is *complement* each other, and the garden as a whole.

Consider scale and proportion - plants do tend to grow and shapes can change over a number of years. Always research the eventual height and spread of any potential purchase, to prevent a "Giant" from overshadowing the rest.

Focal points and features provide useful "purpose" and "definition" within a design - creating areas of interest where before there were none.