

5 tips to REBOOT your garden

There's a tsunami of information out there about how to make the best of your garden but where to start? September is a good time to reassess your plot – the borders may be looking a bit tired and you now know what works and what doesn't.

Here are five pointers to consider when rethinking your garden:

Function – How do you want to spend your time in the garden and what activities do you want to pursue? Answering this will help you to define how much of your space will be needed for what for example, a patio, a veg patch or a football pitch? Often you can't do everything but it will help you fine tune your priorities.



Shape - Gardens come in all shapes and sizes and are often boxed in with unsympathetic fencing. Not a lot can be done about this but you can reshape the most common feature – the lawn. It doesn't have to follow the shape of your plot; giving the lawn a regular shape – square, rectangle or a circle – or an informal shape will define the whole character of the garden.

Circular lawns help small gardens look bigger; informal shapes work well in larger plots, but keep it simple. Bold curves work better than fussy wiggles and are easier to maintain; a mowing edge makes it easier still. The borders can then flow around the lawn and planting will fit more naturally into irregular shaped borders.

You might decide to dispense with the lawn altogether and have a gravel garden with planting through it. Or if you have sport mad kids, a fake turf lawn would be an easy, no maintenance, all-year-round alternative.



Structures and features – Patios, pergolas, summer houses –these are an investment so site these carefully, as a focal point from the house where they'll catch the evening sun. A pond or water feature could be sited nearer the house where it could be viewed from the house and enjoyed even in winter.

Want to grow veg? These don't have to become a mud patch neglected at the bottom of the garden. Organised into raised beds with firm paths they are much easier to manage and keep tidy and attractive year round. Consider siting your veg plot nearer the kitchen door where your fruit and veg will be near at hand.



Soil –this is your gardens most important asset. Take time to assess you soil type- is it sticky clay, sandy and dry or a rich crumbly loam? Getting your soil into a good, workable condition will save a lot of back breaking work and disappointing results later on.

Mulching with a thick layer of compost each spring in the early years will improve any soil, retain moisture and suppress weeds. Feeding plants each spring with a handful of blood, fish and bone fertilizer around the base of the plants will give them a real boost and keep them healthy.



And finally

Plants – understanding your soil and planting the right plants in the right place is key to a successful garden. Don't waste time and effort trying to nurture plants that are clearly unhappy in your garden – they will let you know!

There's a range of plants for every situation – dry and shady, hot and sunny, wet and boggy.

And don't be afraid of adding height even in a small garden. A small tree or large shrub will give real stature to your garden, screen an ugly feature or view, and add a touch of drama. I'll have a video out on this subject soon.

Selections of smaller plants are best planted 'en masse', in groups of 3, 5 or 7; these will look more natural and create a sense of cohesion to your borders. Local nurseries and garden centres will be only too happy to give advice.



For more information and help designing your garden please contact me.

www.gardendesignernorthdevon.co.uk.