

Tips for New Gardeners Part 2 - Planning the Garden

For your garden to work, it needs a degree of planning. Some people do seem to have an instinct for setting out a garden but for the rest of us (the majority) some thought is necessary or it can take a long time of trial and error to get it right.

The minimum is to at least consider the purpose, for some it is an outdoor room where they will entertain friends, work colleagues and family. Others will need a family friendly garden in which their toddlers can play safely. To some, the garden will be a peaceful refuge or a source of organic vegetables.

Clearly your garden will not need to stand the high levels of traffic that a public garden where the lawned areas need to be resistant to thousands of feet each day. Nor will your garden need to incorporate unusual plants and complex or intriguing water features and sculptures because you are not looking to attract visitors. Public gardens also have a team of gardeners to look after them, not just because they are large, but because keeping complex gardens looking good takes a lot of effort.

However, you will want your garden to look interesting and be able to cope with the kids or grandkids or visitors kids! So once you have decided on the type of garden you want, you can plan the different areas. Make a sketch of the layout you envisage first, it helps get things clear in your mind. The sketch does not need to be professional quality like you may have seen on the garden programmes on TV, just an outline, more or less in proportion and shape, with ideas of where each feature will go - lawns, patio, decking, borders, paths, veg patch ...

Next, you can start to think about the materials you will use for the hard landscaping - block paving, slabs, natural rock, water features and so on. A trip to your local garden centre can help you here. Then you can start to think about the plants. Take a good look at the garden, ask yourself where are the shaded areas, which areas receive full sun, are there any areas that are wetter or drier than others? Mark these on the sketch (coloured pencils are good for that). This can help you to research the plants for the garden, it is no good buying plants that require shaded spots if there are none, although as you become more experienced and adventurous you can use planting and other techniques to create different conditions in different parts of the garden.

In addition to the conditions, before purchasing your plants you will need to have an idea of what colours you want in your garden and how to make your garden interesting all year round. So when you head out to the garden centre to buy plants, you will have an idea of what you want, not so much in terms of what exact plants you want, but rather the colours, time of flowering and conditions. So why not spend time deciding on specific plants? Firstly, it is time consuming until you have a wider knowledge of plants and secondly, you would probably not find them locally which can be very frustrating.

To sum up, an ad-hoc garden can turn out to be an interesting and pleasant place to be but with some planning, it is possible to achieve the look and feel that you want much more easily and quickly.

Do you want your garden to be the envy of friends, family and neighbours? Then contact Luke Harrison Gardening Services to arrange your [Landscape Gardening](#) Advice or garden planning and maintenance in the Derby - Burton area.