

# Outdoor Living

## The perfect summer garden

As many of us know all too well, after working all day indoors there's no where better but in the 'outdoor' room to relax. Eventhough gardens have become smaller and people generally have less time for garden maintenance activities, most will demand more and spend (both time and money) more in getting the outdoor space right for them and enjoying more time outdoors, whether it is alone or with family and friends.

### A Place To Sit

We probably spend more time in the garden sitting and eating than any other activity. So it is vital the layout of the outdoor space takes this important aspect into account. Invariably the sitting and eating activities take place on or the near the patio areas.. Today's choice is vast including an extensive range of natural stone which includes bestsellers like Sandstone, Granite and Limestone to name but a few. Unquestionably Sandstone available in a wide range of sizes and colours is a top seller and the preferred choice by far of most people. Natural stone, demanding little maintenance, is still the preferred choice over other patio alternatives such as man made products and decking. Locating the patio in the sunniest part of the garden is obvious but you would be surprised to discover how frequently this prized location in the garden is occupied by the garden shed. Monitor the sun movements throughout the day to determine what is the best position for the patio. Most prefer sunny positions late afternoon or early evening but some might prefer dappled shade during midday. So choose a location for the patio where and when you're most likely to use it most. Patios

should be level so that you have no trip hazards at joints or patio chairs do not annoyingly rock each time you shift position.

### Plants Please

Of all the elements that go to make up your perfect garden, plants after structure are the essential component. The choice of plants today is practically endless, also how you use plants in the garden can yield specific effects on overall garden size and style.

Ideally plants should be used in as naturalistic way possible so as to enhance the desired look. For example, trees and shrubs can be cleverly used to disguise a long narrow garden to make it appear broader in effect, conversely plants can also be used to lengthen broad gardens which are not very long by using the taller plants nearer the house and shorter further away to create a perspective effect that makes the garden appear longer. Much easier and less costly to introduce to a garden are plant containers, be they urns, planters or humble terracotta pots, they can be very cleverly used to add high drama and bold colour schemes to areas within the garden. Bamboos are fantastic container plants so too are Japanese maples but require sheltered conditions which may not be available in open beds during winter months.

### Watered Features

There are a wide range of types and sizes but nowadays people choice is influenced by the safety aspects and low maintenance requirements, hence the popularity of Reservoir features typically positioned on or near patio area where they are best enjoyed for both visual and the soothing sound effects

of trickling water. In more contemporary gardens stainless steel columns are a popular choice. Irrespective of your style preference, water features add a new dimension to any garden. All that is required is careful attention to detailing, a thoughtful selection of plants, e.g. ferns, ornamental grasses combined with natural river cobbles create superb compositions and very pleasing features to admire.

### The Meaning of Light

Lighting is really a must have in the garden. It can not only make an ordinary garden look spectacular revealing an aspect unseen during daylight, but come nightfall the silhouettes of trees and shrubs against textured walls take on a whole new meaning. Just as much as gardens can be visually admired for their interest during daylight, lighting offers a whole new dimension to the meaning of beauty in the garden albeit at nighttime. There are many lighting effects to be considered including: spread lighting across access paths, uplighting to direct light up through the branches and trunks of trees or up the walls of buildings, spot lighting can be used to illuminate a statue or water feature and downlighting is typically used to illuminate steps.

Irrespective of how you express it, more and more people are demanding more from the outdoor living space and wish to integrate it more with the established 'interior world'. In other words today's homeowners are demanding more functionality from the gardens, form following function, is the prevailing principle and the smarter approach to determining the outdoor living space.

### Owen Chubb Garden Landscapes Limited

Owen Chubb is Director of Owen Chubb Garden Landscapes Limited, an established and award winning landscaping company offering clients a complete landscaping service. Proud winners in 2005 of the prestigious ALCI Award for BEST PRIVATE GARDEN (Over €13,000 Category).

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