

CHECK LIST FOR FIRST MEETING WITH A GARDEN DESIGNER

Writing a brief will help convey to the designer what you are wanting to achieve. Most people know relatively little about gardens and find it difficult to describe what they like, or want. Some have very strong ideas and objectives, while others do not have a clear picture in mind. Basically your lifestyle will dictate your brief, and now is the time to tell us what style and function you desire from your garden. Will people dine, swim or relax? Are you after lush green surroundings, contemporary styles, formal layout or simple lines? Are there children play areas, storage areas or pet areas to be considered? It is important to also define budget considerations at this stage to outline what can be achievable.

Take the time to look at the checklist below, this will help you come up with a brief or at the very least get you thinking about what you really want. Remember, a good designer will “try to get inside the mind of a client” and together we will work through the process together.

- Borrow books from the library on garden design and home and garden magazines. Get a feel for what you like, anything from garden styles, to planting schemes, furniture, lighting or paving.
- Make a list of all the things you want, e.g. seating area, children's are, pond, waterfeature, outdoor entertainment area. Use photographs of gardens that you have liked or visited to illustrate such elements.
- Make a list of your hates, and make sure that the designer knows what they are.
- Think about who the garden is to be used for, and what differing or even conflicting needs it may have: elderly relatives, young children, dogs, growing vegetables.
- Gardens rarely have a blank slate. Make a list of the things in the garden you definitely want to keep, or want to get rid of.
- Make a note of the views you want to keep, improve or lose.
- Study how the sun moves across the garden, preferable over 6 months. It may be important to know where the last sun of the day can be found in summer, or where the warmest spot is in winter.
- Try to pinpoint the different kinds of soil in your garden, the waterlogged patches and the fast-drying etc.
- Think about the micro-climate, which areas are the coldest, warmest and hottest etc.

