



Importance of a Designer

Every product has a design process behind it, from your car to a knife and fork. The process ensures that the product functions and is manufactured correctly. Why should your garden be any different?

At Bowood Landscapes we believe that a design is essential to producing a beautiful outdoor space you can enjoy. A good designer will consider your personal requirements and produce a scheme that marries this with good geometry, structure, form, texture and colour. Here is a summary of what you may expect from the design process.

- A Brief. Confirmed in writing - This is an agreement between the designer and client to be followed by the designer.
- Survey. Measurement of site - measurements transferred to drawing board at a convenient scale.
- Analysis and development. Bringing together the site considerations, survey and brief to produce and draw up a solution.
- Visualisation. Production of perspective drawing or other visual aids.
- Presentation of finished work.
- Additional details (if required). Setting out, construction or planting details.

The finished design may then be used to obtain quotes from landscapers to construct the scheme.

Dangers of 'winging it'

Planning is everything - it is often too late to address certain issues on site. This is particularly important if retaining walls or similar structures are being built, but also when looking to achieve that perfect finish. A landscaper may be very good at his job, but without good planning the results can be variable.

An unplanned garden will also be incoherent in structure. A designer helps to make all elements work together which gives you a more usable and attractive outdoor space.

Please call us for more information.

How to choose a Landscaper

1. Questions to ask yourself

- Why do you want to landscape your garden?
- Do you want or need a garden designer or landscaper? A plan of what you wish to have created could be the best investment you make.
- Do you have a need for a specialist?
- What is your budget, be realistic, landscaping isn't cheap.
- Have an idea of what you want, maybe a list of what you are interested in could be a good starting point for your landscaper.

2. Where to find landscapers

- Ask friends and family if they have recommendations.
- Ask at garden centres or nurseries
- Look at online directories who promote vetted or at least recommended companies.
- Yellow Pages, local newspapers and other local magazines.
- Via BALI (British Association of Landscape Industries) or APL (Association of Professional Landscapers). These can be found online.
- Check out landscapers who you actually see working locally to you.

3. How to select a Landscaper

- Make a list of around 10 landscapers you're interested in selecting and using the following criteria whittle them down to around 3.
- Are they suited to the size of your project, you don't need a larger company to dig a flower bed and you wouldn't use a one man band to lay a 100m² patio.
- Are they based reasonably locally, further travel - higher costs.
- Do they appear professional in their advertising?
- How long have they been trading?
- Do they belong to a professional body such as 'BALI' or linked to a customer approval scheme like 'Check-a-Trade' or Trustmark etc.

4. How to choose the right Landscaper

- Ask them to give you a brief history of their background and their business, good landscapers love to do this.
- Ask them to provide you with at least three references all of which you should check out.
- Ask if you can visit a couple of their completed projects, is the design and quality of finish to your standard.
- Ask if they or their staff have had any training or hold qualifications.
- Are their staff employed by them.
- Do they sound confident in answering your questions, do they take time to help you understand anything you are not sure about.
- Do you feel you could easily negotiate with this person, what does your gut instinct tell you.
- Do they do quotes or estimates and how firm are their prices, on larger projects do you get a written contract and a set of terms and conditions.
- How do they deal with project changes and additions as well as unpredictable costs.
- What is the process during construction, when are their start and finish times for each day, will they be on site for the duration of the whole project.
- Do they have uniforms and liveried vehicles, this shows a degree of pride in their image.
- Ask if they have insurance, by law they must have Public Liability Insurance and Employers Liability Insurance if they have staff. These are a must, otherwise you could find yourself liable for accidents.

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