



Grass Including a lawn in your design is a great idea if you have children who will want to play outdoors

Paving If you have space for outdoor entertaining, include it in your design and locate it leading out from the kitchen or dining room

Path A paved walkway is a sensible addition, especially for the winter months, when you want to avoid stepping on muddy grass

OUTDOOR LIVING

SLR PHOTOGRAPHY

In the last part of our design series, **Sophie Hoyland** shows you how to make the most out of your exterior space by planning your landscaping right from the start

The first step to a perfect garden design is a good plan. You need to think about your outdoor space from the outset of your self build project, not least because most councils will want to see your ideas before they grant planning permission. It will also allow you to better determine the ideal position for your house on the plot, to avoid creating awkward or unusable corners or spaces. So what do you need to consider to get the design right?

Rules and regulations

Most general garden improvements don't require planning consent, but if you're considering including outbuildings, such as sheds, summerhouses and greenhouses, or features such as swimming pools or tennis courts, you will need permission. "This usually depends upon the size of the feature, its location and whether its presence is adversely affecting your neighbour's privacy. It's worth contacting your local council to discuss any restrictions in your area," says Cathy Cornish from Wild to Wonderful Garden Design. "Always check whether any existing trees on your plot have a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) on them which restricts felling and any pruning work. You also need to ensure any changes you make to the garden won't have an adverse effect on the health of the protected trees," says Cathy.

You need to comply with regulations relating to sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) which were brought in to reduce flood risk. "This means if you don't dedicate any of your front garden to hard standing car parking, for example, you need to use a permeable or porous surface material to allow rain to drain through or direct rainwater onto a lawn or border," says Cathy. "Bear in mind if you install more than 5m² of traditional impermeable driveway material, you will require planning consent."

Planning

Pick up a pen and paper and start jotting down how you wish to use your garden. "Consider what you would like to be doing in it – relaxing, entertaining, pottering about, planting or playing – and always remember to include everyone in your family and how their requirements may change over the coming years," says Cathy. Next, decide what the must-have items are for your garden, and how much time you can set aside each week to maintain it. "We've seen a significant increase in the number of customers wanting low-maintenance outdoor areas they can enjoy during the summer months. If you don't have the time or knowledge to look after it, you need to assess whether you have the budget to employ a gardener. If you don't, you need to think about easy solutions," says Cathy. Decking or paving will be much

simpler to maintain than lawned areas, which will need regular mowing. Remember to consider matching the style of your garden and outdoor space with your house as well and always consider the garden as a whole. "If you don't, the outcome will be lots of disjointed areas with no natural flow in the garden," says Cathy.

Layouts

Your garden's layout will not only be determined by size and shape, but also by the practicalities of your daily life. "You may wish to store your lawnmower, which you use periodically, in a shed at the bottom of your garden. But if you have a bike that you use daily, you'll need it closer to hand. Likewise a log store should always be kept close to the house to save you walking a long way in cold wintry conditions," says Cathy. "Outdoor dining areas ideally need to be close to the house and preferably with easy access to and from the kitchen. However, if the sunniest place is in a different part of the garden, you may wish to move it to this area instead." If you have a small outdoor area, don't waste space on plants and flowers that are only in bloom for short periods. Ensure they earn their keep in your garden by offering a long season of interest, such as spring flowers, fruits and interesting foliage. You can also use plants to block any unsightly views, such as a next door

neighbour's messy garden, or screen off areas to create interest and an air of mystery to allow your guests to explore the space more. Always consider the location of where you plant your flowers. "They may provide a beautiful setting for an outdoor dining space, but you don't want them to attract insects to this area that would spoil a family BBQ," says Cathy.

Surfaces

The most popular coverings for a garden are grass, decking and paving – all have their advantages and disadvantages and should be chosen based on how you plan to use the space. Paving is great for traditional looking exteriors, works well close to the house and is easy to keep clean. It also provides a hard standing surface whatever the weather – provided you pick a product with anti-slip properties for extra safety. Timber decking suits modern dwellings. It can become slippery in wet conditions, but it is useful for gardens where paving won't work, such as small, deeply sloping areas above the damp course of the house. Grass is the most common surface in a garden and will suit all types of properties. It needs a lot of maintenance during the summer months and will create a lot of mud during the winter, but it makes the best play surface for young children. If you want grass, but are not keen on the upkeep, consider artificial grass from Grono (as pictured below right).

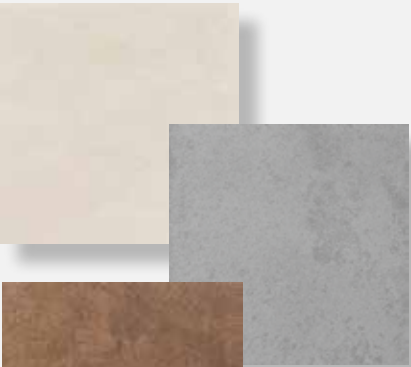
Lighting

Lighting in your garden is essential for safety and security reasons – but it can also be used as mood lighting to make the most out of shrubs, statues or water features. Dimmable lights are great for creating mood lighting at night. ☉

Contacts

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What's hot



From top: LifeStone tiles from the 'Anti-Slip' range in Nacar, Gris and Tobaca, £9.99 per 45x45cm tile, Topps Tiles



Dulux Weathershield range available in Country Cream, Green Ivy, Spring Meadow and Frosted Lake, £18.99 for 700ml tin, from Homebase



Capri 6 seater set, £699.99, Argos



Flamingo chippings, made from marble tiling offcuts, £89.75 per bulk bag, Long Rake Spar

Yellow Balau decking smooth, £6.28 per linear metre, Silva Timber



Tilbury Pendant, £255, Jim Lawrence

Artificial grass, £20 per m², Grono