

DESIGN

Q&A

What are the top questions garden designer Stuart Craine is asked?

Words Laura Snoad Photography MMGI/Marianne Majerus



Q Do you have any good tips on water features?

A 'Water features are great for hiding noise from traffic and neighbours in urban environments. Establish a budget and make sure the design suits the overall scheme. Bespoke features start from around £5,000, so are not for everyone. Typically, the simpler the feature looks, the more complicated and expensive it usually is as all the pumps and filtration units need to be hidden to keep the garden looking sleek.'

Q What are my options for injecting colour?

A 'Use a bright planting scheme or introduce a bold colour to a wall or fence. Papers & Paints (020 7352 8626; papers-paints.co.uk) has a good selection. However, you have to be a bit careful in the UK; bright shades will look great on a sunny day, but not under a grey sky. Colour can also be accented using reflective materials such as glass, or silver leaf as below.'



Q How should I pick a garden designer?

A 'Choose one that is registered to the Society of Garden Designers (01989 566 695; sgd.org.uk). It has an accreditation process so you get peace of mind, and you won't necessarily have to pay more. Take a good look at previous projects on the designer's website and then meet up for an initial consultation. This usually incurs a small fee, but it gives you a good chance to discuss the space and exchange ideas – it's all about chemistry really.'

Q How can I make my garden more eco friendly?

A 'Green roofs and drought-tolerant planting schemes are good ways. Consider Mediterranean plants that won't need constant watering. Take a look at websites that offer thorough advice on choosing the right foliage.' (0844 557 2233; crocus.co.uk)

Q What's the best way to create atmosphere with lighting?

A 'Be subtle, it's not about creating a light source bright enough to eat a meal by. Up lighting a tree and using it as a focal point works particularly well. Temporary lighting with lanterns is also a great way to create atmosphere. John Cullen Lighting (020 7371 5400; johncullenlighting.co.uk) and Lightiq (020 8749 1900; lightiq.com) offer some stylish and effective outdoor solutions.'



Q What materials are ideal for use on steps, particularly in gardens on a slope or several different levels?

A 'Choose materials that aren't going to be slippery – sawn sandstone is good because it has a natural grip, as does ribbon slate. For comfort and safety, make treads as wide as possible (typically 300mm), and risers (the level from one step to the other) should be around 170mm.'

Stuart Craine Design (020 8969 3553; stuartcraine.com)