



Transform your outdoor space

Dean Lacey, founder of LandArt Ltd, shares his tips for designing your garden and how to create an area where you can relax, recharge or host friends and family

“As an extension of the house, the garden is essentially another room,” says Dean Lacey, owner of LandArt Ltd (landart.ie), which provides garden design, garden construction, planting/horticultural services and maintenance services. “It is our own safe, private, outdoor sanctuary; a place to be enjoyed by the whole family. It is a place to relax, de-stress, and get close to nature.”

“Unlike any other space in the home, the garden is a living thing. And that’s why it is important to have a well-designed garden. It will change with the seasons and breathe life into any home.”

Dean has always loved the outdoors and has an extensive background in landscaping. He is accredited by the Garden and Landscape Design Association (GLDA). “I set up my own company, LandArt Ltd, in 2014. At LandArt, we believe beautiful spaces start with considerate design, the selection of high-quality materials, and beautiful plants, implemented by an experienced and skilled team. We are one of the very few professional landscape companies that also offers a full horticultural service.”

DEVELOPING YOUR DREAM GARDEN

When designing a garden from scratch, Dean says it’s important to research your potential designer thoroughly.

“Once you have chosen the right designer for you, the first step in the design process is the on-site consultation.”

“The garden designer will meet you at your home to discuss your project, learn about your lifestyle and experience the site in context. The designer will talk about various options for your project, assess the site and advise on an appropriate pathway that allows your vision to become a reality.”

The second phase is design development. “The designer will develop concept plans that capture the project brief, to give you an idea of what the new garden could look like. They will present a selection of materials, finishes, lighting, fittings, planting, furniture and equipment for consideration.”

“Once you are happy with the plans, the designer will prepare the final design documentation and finishes, as well as a project budget and construction timeline.”

HOME RETREAT

With the Covid-19 pandemic changing people’s relationships with nature, it brought an increase in outdoor areas being used more frequently at home.

Dean says a patio in the garden can be a way to add a natural extension to your home and somewhere to retreat to when the summer arrives.

“In Ireland, we tend to use the patio in our garden in the afternoon and evening.

Therefore, it is important to position the patio, so that it will provide the optimum amount of sunlight throughout the day. A south or west-facing patio will achieve this.

“Choosing the right material for your patio is very important. We tend to use natural stone or porcelain, which are long-lasting. A patio needs to be big enough to be used and enjoyed, but not too big either. It needs to be in proportion to the rest of the garden. Always try to leave space to plant around your patio, as this will help soften the hard edges of the patio.”

Speaking of planting, Dean says a simple way to bring life into any garden is to add planting. “A well-designed, planted border will bring colour to the garden. You could add some colourful pot plants to break up a large patio.”

“Planting in the garden also provides numerous environmental benefits. Incorporate plants that provide nectar and pollen, as these create a sanctuary for bees and butterflies. Examples of these plants are Salvia, Lavender, Echinacea and Nepeta. Hedges also have the natural ability to capture pollution, reduce noise, mitigate flooding and provide food and shelter to wildlife. Additionally, they can reduce stress levels in humans through visually stimulating us.”

Dean says they have noticed a huge increase in the number of projects requiring large screening trees recently. “In



Dean Lacey

Ireland, the vast majority of our boundary walls and fences in the rear of our gardens are around 1.8 metres tall. This is rarely sufficient to provide any significant and comfortable privacy in your garden. Screening trees, such as espalier trees, are a great way to add privacy to the garden.”

FURNITURE AND LIGHTING

In relation to choosing furniture, Dean says to make sure the items you choose are suitable to handle the Irish climate.

“A garden should be a usable, comfortable place, and an extension to your home – not just a place for plants. In order to sit and appreciate your wonderful planted borders, you should add furniture, like seating or tables. An area for cooking BBQ is also a must and pizza ovens are very popular in recent years.

“Meanwhile, Pergolas are making a comeback, as are water features. We design

lots of water features into our gardens. They can be ponds and waterfalls, corten steel water tables, water blades and contemporary ponds.”

To extend the use of your garden late into the evening, Dean advises investing in garden lighting. “Lighting in the garden improves the view from inside the house. Light up focal points, for example, big trees or plants with spotlights.”

To get the most out of the garden, Dean adds that outdoor buildings have become very popular in recent years. “They can be used as offices, gyms, spas, bars, kids’ rooms and anything in-between.”

LONG-TERM BENEFITS

Once you have designed your garden, Dean says that it’s important to maintain it. “A beautifully landscaped garden can only be kept as beautiful as intended through ongoing care. Some homeowners love

to get out as often as possible into the garden and keep the garden looking beautiful. But for those who just don’t have the time, hiring a qualified horticulturist to do regular maintenance is advised.”

Dean also says a well-kept garden can benefit homeowners in the long-run, if they decide one day they want to move and sell the home.

“A beautifully planted garden, with lush leafy planting, will add instant curb appeal and is an easy way to add value. Think about what a new owner would value, as well as what you and your family want to use the garden for. The top things most people look for are: a main seating area, a good size lawn, a garden shed, and well-kept boundaries and privacy.”

“A property with a garden that feels private and safe, with screening trees, will dramatically increase the property’s appeal.”