

FIONA HARRISON

GARDEN & LANDSCAPE DESIGN



Profile

Fiona Harrison Bsc. Hons MSGD
Bsc.Hons Horticulture Reading University. (1983)
Cert. Garden Design: Pershore College. (1987)
MSGD

Following a degree in Horticulture, specialising in design, I gained practical gardening experience as a student with the National Trust. Guided by their Head Gardener, I focused on the requirements of garden plants and their applications in many different planting schemes. This was followed by a further garden design course at Pershore and then nearly ten years working for garden centre companies.

In this role I worked in various capacities, ranging from product buyer to Landscape Designer, in a team responsible for developing new sites and the establishment of a landscape design and build business. In 1992 I set up my own practice based in Virginia Water, Surrey . During this time I have also lectured in planting design for many years at the Oxford College of Garden Design.

Design Principles

I love gardens and the excitement that a well designed outdoor space can bring to people's lives. Plants are the final decorative and structural element of a scheme but often the most important in producing an uplifting emotional response to a site – the ultimate sign of a successful project. In addition to my specialism in plants, my approach to design seeks direction from three sources: the client's personality and preferences, the architecture, and the nature of the site. The need to work with nature not against it, is vital to produce better environments for people, as well as for wildlife.



In successful schemes, plants and hard landscaping combine to fulfil a function and complement the setting .

Decorative elements beyond plants are important and I like to introduce art in the form of eg. sculpture, driftwood or a decorative pot and, where appropriate, use subtle lighting effects to highlight the garden at night.

The greatest achievement is to see a garden changing peoples lives in how they live outdoors, entertain and relax - often to see them become gardeners themselves!

Welcome

A well designed, successful garden gives a truly uplifting effect not only for people but also for architecture and wildlife. The following pages will give you an insight into my work over the last ten years, and the processes involved in achieving these results. Most of my projects are residential and vary widely from the individual design of a border to large country gardens developed over a period of several years. Regardless of garden size, a successful project is always one where the client has enthusiasm for and trust in the design process. This produces a garden with mood and function which complements the site and matches the client's lifestyle.

My services provide not only design and implementation but ongoing maintenance advice so that gardens can mature and develop in a practical and sustainable manner.



Wentworth Garden

The clearance of overgrown Rhododendron, laurel and coniferous hedging gave this garden a new lease of life.

Views were created within and beyond the site – along pleached Hornbeam avenues to the golf course and to sculptural and planted features within the garden.

A pergola was added to soften the house architecture and create a shady dining area. Roses and herbaceous borders were added for cutting, colour and scent while the groomed lawns were balanced with a woodland meadow naturalized with bulbs and cyclamen.

A pleasure year round, this garden complements the architecture of the house and life style of the client; also ensuring a sympathetic and sustainable link to the surrounding landscape.



Roof Garden

A place for meditation and relaxation was the brief for this elevated garden. The softness and warmth of a cedar deck was juxtaposed against rough textured cream paving. The controlled shapes of the clipped Box are tempered by the naturalism of rugged birch and grasses .Set within polished steel planters these plants are able to thrive in the exposed open environment.

The rendered walls are painted a warm Etruscan red which softens the light from the expansive skyline.

Truly a calming and peaceful space - a modern design with minimal upkeep.



Sculpture in the Garden

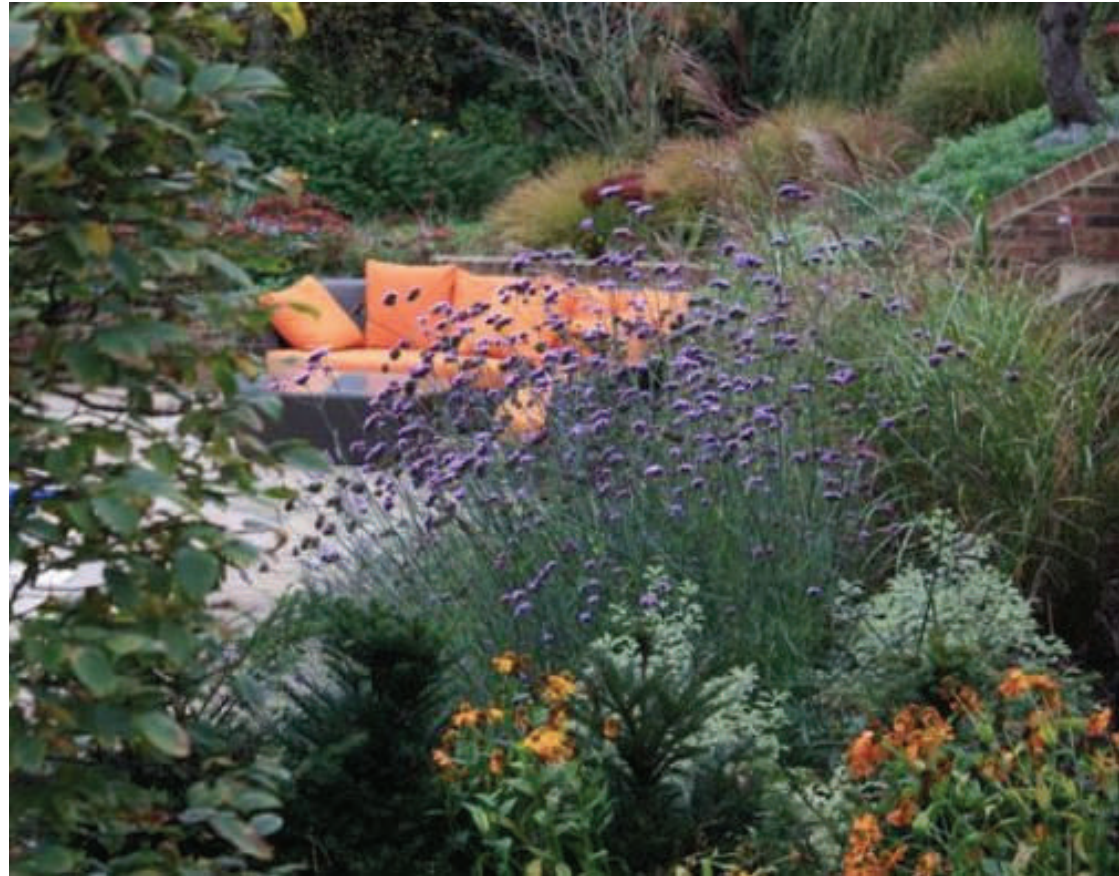
Designed as a series of interlinking spaces this small garden grew to accommodate the client's interest in art.

Use was made of the existing land contours to create an elevated oak pergola walk and gazebo, shady fountain courtyard, and open lawns. Planting followed the various aspects of the site to include a sunny herbaceous bank filled with billowing Euphorbia, Geranium, Iris, Penstemons and Salvias. Colours vary from the early summer tones of lime green, cream, yellow and burnt orange to the mid summer heat of deep reds, blues, oranges and purple. Sculptural pieces such as 'Jack Frost' by Graham Lougher and the decorative vase by Philip Simmons all add to create a unique composition. At night subtle lighting highlights these features enabling the garden to be enjoyed throughout the evening.



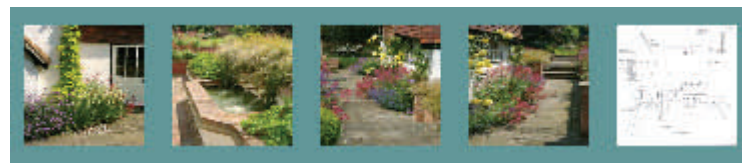
Modern Arts and Craft

The existing garden to this recently extended house had been laid to lawn and a swimming pool. The brief of the project was to soften the impact of the pool, reintroduce interest within the garden and provide a welcoming approach to the house. Working along traditional lines, a series of terraces was sculpted using cream coloured York stone walling. The top terrace around the house was softened using clipped Yew pyramids and provides a viewing platform for the rest of the garden. Stainless steel wire balustrade allows minimal interruption of the view down to the herbaceous border walk marked by the clipped forms of the Hornbeam pillars. This leads to the swimming pool which is given more of a sense of enclosure by use of an Oak loggia and walkway, providing shade and seating. The lower lawn is framed by mature Scots Pines, Rhododendron and Oak woodland and will be complemented by plants to extend colour into the summer including Hydrangeas, Cornus, heathers, and grasses. Craftsmanship and planting detail provide a modern answer to a garden uplifted and revitalized.



A Cottage Garden

A delightful cottage with a modern extension needed help to integrate home and garden. Reclaimed setts, York stone and bricks were used to create the sheltered seating areas with a small raised pool fed by three reclaimed clay pipes. Planting in the hot vibrant colours of burnt orange, cream, blue and grey is stimulating and inviting, lasting throughout the summer months. A feeling of maturity was quickly achieved by planting occasional wall and paving joints with creeping herbs and sprawling daisies. The cottage entrance is defined by a low clipped Box knot garden and standard golden Hollies, an old well is softened with dwarf ferns and Euphorbia. A garden that, through the use of sympathetic materials, looks like it has always been part of the house.



An Elegant Modern Garden

The site had been levelled during the building of this new home with only a driveway constructed in the landscape.

The elegant façade of the house frontage was partially screened from the road by a short avenue of fastigiated Hornbeam. These are underplanted with blue cat mint for the summer and white Tulips for the spring.

A black iron balustrade protects the edge of the raised terrace which at the rear of the site opens on to a radiating design on three levels of decking, paving and lawns. A cedar hot tub nestles, next to the house, amongst a swathe of pheasant grass whilst at the opposite end of the garden a recessed trampoline is hidden from view perhaps to be turned into a pool in the future. The top of the garden has a small terrace and two Adirondack chairs, enveloped by plantings of Lavender, Roses, hardy Fuchsias and Penstemons. The clean, defined lines of the garden help to create a sense of space and order, softened by the profusion of surrounding planting.

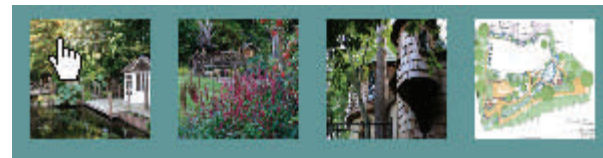


Woodland Water Garden

A natural drainage ditch at the edge of woodland, provided the inspiration for this pond and garden.

A series of three pools were moulded into the natural valley created by this ditch, linked by rocky outcrops and cascading water. Planting reflects the watery shady environment in the use of Astilbes, Iris, Ferns and Primula. The giant leaves of Gunnera punctuate the planting giving a bold sculptural effect. A small thatched summer house and overhanging deck provide a platform for seating and occasional pond dipping!

Crossed by several bridges the water garden concludes as a small stream above which a tree house emerges from the canopy of tree leaves. An example of how the site itself can lead the design process this is an area of natural beauty, a calm, cooling space, perfect for a Sunday afternoon.



Courtyard Garden

Designed for a couple keen on gardening, this small garden was packed with detail for year round interest. A multi toned slate paving outlined in brick was chosen as the background for a profusion of summer colour. The borders were packed for instant effect to be thinned at a later date and included white floribunda roses, grasses, Rudbeckia, Cat mint and Laven- ders. The upright form of Skyrocket junipers punctuates the more ephemeral planting. A David Harber sundial provides a focal point from the main house windows and a stone wa- ter features trickles gently by a shady seating area.

Subtle lighting provides an evening picture of the garden and creates an ideal space for sum- mer evening entertaining.



Walled Garden

Attached to a country house, this area to the rear of the house had been abandoned to shingle and muddy grass. As a place for family entertainment, areas for sunbathing, barbequing, eating and playing were considered. A pool for pond dipping and enjoying as much from within the house as outside was added. Screening and division of the site was achieved using clipped pleached hedging and a loggia against the house provides a shady seating area.

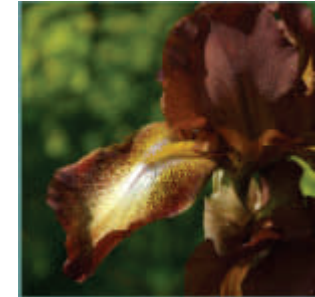
Planting combines a mixture of solid blocks of clipped Box with drifts of grasses, Lavender, ground cover Roses and Hydrangeas. A secret enclosed space perfect for relaxation or entertaining.



Process

Initial visit/ consultation

The process starts with a meeting to introduce myself and my work; to understand the site and your requirements. I will be able to advise on the potential and limitations of the site. I follow this meeting with a design brief and fee quotation for at least the first stage of any design work. There is a fee chargeable for this initial or any consultation visits. A consultation visit may cover more specific ideas where the client simply wants planting ideas or advice on landscape material selection.



Site Survey

The first stage of any design work is the site survey. On smaller sites this is usually done by myself while on other larger or more complex sites a professional surveyor will be required. Some sites may already have a detailed site survey, particularly if a new build. As long as it's accurate, its use will save time and money.



Outline Plan/Master plan

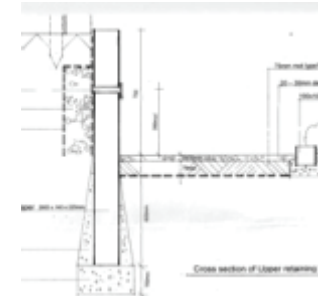
The survey and design brief are brought together in this drawing which is the proposal for your garden. It will show the garden layout, position and type of hard landscaping, planting areas and features. It will be accompanied by supporting visuals. This is the stage when alterations and additions are made. This document becomes the master plan for subsequent design work.



Process

Layout Plan / Construction Details

To enable the garden to be priced and constructed by a contractor, it is necessary to further detail the design by adding information about construction of water features, hard surfaces, timber structures etc. Dimensions and indications of major structural planting need to be added.



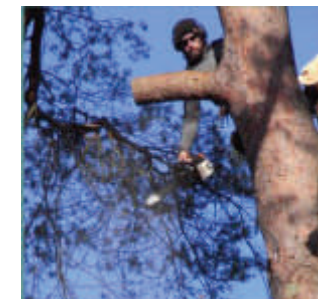
Planting plan and Schedule

An important part of the design detail is the planting. On larger schemes an outline presentation of planting proposals may be necessary but generally, the planting is detailed following a discussion on style, maintenance and site environment. A schedule lists all plants within the scheme, numbers and planting size. This is used for sourcing and costing purposes.



Tender documentation and contractor appointment

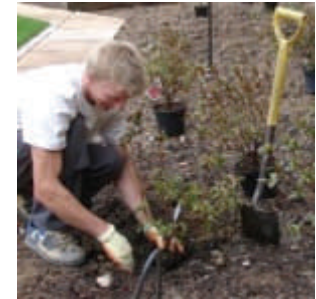
I work with many experienced contractors, from general landscapers to specialists in irrigation, lighting, timber construction and water features. These contractors can then provide competitive quotations for the construction of the garden. This is done through the preparation of contract documents and all drawing details.



Process

Planting Supply and Layout

In all projects I am able to source plants at sizes as required and lay these out for planting by the contractor. Plants for larger projects are often sourced from many different nurseries in this country and abroad. Smaller gardens, where possible, are supplied from local growers.



Project monitoring

To ensure a successful project I am able to monitor all site works .The contractor is employed directly by the client and will have his own terms and conditions. These usually entail stage payments and a retention payment following completion. Fees are based on an hourly rate as required.



Garden development / maintenance

Designing a garden is more of a process than a finished product. It is important to take a long term view and to consider maintenance. Maintenance reports can be prepared, detailing a suggested month- by- month programme of works. I often revisit completed gardens on an annual/biannual basis to advise on planting issues.

