



THE DESIGN PROCESS

Initial design consultation

This meeting usually lasts around 1 hour, and is best if carried out on site during day light hours. We charge a nominal fee of £50* for this consultation, which is fully refundable off any further design work commissioned. During this meeting we would provide you with an abundance of ideas for how you could develop your site, and would also provide you with an opportunity to review our portfolio of work. This allows you the opportunity to examine other gardens undertaken by our practise, where we will show you before & after pictures of projects completed, together with an array of plan drawings to show how our work can be visualised ahead of the construction stage.

*Local appointments only, for appointments 5 miles plus additional travel time may be charged

Budgets

It is a good idea at this early stage to have an idea of the amount of budget that you wish to spend on the total project. We can show you examples of previous work undertaken and provide you with an indication of the budget spent. We can also help you to understand the areas that drive costs up, and so help you to come to a realistic budget for the project in mind. However, it is not an exact science, and it is impossible to 'design to a fixed price'. Once the project has been specified (see later) and the quotes received, it is not uncommon to have to 'tweak' the design at that stage to resolve budgetary issues. Sometimes we are pleasantly surprised.....

Written Estimate for Design Fees

As part of the above consultation process we would then follow up with a basic written brief, outlining the main objectives, criteria of the garden project, together with a written estimate for our design fee to execute an overall Presentation Plan for the site. Should you decide to go ahead with a commission we would then ask for a 50% deposit (the balance is payable on receipt of the final plan) and for you to sign and return the design estimate document. Once these are received we would then schedule your garden project into our work programme.

Survey

As part of the above fee, we would normally commission a land survey, which is regularly undertaken by an external party (depends upon the size and complexity of the site). The survey takes place at some stage between notification of commission and the design brief meeting.

Design Brief Meeting

This is a follow up meeting, which again is best if held on site. This meeting usually takes up to 1 hour, and is primarily focused on finalising the brief with you, and exploring any other possibilities that could be considered. We 'listen' to you, and although we may make many suggestions, we will always come up with a design brief, which reflects YOUR wishes, and YOUR personal style. We also use this as an opportunity to take numerous photographs of the site, as a photographic record, to assist with the design process.

Following this meeting we would provide you with a detailed written brief for you to approve. No design work is undertaken until this document has been approved by yourselves. We have found that this greatly reduces any misunderstandings between client and designer, and minimises the amount of amendments required.

Outline Plan

We would then prepare an outline plan to present to you, (sometimes more than 1 option is presented) together with early ideas for landscape material choices (i.e. paving, wood, metals etc). If features are also to be included (i.e. water features/pergolas etc) then again, suggestions for these would be put forward at this time. The outline plan is sometimes mailed

to a client, but more frequently will involve a further meeting with you. For very small, or straightforward projects this stage may be missed out completely.

Presentation Plan

2D Plans can be drawn up for presentation to you in Black & White, or in Full Colour. We like to present our plans to our clients in colour, since we believe that this allows you to more easily visualise how your garden may look and feel (we normally allow for this in all our estimates). Depending on the complexity of the site, we may also recommend further drawings to be presented at this stage, such as Section Elevations (a view as a slice through the site) or 3D drawings (axonometrics or perspectives). These are only usually recommended if we feel they are absolutely necessary to allow you to fully appreciate the design proposal. If we feel these are necessary the cost for these will have been included in the original design fee (and it will have been detailed on the estimate), if however it was not originally included, but a client requests additional drawings at this stage, then an additional charge would be made.

Presentation Plans are usually presented in person, and again the meeting often lasts up to 1 hour.

Planting Plan

Following approval of the Presentation Plan we would then move on to the design of the overall planting plan. The estimate for this fee can only effectively be calculated once the Outline Plan has been agreed, so normally the estimate for this design stage is submitted with the submission of the Presentation Plan. Again, we take a 50% deposit for this on commission, with the balance payable on supply of the plan itself.

The planting plan will detail exactly where every plant will be positioned, and will be accompanied by a 'Plant schedule'. The plant schedule lists out every plant species by full name, including the size of the plant to be ordered and the total quantity of each plant required. The planting plan will be drawn up taking into account the full conditions of your site, i.e the soil type/aspect (sun/shade) etc, so ensuring that the plants selected are suitable for your garden conditions, and will establish (i.e settle into their new home) very well.

Planting plans can either be sent via the post, or presented in person (tbc the requirements of each project).

Scope of Works / Detailed Specification

Once we have full approval on all of the plans, we would then need to prepare either a Scope of Works Document or a Specification document. A Scope of Works document describes all of the activities that need to take place on site, and is the minimum required by landscape contractors, in order that they can quote for completion of the build. For more complex projects we would normally recommend that a Full Specification document is prepared. We would of course provide you with fee estimates for the drafting of these documents.

Construction Detail Drawings

Should the project require, we can also provide detailed construction drawings. With contractors that we work closely with, this is often kept to a minimum, and often not necessary. However, on more 'adventurous' projects, for example on a water feature that is a totally new custom design, we would recommend that we execute a detailed drawing of exactly how it is to be constructed, that we can pass onto our contractor.

Should the client wish to appoint their own landscape contractor (or carry out the build themselves) then we would normally recommend a full set of Construction Drawings, to ensure that the garden is built as it was designed and intended.

Hard Landscaping Quotations

(the nuts & bolts of the site, i.e. patios, driveways, pergolas etc)

We work regularly with professional Landscape Contractors, and would normally request a minimum of 2 quotes for the majority of projects, however for smaller projects we would usually supply 1 quote only.

Soft Landscaping Quotations

We have 3 core nursery's which supply us regularly with plants & trees, however we do use a wider range of nursery's for more specialist items (i.e. fruit trees /larger specimen trees /

hedging etc). We undertake the planting ourselves, using a regular team, who have years of horticultural knowledge & expertise. We would normally supply 1 quotation to you for the total cost of all the planting (supply & planting).

Electrical/Lighting Quotations

We can provide an indicative lighting plan within the Presentation Plan, but for more complex lighting projects we outsource the design & specification to a Specialist Outdoor Lighting Designer who we work with regularly. The fee for this is usually £250 plus vat.

Project Monitoring

We can work with you from the very start of your project, right through to the completion of the final project. We offer a full Project Monitoring service, whereby we are with you every step of the way, and effectively ensure that the project is pulled together, professionally and effectively, with minimal drain on your time, but involving you as & when necessary. This includes:

- Securing hard landscape quotations
- Securing other quotations (lighting/plumbing/irrigation etc)
- Appointing contractors on your behalf
- Regular site visits (at critical stages)
- Proactive Problem Solving (there are always site problems with require intervention!)

And finally.....

The above is really an attempt to outline the overall process and help you understand the various stages that can be involved in a complete Garden Design project. The process is not set in stone... some projects require more steps, some can be completed in maybe just 2 steps! We work with our clients in a way that suits them – not us! Some clients may only require a planting plan, and that's fine, some clients want us to hold their hand from start to finish, and that's fine too.

For further information please contact:

Pat Fox
t. 01279 730 040
e.info@aralia.org.uk

Aralia Garden Design

The Studio
Clipped Hedge Cottage
Dunmow Road
Hatfield Heath
Herts
CM22 7EE

