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ADVICE AND SUPPORT
FOR BUSINESSES IN A
COUNTRYSIDE LOCATION

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From 'lady that lunches' to award-winning garden designer

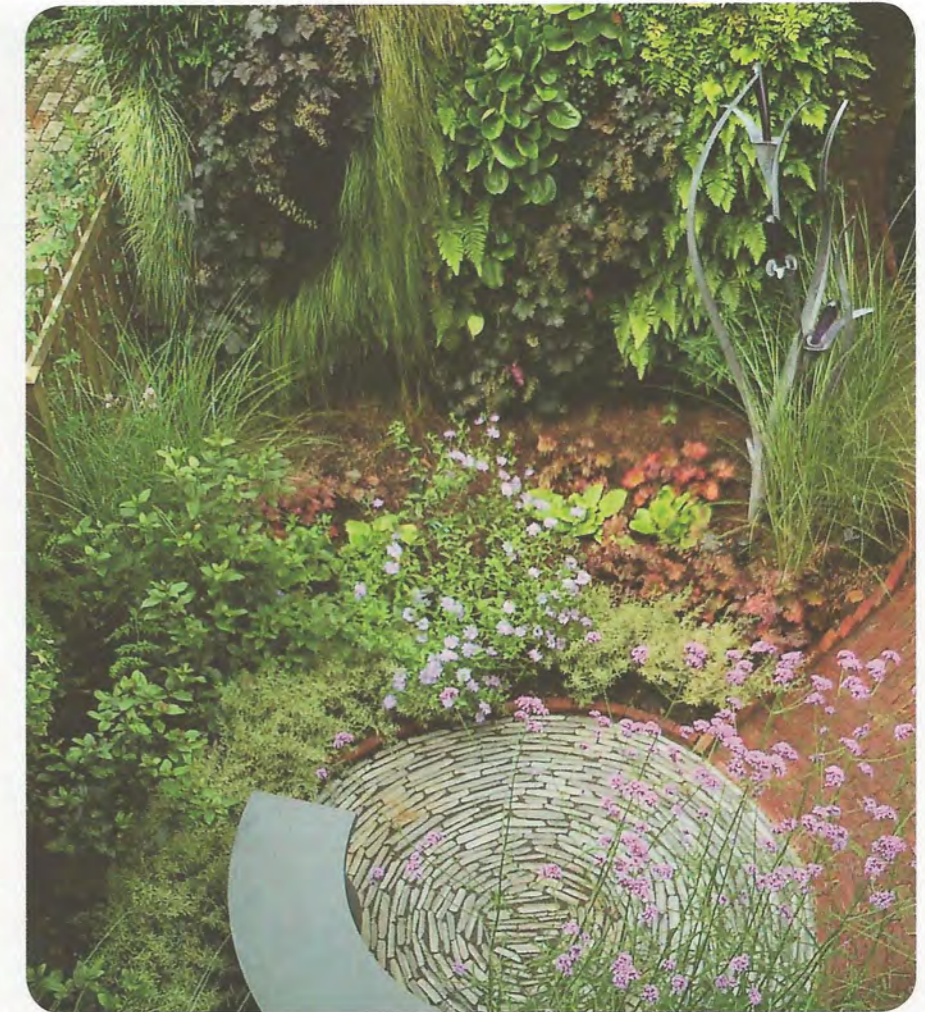
Aralia Garden Design blooms
with Business Link's support

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How does your garden [business] grow?



“After that first garden, I was asked to do another and suddenly I had a new business doing something I love.”

Patricia Fox

From ‘lady that lunches’ to award-winning garden designer, Patricia Fox has seen her business grow with careful nurturing from Business Link.

Garden designer and landscaping contractor Aralia Garden Design has won its second national landscape industry award and recruited two new employees. And it’s all happened thanks to proprietor Patricia Fox’s growth plans and ongoing support from Business Link.

According to Patricia, the idea of entering industry awards was first planted by Diane Budd, a Business Link Specialist Adviser in Agriculture, Food and Land-based businesses. “It was in one of my regular one-to-one advice sessions with Diane that she suggested I went in for a Landscape Design Excellence Award from the British Association of Landscape Industries (BALI). To my amazement, we were one of the four firms who won!” And Aralia Garden Design then went on to win the coveted Principal Award for the under £50,000 Class Landscape Design Excellence Award in 2010.

Patricia admits that becoming a garden designer was more by chance than design: “After training in fashion

design, then starting my career in the cosmetic sector, I launched and ran my own product sourcing and distribution business. But the commute and demanding hours were taking their toll on family life, so in 2004 I downshifted, became a ‘lady that lunches’ and enrolled on a garden design course at Writtle College.”

Chance then played its part, after Patricia put her new garden design skills to good use by offering a free garden make-over as a prize at a school raffle.

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Patricia Fox

That was the turning point, and Aralia Garden Design quickly showed signs of healthy growth. “After that first garden, I was asked to do another and suddenly I had a new business doing something I love,” laughs Patricia. “To ensure I could make the best of this early growth, I contacted Business Link. Within a few days, Diane came to visit.”

Diane takes up the story: “We have met regularly to review Patricia’s business, her plans and to identify specific areas where Business Link can offer support.” The Business Link Adviser notes that Patricia’s focus in 2010 was not just on winning awards, but also on recruiting two new employees. “Patricia was winning more work and for increasingly larger contracts. This all generated lots of extra work, so it made business sense to recruit an administrator and employ a freelance designer.”

Armed with employment law advice and employment contract templates from Diane’s colleagues in Business Link’s Information Gateway, Patricia proceeded to recruit designer Tristen Knight and administrator Trudy Chappell, taking Aralia Garden Design’s team to three.

Patricia has more competitions in her sights and is targeting larger contracts

with bigger budgets. “Business Link’s steady and ongoing support has helped me keep my plans on track,” concludes Patricia. “And my Adviser’s suggestion that we enter national competitions has generated national publicity that has been invaluable as we’ve grown.”

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Diane Budd

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If you’d like to explore how Business Link could help your business blossom, call the Business Link Information Gateway Team on 08457 17 16 15 or email questions@businesslinkeast.org.uk.

THIS WAY