

INDUSTRY ZONE

Compiled by Veronica Peerless

Education & career advice plus the latest on SGD members and projects



The award-winning roof terraces at Chelsea Creek



Patricia Fox MSGD

PRACTICE PROFILE ARALIA

Patricia Fox MSGD talks about her Hertfordshire-based practice, which offers garden design and landscape architecture services

How many people do you employ?

There are seven of us working at the practice full-time.

Is there a practice style?

People often say there is, but I prefer to think that we work with the client around their preferences, and then perhaps push them a little to where we want them to go.

What kind of projects do you work on?

Our bread and butter work has become roof terraces and country estates, although we do everything in-between too. We primarily focus on residential work but also jobs for architects and developers.

Which completed projects are you most proud of?

There are so many that we are truly proud of, but the Chelsea Creek penthouse roof terraces have to be one of our top projects. We started work on the roof terraces shortly after RHS Chelsea 2012 and at the time they were a huge leap for us as a company. But we also have some wonderful projects on the drawing board (well, PC) at the moment that we can't wait to get built.

What are the challenges in running a practice?

The biggest challenge is getting the right team – once you have that, everything else falls into place. It's hard to lose good staff that you've trained and invested in, but no one stands still and neither can a practice, so I guess the second biggest challenge is trying to stay ahead of the game.

What projects are you working on at the moment?

We currently have 53 projects at various stages of development, some in for planning, some at concept stage, and some to be built this year. They are a real mix – roof terraces, small urban gardens, country estates and some commercial projects, including a golf course.

What software do you use?

We use Vectorworks for landscape design, with SketchUp and Photoshop for 3D work. We also use Office 365, Harvest (timesheets), Xero (finance), and Evernote (project management).

What do you look for when recruiting new staff?

We like to recruit both garden

designers and landscape architects. I like the idea of a multidisciplinary practice, and at present we are looking at recruiting a designer with an architectural background. We look for candidates with real passion and enthusiasm – these, to me, are the most important attributes. I simply wouldn't take someone on if they weren't bubbling over with energy and creativity, and a can-do attitude.

How do you envisage the practice growing in the next five years?

I'm not desperate to grow the practice – it's reached a size that means we can easily take on larger projects without too much hassle, but we are still small enough to retain a culture of passion.

What's the best part of working at Aralia?

You'd have to ask my team. I hope they'd say we have a culture of empowerment and passion, and that the sky is the limit. We constantly reach for the stars, which can be scary, but I hope that they would say it's exciting. They certainly never have time to get bored!

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