

**GARDEN
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REVIEW OF THE YEAR

What the judges said

The judges of this year's Review of the Year share their impressions of the entries and some of their highlights



The standard was far higher than previous years with a wide range of design use: residential, commercial, corporate and public spaces. This is a reflection of the variety of schemes now being requesting.

To me, the overriding success was the quality to which all of the gardens have been built. This comes down to the selection by the designers of professional, high-quality contractors who understand their vision. However, this can only come about from detailed drawings and specifications from the designers. This year, few designs were submitted with detailed drawings. This information is vital for a scheme to work. If you are not sure of how it should be done, ask your contractor! A good contractor would be only too pleased to help, thus limiting the risk of misunderstandings. The client is, after all, spending more on their garden than the average annual salary (the average spend on garden construction this year was £42,500!).

Dan Flynn is director of garden contractor Garden Link



This year many more designers sent in one of their gardens than previous years and the judges had a task to select the best. The submissions split naturally into two camps: quite a few gardens appeared to have generous budgets — from City bonuses producing quality and contemporary gardens — and gardens built on very small budgets, some of which appeared to have restricted creativity. The judges were delighted to see designers expanding their expertise into public spaces and gardens for businesses. My personal favourites were John Tizzard's design from Sweden, Charlotte Rowe's courtyard and Nigel Philips's therapeutic garden.

A couple of trends: The best contemporary gardens are using quality materials and workmanship and detailing is all. The planting we saw through a lot of the gardens is the same hybrid of perennials and grasses wafting in the breeze... time to change and move on. Lastly, having your gardens professionally photographed makes all the difference to promoting your talents.

Helen Billetp MSGD is a garden designer in Surrey. She has worked on the Society of Garden Designers' (SGD) council and is a member of the SGD adjudication and forums committee



This year's submissions were really encouraging. Many were well photographed and the plan presentation was clear. Trends included the smarter urban inner-city layouts — really interior decoration outside. Then there were the country gardens whose solution was more traditional and appropriate for its setting. Michael Day's garden was very gentle and Gill German did the 'borrowed landscape' thing well, as did Kate Marshall. We all loved John Tizzard's submission for a communal space in Sweden — simple, yet subtle. The suburban lots were interesting and many had fine, clean lines. I particularly liked Tim Mackley's balance of parts within his layout.

Planting was disappointing — lavender and box balls are pretty dull, and grasses are not necessarily strong enough for a modernist design, when stronger, woody architectural plant material is called for.

It was sad that there were so few submissions from outside the southeast. Garden designers there do the courses, the exams and support the SGD symposiums — what's their problem?

John Brookes MBE FSGD is a garden designer and writer in West Sussex and a former chair of the SGD



Design quality and presentation was varied, from weak to excellent. Plan drawings often did not convey the design qualities apparent in the constructed project and there were few concept illustrations to explain ideas behind the design resolution.

Clear design themes came through. For the smaller urban garden and city roof gardens the architectural, rectilinear compositions were conceived of as external rooms. These gardens had restrained planting palettes. Several designs had strong axial layouts forging links between the garden and the landscape beyond the boundary. The final theme was one of organic designs enriched with a tapestry of informal matrix grass and perennial planting.

What became apparent in the success or not of the project was the importance of boundary design and the control of views from the garden. Simple, strong walls of masonry, timber or plants worked best in providing a backdrop or framing for the garden spaces, allowing the design character of the garden to be the dominant experience.

Helen Brown is a senior lecturer at the School of Architecture and Construction in the University of Greenwich

FULL COMPLEMENT

A design linking outside with inside



IMAGES: TIM MACKLEY

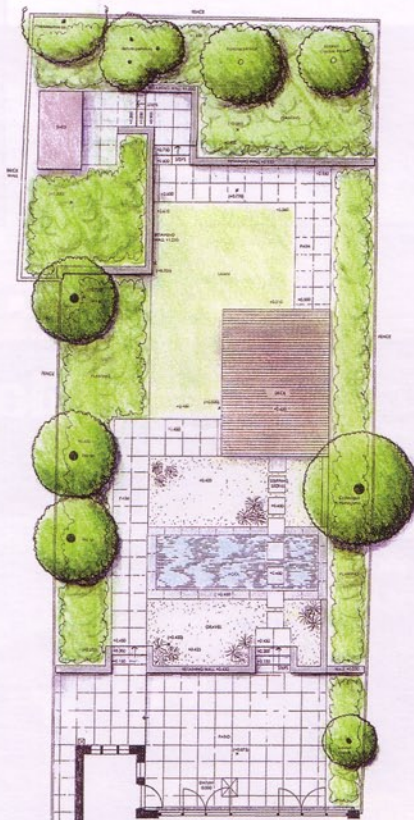
Garden designer Tim Mackley was invited by the client, a design-aware woman with two grown-up children, to design a garden to reflect the considerable work recently completed on her Victorian property. The ground floor of the property had been remodelled as an open plan living space, with wall-to-ceiling windows overlooking the garden.

The new garden, therefore, had to:

- ➔ convey a bright, open feel to complement the modern interior;
- ➔ include an ornamental pool;
- ➔ enlarge the patio area to allow for dining;
- ➔ effectively utilise its change in level;
- ➔ accommodate a more informal seating area;
- ➔ incorporate an area of lawn.

Work began in February 2007 with the gutting of the original garden, saving the existing trees — that include three limes with Tree Preservation Orders — to retain a sense of maturity. A series of terraces was created to cope with the level changes, commencing with a patio in Stonemarket's Arctic granite paving against the house. From here, steps in this same granite lead up to the pool and adjacent Western red cedar decking. Towards the rear of the garden, a final terrace provides a deep planting bed.

Rendered concrete blockwork retaining walls are painted in Farrow and Ball's Chemise to match the paintwork on the house. Seven recessed light-emitting diodes are set into the walls overlooking the patio, another six within the pool, and two spike-mounted adjustable uplights illuminate the hawthorn and birch trees.



Tim Mackley's design for a garden in London, completed in May 2007. Clean lines and an open design help to carry the modern interior out into the garden.

GARDEN FACT FILE

Designer: Tim Mackley. Tel: 020 8693 4832. Website: www.timmackley.co.uk

Location: Dulwich, London

Size: 312m²

Aspect and soil: southwest facing; heavy clay soil

Project started: September 2006

Project completed: May 2007

Cost: over £40,000

Design fees: 5 per cent

Hard landscape: 80 per cent (inclusive of 10 per cent lighting)

Soft landscape: 15 per cent

Contractors: Outdoor Space Design (hard landscape); Tim Mackley (soft landscape)