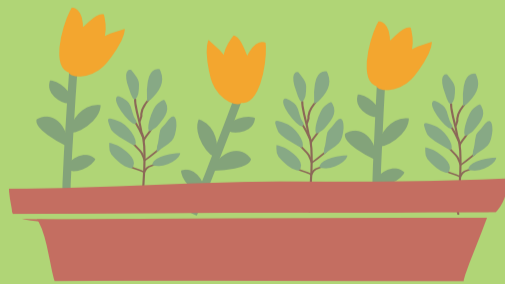




The 5 essential qualities to look for in your Landscape Designer



AMANDA REYNOLDS

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Gardens are wonderful - they can nourish the soul and fulfill your deep creativity. They can also be unbearably frustrating; style and taste can be so diverse and fashions change by the season!

So how can you achieve the glorious garden space that you've dreamed of? When embarking on such an important project that requires imagination, practicality, an understanding of environment and design creativity, it's essential to have a helping hand.

This can take the form of good advice, great education and high quality professional help; someone you can relate to, trust and respect. I believe there are **5 essential qualities** to look for in a fabulous Landscape Designer.

Let's look at them in detail!



QUALITY #1
A GOOD LISTENER

First, you'll want someone **able to listen to your needs and wants and understand what you desire.** This is more complex than it first appears. There is more to creating a garden than putting a few plants in the ground, taking a picture or finding a plan you've seen in a magazine and just transposing it into your outside space.

Everyone has their own special reason for building a garden. For some, it's just to look at. For others, they desire a safe and private space to relax and feel away from the world. Entertaining and having family gatherings are other great reasons, as is growing your own food and nurturing your health. Whatever your inspiration, you'll need a listening ear to help you become more focused to achieve your goal.

Once you are on your way, you'll need someone who has **the skill to interpret your ideas into a workable and achievable project.** Dreams can only become a reality if you have a clear 'garden map' to follow. A good Landscape Designer should **work with you and be able to develop a plan for your sanctuary garden that reflects your individuality.** To achieve this, they will need to encourage you to share your own thoughts, and take these on board. Everyone possesses creativity, and it takes a good listener to draw this out, affirming your ideas and wishes.

A GOOD LANDSCAPE
DESIGNER SHOULD
WORK WITH
YOU AND LISTEN
CAREFULLY TO
DEVELOP YOUR
UNIQUE SANCTUARY
GARDEN



A GOOD LISTENER CASE STUDY

Gen and Matt had just built a lovely villa, landscaping the front garden with a geometric series of walled garden beds. Wanting an attractive low maintenance garden, they engaged a Landscape Designer to choose suitable plants. They expressed a desire to have a personal design using flowering plants with a variety of textures and colors and a touch of formality.

Without hearing the need to be low maintenance or provide lots of visual interest throughout the year, the designer chose plants he always used and copied many of his other designs. *The result did not express the individuality of the clients, suggested plants with high maintenance needs and lacked originality.*

To create the beautiful result they wanted Gen and Matt needed to engage the services of another designer who listened to their needs. The new Landscape Designer chose plants carefully to have flowering and textural interest throughout the year and with similar growing requirements so all would thrive with little maintenance. Because the Landscape Designer had *listened* to what Gen and Matt wanted, the style and design suited the villa and pleased the clients.



A GOOD LISTENER WORKSHEET

WHY DO I WANT TO BUILD MY GARDEN?

Everyone has their own special reason for building a garden. Take a moment to think about your reasons, dreams and creative ideas. The clearer you are, the easier it will be to discuss them with your Landscape Designer.

WHAT ARE MY GARDEN DREAMS?

Maybe you have a clear idea of what you want to see in your garden, maybe your ideas are a bit vague. Whatever the case, take a moment to jot down some dreams of what you'd like to see in the finished product.

PRO TIP - GATHER IDEAS FROM EVERYWHERE - BOOKS, MAGAZINES, OTHER PEOPLE'S GARDENS. COLLECT THESE TO SHOW YOUR DESIGNER.



QUALITY #2 KNOWS THEIR CRAFT

A GOOD DESIGNER
WILL TAILOR THE
GARDEN TO YOUR
LIFESTYLE, AND
BE CONSIDERATE
OF YOUR TIME,
INTEREST AND
BUDGET.

After helping you decide what you want, a great Landscape Designer will ask ***‘is this wonderful garden possible to achieve?’*** They will understand what is required to bring your dream to fulfillment. They will understand how issues such as your location and the style of your house impact on the garden. They will tailor the garden to your lifestyle, and be considerate of your time, interest and budget. They will work towards creating a beautiful space just for you, as individual as you are.

To achieve this understanding, *a Landscape Designer should have the skills and experience to consider all aspects of design, including balance and proportion, movement, shape and form and color.*

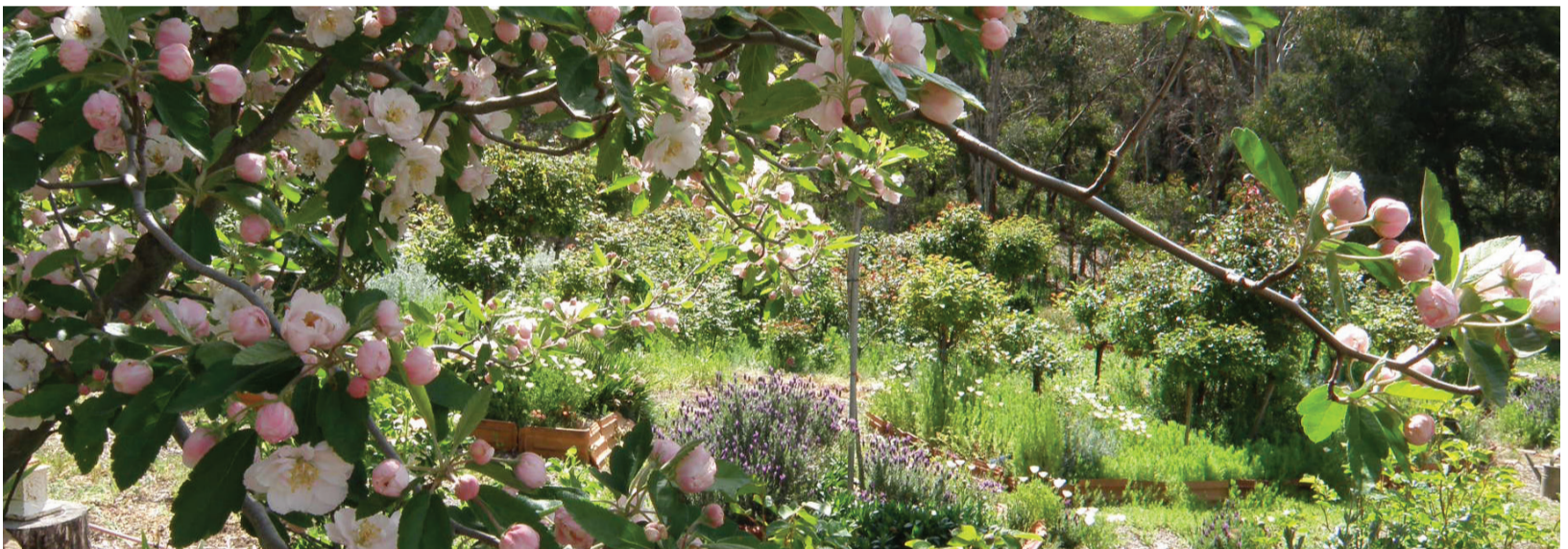


The ability to look at a site with the desires of the client in mind and translate this to a workable landscape design is a skill that can take years to develop. It requires a depth of knowledge of the environment that only comes from exposure to a wide range of different projects and locations.

KNOW THEIR CRAFT

CASE STUDY

Lauren and Paul live in a delightful house on a hill, with stunning views to paddocks and hills. However, the garden was proving difficult to develop; the scale of the house seemed disproportionate to the garden, the garden felt disorganised and regular care was difficult to maintain. With the help of a skilled and experienced Landscape Designer, they learned what was possible in the location, how to improve the soil, what plants to choose and how to unify the space around their house.



- To address the scale of the house to garden, they enlarged the planted area, using low maintenance hardy shrubs and perennials that provided all year round color and interest. The house was then in proportion to the size of its garden.
- To unify the garden, they added pathways and visual ‘endpoints’, to provide a sense of movement, unity and delight.
- To overcome the difficulty of maintaining the site due to wind, weeds and lack of water, the designer implemented clever plantings and organic weed control methods. This also improved the soil and the health of the plants.

Lauren and Paul now spend many enjoyable moments in their new garden, seeing the success of their efforts and having **confidence** now to add their own individual touches.



KNOWS THEIR CRAFT WORKSHEET

WHAT IS YOUR STARTING POINT?

Everyone starts off at a different point. Think about yours. Are you starting with a blank slate or do you have an existing garden you would like to update, renovate or restore?

WHAT STYLE IS YOUR HOUSE?

Houses are as diverse in design as the gardens that accompany them, but unless you're also planning a renovation, your house isn't going anywhere! Take a moment to think about how your house is designed and how that might impact on the design of your garden.

PRO TIP - TRY TO DRAW A PLAN OF YOUR HOUSE AND GARDEN SITE. TAKE LOTS OF PHOTOS - THE MORE FAMILIAR YOU ARE WITH THE SPACE, THE EASIER THE PROJECT.

WHAT KIND OF GARDEN DO YOU LIKE ALREADY?

Being the discerning client that you are, it's likely you've already got some idea of what you do and do not like when it comes to garden design. Take this a little bit further and take some time to clarify what style of garden you would like?

QUALITY #3

UNDERSTANDS WHAT GOES INTO BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL GARDEN



A GOOD LANDSCAPE
DESIGNER SHOULD
GIVE YOU A
WORKABLE
AND HELPFUL
FRAMEWORK
TO GUIDE YOUR
PROGRESS.

Building a successful garden requires much more than buying a few flowering plants from the local hardware store or copying a garden you've seen in a magazine. *You need to understand the practical elements that make up an outside space*, such as the soil, climate, water and drainage, wind, sun and shadow—the list goes on!

A good Landscape Designer will separate your project into the *hardscape, landscape and greenscape elements, giving you a workable and helpful framework to guide your progress*. It is also necessary for your Designer to have a wide-ranging knowledge of plants—how they grow, what they need and how to help them thrive. Lack of understanding in this area can lead to disappointment and challenges, not to mention wasting a lot of time, effort and money!



UNDERSTANDS WHAT GOES INTO BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL GARDEN

CASE STUDY

Brad and Andy were becoming very despondent about the lack of success in their garden. Weeds were abounding, drainage was a problem, plants weren't thriving, and they wanted to become more organic in their methods. Being great hosts, they longed for a garden in which they could hold gatherings for their many friends. They employed a Landscape Designer to assist them to sort out their challenges.



The designer undertook a *comprehensive site analysis, identifying problems with the type and fertility of the soil, water drainage and persistent, difficult weeds*. The designer used organic weed control methods, which also improved the soil and water management. The designer addressed the drainage problems by using swales and slow drainage techniques to direct the water and keep it where it was needed. *A detailed planting guide gave Brad and Andy a range of hardy beautiful plants to use in a workable, manageable and stylish design.*

Brad and Andy now have a gorgeous garden they can be proud of and entertain their many friends.



UNDERSTANDS WHAT GOES INTO BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL GARDEN WORKSHEET

You've spent time reflecting and researching, now it's time to start developing a clear concept plan! Ask yourself these questions:

WHAT IS MY SITE LIKE?

What is the location? What is my soil like? What are the existing buildings and vegetation?


PRO TIP - WHEN ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS, IT CAN BE HELPFUL TO RANK YOUR ANSWERS TO CLARIFY WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT.

WHAT ARE MY NEEDS AND HOW WILL I USE THE GARDEN?

Be honest about this one, what do you really need from your garden and how will you use it?

WHAT KIND OF GARDENER AM I?

Maybe you're the avid kind, or maybe you struggle keeping a cactus alive. *It doesn't matter!* As long as you're open about your style, capabilities and time budget, your designer should be able to design to compliment you.



QUALITY #4

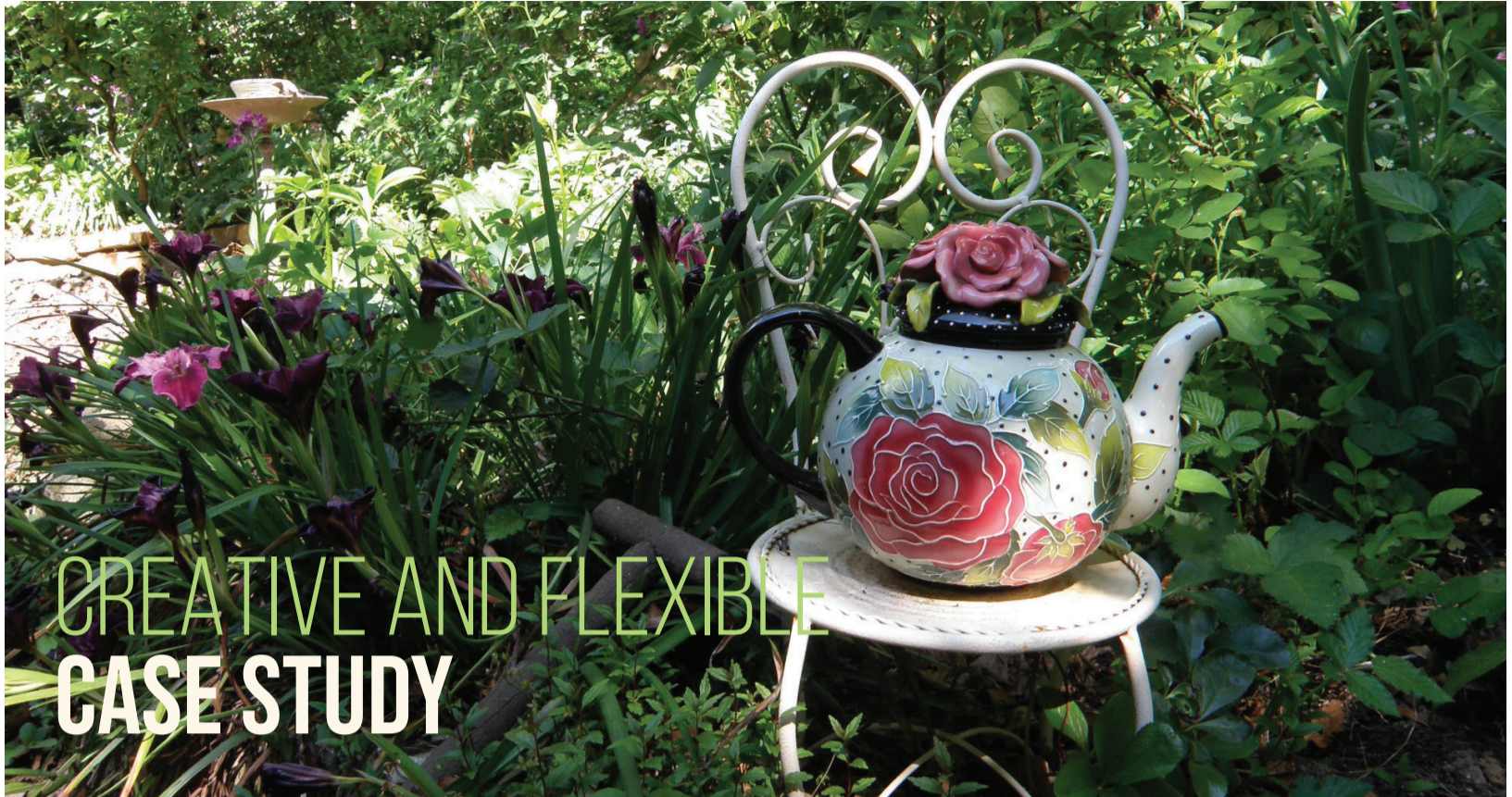
CREATIVE AND FLEXIBLE

A GOOD DESIGNER
WILL BE ABLE TO
THINK OUTSIDE
THE BOX, USING
CREATIVITY AND
FLEXIBILITY.

Every garden is different and will possess its own set of unique challenges. But while these challenges might be uninvited, a good Landscape Designer should be able to adapt and use these challenges to your advantage.

On top of listening to what you want and using their experience and practical knowledge of gardens, *a good Landscape Designer will also 'think out of the box'.* By using their creativity and flexibility, a good Landscape Designer should be able to turn even the most stubborn of problems into an opportunity for a design that is as individual as you are.





CREATIVE AND FLEXIBLE CASE STUDY

The big steep bank of soil and water tank at the back of Eddy and Rosie's cottage posed a problem—not only did it make them feel closed in, but deprived them of a lovely open space. Their Landscape Designer suggested removing the bank, and they took the plunge. When they came to the water tank, they discovered it was lined with concrete. With careful thought and much discussion, they reduced the tank to half its height and converted it to a gorgeous fish pond! The designer then incorporated it into sweeping curved stone terraces, adorned with a delightful cottage garden. The planting design included garden beds full of flowers all year round for Rosie to pick for the house, one of her favorite pastimes.



Where there was once an imposing bank there was now a stone paved open space for outdoor eating and children to play. Over time, Eddy and Rosie enlarged the kitchen window, so they could admire the garden from inside the house. *With flexibility and creativity, this unused area became a much-loved space.*

CREATIVE AND FLEXIBLE WORKSHEET

Dream for a moment. **Imagine** that you are in your new garden:

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

HOW DO YOU FEEL?



PRO TIP - MOVEMENT FROM ONE AREA TO ANOTHER IS VERY IMPORTANT. THINK ABOUT PATHWAYS AND HOW YOU WILL GET FROM ONE AREA TO ANOTHER.

WHAT CREATIVITY DO YOU WANT TO CONTRIBUTE?

Are there any challenges that could become opportunities?

QUALITY #5

GREAT TO WORK WITH

A GOOD DESIGNER
WILL HELP YOU
UNDERSTAND THE
DESIGN PROCESS
FROM PLAN TO
IMPLEMENTATION
AND ENCOURAGE
YOU TO TAKE PART
EVERY STEP OF
THE WAY.

All the skills and knowledge in the world mean nothing if the designer cannot communicate with you or listen to your ideas. It is frustrating to work with a person who does not listen or who does not include you in the design process. A great Landscape Designer will be easy to work with, willing to take your ideas on board and incorporate your creative suggestions. They will help you understand the design process from plan to implementation and encourage you to take part every step of the way.

A great Landscape Designer will also be willing to help you gain the skills and knowledge to make your garden happen. If you're not sure of something that would make managing your garden easier, a great designer will teach you how to do it. By **empowering** you to learn more about your garden and hearing what you think and feel, a great designer will inspire you and fill you with **confidence**!



GREAT TO WORK WITH CASE STUDY

More and more, people want to express their own creativity into their living spaces, and often wish to do the work themselves. Jasmine and Tony bought a small property with a country house and wanted to put their own stamp on it. **Chickens, veggie patch, orchard and flower garden were all on their list and they had loads of ideas.** They just didn't know where to start!



With the help of a Landscape Designer who had more great ideas and the knowledge and skills to merge them all, they brought it all together in a workable design. The designer had a can-do attitude but was also *realistic and honest* about what was possible. Together they put in place a plan of action, including preparation, installation and maintenance for the next year and beyond. Jasmine and Tony attended garden workshops which gave them the *skill, knowledge and confidence to start* and now their garden project is well underway.

After many laughs and great garden conversations, the relationship between Jasmine, Tony and their Designer became more of a friendship of inspiration and encouragement. Jasmine and Tony know they can call on her for help and advice when they need.



GREAT TO WORK WITH WORKSHEET

Now it's time to look for a landscape designer you can work with and who will give you an achievable plan!

WHEN YOU TALK WITH A POTENTIAL DESIGNER ASK YOURSELF:

Are they really listening to what I want?

Are they interested in my project?

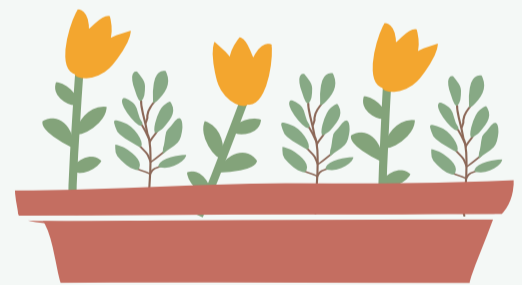
Is there a clear process from concept to building the garden

Are they knowledgeable about design and horticulture

Do I think they would be enjoyable to work with?

PRO TIP - ALWAYS REMEMBER; GARDEN DESIGN IS ULTIMATELY A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS AND ONE YOU SHOULD ENJOY AND FEEL ENERGIZED BY!

ADDITIONAL NOTES:



If you would like to discuss any ideas raised in this short e-book,

please don't hesitate to contact me:

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And don't forget to visit our website for more educational and inspiring content!

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AMANDA REYNOLDS / THE AUTHOR



LANDSCAPE DESIGNER

As a Landscape Designer, I design holistic gardens based on permaculture principles and love developing productive gardens, butterfly and biodiversity gardens and beautiful spaces of sanctuary. I delight in seeing people actively engage in their environment.

GARDEN EDUCATOR

In my role as a Garden Educator, I love teaching gardening and sustainability to both children and adults. I've been involved in developing community and school gardens and inspiring people to build their own gorgeous gardens