



Design, Marian Boswell MSGD, photograph, Jason Ingram

The Society of Garden Designers presents its declaration of intent, to challenge the *status quo* and encourage its members to implement ways of working and making gardens and landscapes where sustainability always comes first

MANIFESTO FOR SUSTAINABLE GARDENS AND LANDSCAPES

During its inaugural symposium at RHS Garden Wisley this summer, with climate change and the loss of biodiversity uppermost in their minds, members of the Society of Garden Designers closely examined their own and the wider landscape industry's working practices and approaches to design, plants, planting and aftercare, materials and responses to site.

The results of their extensive and stimulating debates and sharing of thoughts and ideas have since been carefully recorded and distilled on behalf of the Society by its Fellow and immediate past Lifetime Achievement Award winner, David Stevens and, with

newly appointed lead for sustainability, Rachel Bailey MSGD, the Society proposes the following guidance, for use by its members, and all fellow industry experts, in the course of their work.

We, the members, need to reduce the environmental impact of our gardens and landscapes and to reverse the decline of biodiversity which has accelerated over the last 50 years.

This should be achieved by recognising key elements which include hard landscape materials, construction and approach to

resources; water as a resource; soils; and plants, planting and an increase in biodiversity.

Approach to resources

We must:

- consider conserving, recycling or upcycling materials: stone, metal, concrete, foundations, and sub-bases, all can be reused for the good of the environment;
- reduce areas of hard landscaping;
- educate designers, clients and the industry about the characteristics and cost implications of using different materials and surfaces, and about their carbon footprint, including the energy consumption in their manufacture and the distance of travel from source to site;
- question the advantages and disadvantages of the extraction and quarrying of natural stone and subsequent destruction of habitats versus using manufactured paving; and
- advocate the use of renewable materials.

Water as a resource

We must:

- conserve water and minimise the chances of water run-off through permeable surfaces by using sustainable drainage systems (SuDS);
- change the trend for 'pave and seal';
- incorporate storage systems to save water from roofs and other structures, either by installing water butts or below-ground storage tanks;
- incorporate 'rain gardens' where run-off is inevitable, possibly with ponds or pools/wetland areas and planting. This can take up a relatively small area in a garden, or a far larger one in a municipal or urban space. Green roofs and walls can also conserve water and limit the chances of run-off; and
- promote natural swimming pools, and their advantages over conventional swimming pools.

Soil

We must:

- value the soil, soil types and organic material;
- recognise that soil husbandry directly influences and can enhance species-rich schemes;
- work with what we have in regard to pH values, and suggest maintaining fertility with home-composted organic material as both a conditioner and a mulch;
- where possible, only modify soils with materials found on site, such as crushed brick or stone to create conditions for specific planting regimes; and
- reduce the need for peat extraction by using peat-free composts.

Plants, planting, increasing biodiversity, and restoring ecosystems

We must:

- increase biodiversity, including the range of species and organisms that are found in a garden or a landscape. Plants, animals, insects, bacteria,



'TREAD WITH A LIGHT TOUCH AND THE EARTH WILL REPAY YOU IN MORE WAYS THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE. WE MUST TRY HARDER; WE MUST DO BETTER.'

DAVID STEVENS FSGD

OUR DECLARATION OF INTENT

THE SGD MANIFESTO will be available via the Society's website. A longer resource offering practical advice and ideas on how to incorporate sustainable working practices, and design and build environmentally sustainable gardens and landscapes will also be available. This will be a working document and the Society would like to hear from any members or related industry experts who have any additional advice that they believe would be relevant to that guidance. **Visit sgd.org.uk for contact details.**

RECORDINGS OF SGD SYMPOSIUM TALKS by the main speakers are now available online; visit sgd.org.uk.

fungi – all of these work together in interactive ecosystems which are delicately balanced, and are required to sustain all forms of life;

- establish and encourage 'corridors' in urban and other areas that will allow free movement of wildlife, both within and between gardens and landscapes. Movement of species can be facilitated by unsealing soil, layering planting, and opening gaps in boundaries; consider linking gardens by planting similar trees and plant species, for example;
- retain existing planting, where possible – trees, shrubs, hardy perennials – and design schemes around them. Source plants with low carbon footprints by working more collectively with local and British regional nurseries;
- encourage clients to appreciate wilder and less maintained areas within the garden or landscape, through education and encouraging them to visit gardens where this is already practised;
- encourage a reduction in the use of herbicides and insecticides, using biological controls and mechanical methods instead;
- advocate the implementation of green roofs and walls in appropriate locations;
- promote alternative and 'greener' solutions for play areas;
- strive to ban the use of artificial grass; and
- positively work with suppliers and manufacturers to develop products that are recyclable and environmentally friendly. ○

Design and photograph, (top) Lynne Marcus MSGD, (bottom) Rachel Bailey MSGD