

Landscape costings-some guidance

How much will my garden cost?

Many clients ask for ball park ideas before proceeding with a design, and we feel we should try to help- this is a bit like nailing jelly to the wall so please bear with us....

The short answer to the question is "it depends"



The only way to know what something will cost is to get a specific quote based on a detailed plan and work schedule.

The rougher the plan the less useful the estimate- a single decision to add fencing, a patio, water feature, lighting, or irrigation can swing the costs by 100% or more, so it can be incredibly misleading to give numbers plucked from the air.

Landscaping (unless we are only talking about planting) is essentially a building project not a furnishing exercise- so think about the cost of an extension not the cost of a new sofa. It is almost impossible to generalise on costs for all these reasons, so take even the broad ideas below with a health warning.

How are Cool Gardens different from any other design and landscaping team?

If you have met us you will already be aware that we are a professional business taking on complex building projects for exacting clients. To do what we do, and do it well, we run a staffed project office, have whizzy IT systems for the CAD work, and experienced project



management staff. We don't run cheap casual labour, and we have to pay full VAT, insurance and the like. This adds up to a very different cost structure from a "man and a van" build team or a lone designer hand-drawing plans from home.

Yes but what will it cost?

In many gardens the single most expensive element is a patio and you can assume somewhere between £150 and £250 per square metre for this (fully fitted) whether it is good quality deck or stone. In some projects that is pretty much it apart from a bit of planting, but in a full build with fencing, lawn, planting areas, paths, a water feature,

lighting, a gardens studio and irrigation you might easily be talking about less than a quarter the total. If the patio is raised and requires retaining walls or balustrades the cost will inevitably be higher.

Mobilising a team to site to start work (with tools, toilet, diggers and materials) generally costs at least £500, a team of 2 people for a week costs of the order of £2,500 and if we assume materials will be at least 50% of the budget you can see that a budget of £5000 is unlikely to cover more than a weeks' work. As a result, projects with budgets less than this are rarely cost effective for us or our clients although there may be other ways to do the work (see below).

If I tell you what I have to spend can you fit the design to this?



This is largely depends on how realistic and flexible your budget is.

It is our experience that whatever budget you have in mind will not cover everything you might start out looking at doing as there are always trade-offs to be made. Most people (even those with huge budgets) make some changes or compromises. This might include cutting things out, changing the designs or materials, or deciding to carry out the work in tranches, and we are very experienced at helping you to get best value through this process.

Whilst we can help you juggle the numbers, whether you have ear-marked sufficient budget to cover what you want(ed) to get done is something we have absolutely no control over! We are not actually responsible for the intrinsic cost of landscaping work and sadly we cannot magically reduce the costs- in most cases they just are what they are and the trick is to make adjustments to the scope and approach to fit what you choose to spend. We are experienced enough now to say when we think you have reached a point below which you cannot cut the costs without disappointing results rather than just cutting corners.

Once the costs are agreed will they be fixed as my budget is absolutely stretched to the max?

Our main quote is fixed apart from any highlighted variable charges such as waste and parking. That said, it is rarely wise to start a building project of any kind with no flexibility at all, although the decisions on any extra works are of course always yours. In our experience the larger the project the more likely it is to end up morphing into something rather different during the works as our clients see the space taking shape and add/adjust/develop the ideas. We will often provide suggestions as the inspiration hits us too- but of course it will be up to you to decide on what you wish to do. As a rule, if we are left to get on with the work as planned it will stay on budget and if you make lots of changes it probably won't!

I guess we should also say that you never quite know what you will find when clearing an overgrown plot, and digging into the ground can reveal all sorts- we have come across air

raid shelters and ice houses, huge tree roots and underground obstacles as well as the more common challenges of rotting fences or dodgy retaining walls. All of these can be dealt with but can incur some costs.

What if I have my own builder?

We are totally relaxed about whether we build for you, or you arrange someone else. If you have a trusted builder, we think that is great, and we can offer as much or little project management support as you need. In fact, working this way we have build up a stable of good local builders who we often work with comfortably and we are happy to pass these on to you. It can work out cheaper if we supply materials and project management and they supply the labour directly contracted to you. We can supply materials, monitor work on site and hold your hand throughout the process if you want us to, or leave you to do it.

We are not precious about who does what although of course if we are not the main contractor we can only nudge and advise-we are quite good at this!