



coolgardens



Living with Cool Gardens

A short guide to how to survive the build process, containing key information on how we work and how we hope to work with you. We take a great deal of care to make sure that you get the best possible finish, and it often helps to understand how the materials and build style are likely to shape the final result.

This guide contains the following:

- 1) Project management Q and A
- 2) Before you start
- 3) Thoughts on landscape materials
- 4) Design into build and what to expect
- 5) Cool Gardens Terms and Conditions (of which this brochure forms a part)

2) Before you start :

Discrepancies

You will have a design and an agreed costing. The build is being planned and the site will soon be prepared. Sometimes, as the process moves forward and final decisions are taken a discrepancy appears between the drawing and the quotation. As a default we consider the prices and details in the written quotation to supersede the drawing unless we discuss and agree otherwise.

Planning issues

Please ensure you are happy with any local planning issues, we will advise where we can, and will draft planning applications and support documents where required but we do not profess to be planning consultants although we know a number who can assist us if desired.



Structural considerations:

We have built many things in many locations, each has their own set of issues and challenges which we will do our utmost to point out before getting too far along in the project. Having said this you will understand that we are not qualified structural engineers and we strongly advise that anywhere with a history of structural problems, new builds, and all roof terraces and balconies are checked by a structural engineer for suitability before any work is started. As with other planning matters we do rely on you to assume responsibility for this. Retaining walls of complex design or above 1.6m in height should also be designed by a structural engineer; we will arrange this on your behalf if required.



3) Landscaping materials:

Most are natural products and therefore you have to expect some considerable variation-and of course weathering from being out in the open- this is part of their charm, but if you dislike this or are not sure what this might mean for your garden we should discuss it in more detail and explore possible options and treatments- please let us know.

There are few standards in landscaping- what one supplier calls one thing another may use to mean something else- this can cause confusion so do expect to see samples and beware when making comparisons

Stone:

Natural stone, can vary considerably in hue and finish. We think this creates a wonderful effect versus a more flat looking reconstituted stone, but the uneven surface does not suit all and you need to consider the colour variation when looking at a sample as the stone can vary significantly from the samples. If you prefer a very uniform surface you may wish to consider sawn slabs.

Wood:

Wood can also vary considerably, even superior wood will have some natural grain variation and occasional knots, which again we think is part of their charm. We also take the time to choose what we consider to be the best boards for the most prominent locations. If you prefer to explore a completely knot free finish and selecting out more faded boards for example, we can certainly quote for this. Wood will rot in very wet locations, treatment will help but not prevent this, do ask if you think this will be such a location and we may choose an alternative for you.

Fencing:

Fencing can cause all sorts of trouble! We assume if you ask us to replace fencing that you have agreed it with the neighbours-if not then best ask. Painting of fencing can be a great way to make a difference, but check what happens to the other side and how to treat the fence posts before embarking.

Most fencing has a "right and wrong" side. Both are generally ok, but your neighbour may not agree.

Old fencing can pull down the new- it is often best to replace the whole run if the posts are wobbly.

4) Design into build and what to expect:

Design into build

Some elements of the design are purely aesthetic, others are functional. With the more functional areas we will design (and then build) to the specification we discuss. Thus an area of paving intended for pedestrians will not be suited for vehicles and will cost (possibly a great deal) to lift and replace. The same is true for a shed intended to be weatherproof but not watertight: the build style, materials, and costs are different between the two, please make sure you are clear as to what you require and what has been quoted for. If you do change your mind about something like this please make sure we have a clear written record of the comments. An e-mail confirmation is a good idea for the recording of any such discussions, clarifications and changes.

We ask for your help in getting the final specification into place in a timely fashion. If you wish to make the final choice of materials for example on paint colours, please do so at the start of the build. We are sure that you understand that we need time to order materials in good time to get the work done. In the absence of a prompt decision we will act on our initiative to keep the team working-if you are not happy with a decision we have taken in these cases we may have to charge you extra to change it.

What to expect:

- Like all small businesses we do have to manage sickness, holidays, and rare emergencies, we will always tell you if there is any day when we do not expect to work and will manage staffing issues with minimum impact to you
- We will leave the site as clean as possible at weekends and holidays, and will keep your access and drive as clear as we can. You will appreciate that we do have materials deliveries to accommodate, and we will assume (unless told to the contrary) that we can use your property to stack, store and marshal our materials. As an example, properly constructed driveways will comfortably take a skip load: let us know if you have concerns about the quality of your existing hard landscaping and we can discuss the cost implications of avoiding these areas. Loose tipped materials like soil can be messy so we will try to deal with these sensitively and will of course clear up afterwards!
- A large number of decisions are taken on site daily regarding the minutiae of the build. The value of the detailed design is that we do not need to refer such items to you unless we think there is a material variation from the plan or a cost decision to be made. If there are particular elements that you would like to oversee (e.g. the placing of a key tree) or that you consider critical please ensure we know and we will do our best to accommodate you



- You are very welcome to comment during the build. Do recognise that looking at a partly complete garden is often very misleading: scale and proportion can look odd, and paths and features often look too large until planting, lawn, and other details are in place
- We can of course agree changes to the design during the build, but we will need to charge for additional time and materials. Small changes can have big knock on impacts on the design.
- In our experience, most builds do throw up some additional work of some kind: this might be replacing rotten fence posts or stumps that only come to light after the garden is cleared, extending the paving into an adjacent area, or removing a large concrete block found under the soil. We do have to charge for those items that involve us in material additional time or costs.

What we need:



We need little from you apart from reasonable access to the garden during working hours (this may mean giving us keys or gate codes). We will arrange a site loo. We will need access to parking. If you are in a restricted area but can arrange any parking this helps, otherwise *we will need to charge you for parking at cost*. Please let us know if there are any contractor schemes in your area that we can apply for.

If you have used a third party designer we have some specific guidance on how this will best work, please ensure you and your designer have seen this.

Plants and planting



We do not in general provide plant by plant listings as this restricts our options and creativity and rarely adds much to our clients experience! Once the hard landscaping is completed (and sometimes a little before) we will visit our suppliers in person, select your plants individually, and have them delivered to your garden. This personal service is critical to the quality of the plants we supply and we believe means that we consistently supply the best standards in the industry.

Our personal choice approach means that we can (and do) make substitutions from our guide list based on what looks good, is available, and what represents the best overall value within the agreed budget. You are of course at liberty to veto any substitutions that you do not like.

We will bring more plants to your garden than we will use: we allow ourselves around 10% extra to give us plenty of choice at the time of lay-out and to replace any damaged in transit. Plants can be awkward things and we do plant to a slightly greater overall density than is required to fulfil the design, since one can always expect a few failures after planting. This is captured as part of the costs we agree. Whilst it is not the norm in the industry to replace plants that fail for no obvious reason, we can arrange an extended one year warranty on the trees and shrubs: please ask for details. Evergreens in particular can be expected to drop up to 30% of their canopy on new planting, and deciduous specimens can look decidedly miserable- you may need to be a little patient in waiting for them to recover.



Financial arrangements



Our quotation holds for all of the items detailed. Some items are quoted on a pro rata basis to allow for changes to area to be simply captured (turf and paving are often shown in this way). If there are elements not listed in the quotation that you want us to build please ask for an additional quote.

Our standard payment schedule is 30% deposit on booking, and 20% of starting, with equal weekly stage payments thereafter according to the work plan, until 95% of the total value of the contract has been paid (including any agreed extras). This is for your protection so that you retain a portion of the fees until final completion to your satisfaction. We will need payments for specific additional items such as sculptures, pots and water features as they become due from our suppliers: we will inform you of the timings on these as soon as we can. At practical completion up to 5% of the landscaping budget may be retained against snagging if required. Snagging is occasionally required, we will agree a specific time frame with you for agreed snags to be completed, and will undertake these promptly. As ever we can be subject to delay from suppliers or unsuitable weather conditions thus timings will always remain approximate and non contractual.

Whilst a build process can be tricky we hope to make it as smooth and stress free as we can. Happy gardening.....

