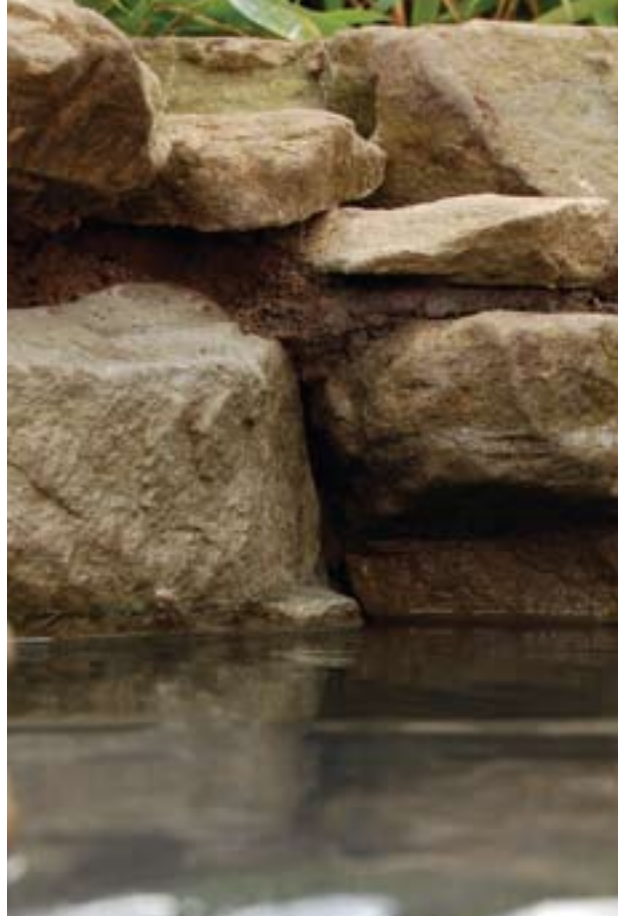


How does your garden grow?

words Claire Sawers · photos courtesy of Paul Church Landscape Design

May is here, bringing with it longer, lighter nights. It's the beginning of a season of outdoor music festivals, garden parties and summer weddings. Enjoying some alfresco fun is always a bonus, but for many, looking out the window at their back gardens fills them with a mixture of dread and embarrassment. Long-untended lawns and jungle height overgrowth may put you off sending out invites for a summer BBQ. But according to landscape gardener Paul Church, even the most unkempt of gardens can be over-hauled easily if you



are prepared to spend a little time and attention on them.

"People are generally looking for low-maintenance gardens. They don't want anything that needs constant tending or weeding," says Paul. He works closely with his clients to design tailor-made gardens based on what they want out of the space – whether it's a safe play area for kids, a chill-out zone for stressed city workers, or a calm retreat for summer meals or cocktails.

Anyone harbouring outdated ideas of crazy paving, grinning garden gnomes or naff water features can think again. Paul favours a fuss-free minimalist style, with a less-is-more approach. "If someone loves hanging baskets," says Paul, "I'll fit them in somehow, but that's probably not my personal taste." His signature style features clean, geometric lines, and a contemporary blend of stone, timber and stainless steel. As for foliage, he goes for a modern mix of what he calls, "architectural planting", favouring strong, straight lines like tall lavender blossoms or narrow bamboo shoots. Once he has re-vamped the space, he adds finishing touches such as cool, contemporary lighting under paving stones, small, easy-to-clean ponds with rows of irises, or his own individual creative flourishes – like fun photos in

timber boxes filled with lights – to create the impression of relaxing in your living room whilst outdoors. Additional outdoor heaters make summer dinners a lot more comfortable, and if nosy neighbours are a pest, Paul has a few tricks up his sleeve to create stylish fences with tension cables and a few pale larch wood posts. Once his work is done, all that's left to do is order the charcoal, stock up the sun tan lotion, and get the deckchairs ready. ☺



Top Tips for a Fuss Free Garden

- Creating boundaries makes an area automatically easier to maintain. If you want a grassy lawn area, box it off into a neat square or rectangle shape. That way it won't spread and take over.
- To add colour, put plants in containers. These are easier than fussy borders which need a lot of weeding. To eliminate unsightly sprouts or weeds, cover the soil with a layer of gravel to create a membrane you can water the plants through.
- Slate flooring or wooden decking is easier to maintain than a lawn, and can be hosed down easily when it gets dirty.
- For small gardens, plant a climbing flower like a honeysuckle, rose or clematis in a container and let it climb up a trellis.

Paul specialises in creative garden design Paul Church Landscape Design and Construction, www.churchlandscapes.co.uk · Tel: 0131 449 7997, 07815 900 268



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