

A QUICK GUIDE TO...

Landscaping

As the growing season approaches, Iain Mulady, Gardener at The London Golf Club, offers ten tips to bring your clubhouse gardens up to par.



1. Into the nights

It's easy to forget the evenings when you're working greenkeeping hours, but it's a time of day when visitors will see the gardens in more detail as they relax with a drink on the terrace. Maximum advantage should be taken of the long, warm summer evenings – lighting, especially uplighters on decorative stemmed trees, look fantastic year round and scented plants, both can extend the hours of interest and encourage customers to linger.

2. Don't forget sculpture

The use of sculpture, be it formal and precise or stylised and naturalistic, can provide extra interest and an effective contrast and foil to planting, lifting it beyond just corporate landscaping. With some artists it can be varied year on year and be displayed on a sale or return basis and it's virtually maintenance free!

3. Low maintenance gardening is a false idol

No such thing exists and any attempt can lead to massive future problems as tough, invasive plants like ivy grow into one another and the persistent weeds force their way through. Careful, knowledgeable plant selection and design can allow for easy maintenance of manageable species in a sustainable manner.

4. Detail

The grander strokes of planting can provide form, colour and structure but it's the little things that jump out at visitors. The garden doesn't have to be painstakingly intricate, but a few carefully positioned focal points and surprises can provide visual interest and impress even casual passers by.

5. Don't get muddled

Lots of different plants jumbled together can often seem too busy to the eye. It must be remembered that it's still a golf club primarily and bold swathes of colour and consistency provide a better experience to passers-by than an overly detailed and fussy cottage-garden. The trick is getting the mix right – bright highlights shine at their best against consistent and strongly formed backdrops.

6. Done once, done properly

In a high profile situation like golf club surroundings it can be very challenging getting the work done without causing upset to the non-stop flow of golfers. It can be tempting to try and do a quick revamp of large areas without any disruption, but taking shortcuts will only result in more disruption later – the hard and messy bit will still have to be done eventually to put things right and until then substandard work is out on show for months or potentially years. Get it over with – the results will last for years so it's always worth it.

7. Winter interest

While the playing of golf slows over the winter months the gardens provide an extra opportunity to keep business flowing, even if the course is closed. Form, scent and colour can ensure the clubhouse remains an attractive place to relax, eat, drink and socialise by focusing on garden areas visible from windows and conservatories.

8. Don't spare the rod

Pesticides have a bad reputation in the increasingly organic world of the home gardener, but they have an incredibly useful role to play. Residual herbicides can save uncountable man-hours of weeding and correct application can allow for drastic weed control without disturbing the surrounding gardens.

Many modern insecticides can be very safe to humans and the environment when properly used. Be more than prompt with fungicides – by the time the problem looks serious it is probably too late.

9. Encourage interest to realise potential

A vast proportion of members will have gardens of their own and plenty of enthusiasm about gardening. Attracting and holding their interest is a potential marketing coup with a knowledgeable gardener on hand to answer questions and botanical labelling of plants to provide added information.

10. Planning

Timing disruptive tasks before golfers arrive, to planning schemes of new planting and design, it is critical that you work in an organised fashion and with an eye to the future.

The course will still be there in 10 years time, and with good planning the gardens should only have matured and improved along the way.