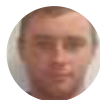


Spending wisely on garden projects

Darren White
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the National Botanic
Gardens



Many uncertainties remain due to COVID-19, but as an industry horticulture is growing, as are job opportunities for our graduates. People are spending more time in their gardens and are keen to invest in garden projects. This has provided a great boost to landscapers all around the country with many contractors' diaries filled for the remainder of 2021.

An unfortunate fallout from the pandemic are price increases on a number of landscape materials including plants and paving products. High demand has driven price increases but a number of supply issues have also resulted in a shortage of stock.

According to Matt Lohan of Woodstock Nurseries in Co Kildare, most hedging has risen in price due to a shortfall in supply as a result of climatic factors over the last number of years resulting in lower yields of plants.

Paving products are in a similar position and at the time of writing sandstone paving was sold out. According to Timmy Twomey of the Natural Stone Yard in Co Meath, a shortfall in supply is creating many challenges in sourcing material due to COVID-19 and demand is extremely strong for all natural stone paving.

Spending on a garden project should be viewed as a lifetime investment. That is why it is critical to select the correct type of paving or plant selection to suit your home and what you personally find attractive.

With large country gardens, in



Using a mix of granite as a border and limestone provides excellent contrast.



Avenue trees and specimen trees can really add to a property.

particular, the level of investment can be very high. I would recommend splitting the project over two to three years and concentrate on hedging and specimen trees one year and paved areas the following year and so on.

This gives you the opportunity to research products and decide what will best suit your needs and help ensure the money is well spent.

Porcelain and granite are the current market leaders in terms of paving. Porcelain has become very popular among landscapers and designers in recent times. Many clients like this type of stone due to its clean cut lines and hard wearing surface and slip resistance. It now comes in a range of different colours.

Granite and limestone are timeless and will nearly always be excellent options as hard-wearing, low-maintenance paving.

Planting trees and hedging should be done carefully. It is important to know your site in terms of soil conditions, light and wind direction. Trees and hedging are lifetime commitments so take care in the selection process when purchasing trees.

Avenue trees and specimen trees can really add to a property. Native trees are always advisable but, also, study your neighbours' plants to get an indication of what will grow well and what to avoid.

The use of *Hornbeam Carpinus betulus* as an avenue tree works well as they provide excellent structure. Hornbeam is generally more tolerant

of conditions present in most Irish gardens than some non-natives.

This weeping beech tree *Fagus sylvatica Pendula* provides year-round interest in the garden and creates a beautiful backdrop for the sunken garden below it.

In conclusion, always try to use a reputable nursery, landscaper, garden centre or paving centre as it is in their interest to provide you with good advice.

When it comes to paving and planting, visit a job a landscaper has carried out previously as this will showcase their workmanship. When it comes to spending money on garden projects spend it once and spend it wisely.



The beech tree *Fagus sylvatica Pendula* adds interest to the garden.