

AGENDA

WHAT CAN WE DO AS AN INDUSTRY TO HELP COMBAT THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF CLIMATE CHANGE?

Six members of the industry explain how they are taking steps to tackle the increasing challenges of climate change

Dr Ross Cameron

Senior lecturer,
Landscape Management

The key element for our sector is to embrace green energy sources and encourage the government to provide opportunities/ infrastructure for these. These need to be genuinely green – electricity from solar and wind, for example. We should also exploit the natural environment to mitigate the causes and effects of climate change, using plants to reduce the energy loads on buildings and provide micro-climatic cooling for our cities or exploit well-designed landscapes that reduce the risk of urban flooding. A key objective should be to radically increase the proportion and quality of green infrastructure within our cities not just with respect to climate change but also to help with other environmental and social problems. We need to manage these landscapes sustainably, and promote pro-environmental practices, eliminating certain artificial fertilisers that release greenhouse gases.

Ali Dempster

Designer and owner,
Sandstone Design

At Sandstone Design we have an environmental policy to 'reduce, reuse and recycle' and make sure we are conscious of our environmental impact as we work.

For example, on site we reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill by separating resources. We use bulk bags to separate out plastics from hardcore, which can be reused, wood, which can go to local power stations, and topsoil, which can be used elsewhere on a project.

As landscaping professionals we can also design and use our gardens in a way that reduces environmental impact. Even in a small space, using a porous surface rather than hard paving and planting more greenery can help offset emissions and improve conservation.

The bigger questions, the CO₂ emissions from imported products and the reliance on single-use plastic packaging, are a bigger industry concern which is more difficult to solve at a local level. For instance, it is practical to deliver and store cement in single-use plastic packaging, as it protects it from the elements. For larger suppliers, how can products be better packaged to reduce plastic waste?

Rhiannon Williams

Landscape architect and project manager,
Landform Consultants

It may sound naïve, but I believe the simple answer is to listen, learn and adapt. I believe in learning from experience and from those who have come before us – but having only been in the industry a few years I also recognise that we need to place more of an emphasis on teaching those coming into the industry the things to consider when designing and building to reduce the impact and effects of climate change. Having said that, anyone, regardless of their experience, can learn something new.

My main passion is for planting. I think there's a lot to be said for adapting the planting palette to include species that are better suited to these changing conditions. I love an opportunity to research the plants I'm using and making informed decisions on what I select. Not just in the conventional sense of making sure a plant is hardy enough and suited to the aspect, but what are the impacts of getting that plant – does it need to be imported from Europe? Can it be British grown or sourced in the UK, reducing the carbon footprint of supply? These questions can so easily be applied to sourcing all materials for designs, be it paving, timber or accessories.



Joseph Gibson

Garden designer/owner,
Joseph Gibson Garden Design

I would love to see horticulture reintroduced to our schools. Children from an early age learning to nurture nature could influence the mentalities of so many, leading to a much greener environment with great long-term benefits.

It's also important that we continue pushing for more green spaces within built-up areas to help combat the effects of pollution.

Ultimately within the design practice itself, I think it comes down to environmentally conscious decisions when planning. For example, the transoceanic importation of materials creates a huge carbon footprint.

We have to question whether we could be making better decisions when selecting our material palette with more focus on their origin and the resources they consume.

When we look at the amount of resources required for producing and maintaining large-scale bedding plant arrangements, we have to question their sustainability and whether their short-lived reward is justifiable.

We also have to ask ourselves: should we be implementing long-lasting and drought-tolerant planting instead?

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Andrew Duff

Managing director,
Inchbald School of Design

Addressing environmental issues can start with the smallest of changes. Think about how we travel to site – do we have to drive or can we use public transport? Think about where our planting is coming from – is there a local nursery closer to site that grows its own stock rather than importing it?

We need to think about using materials already on site and whether we are changing something for the sake of change – remember that leaving something alone is a design decision. Consider using plants normally found within the local vernacular. These should require a lot less water and ultimately less maintenance as they are used to growing in a similar location.

Most garden designers are working in a sustainable way already, but just some simple adjustments to the way we design can make an even greater difference.

Hannah Genders

Owner,
Hannah Genders

Our gardens are incredibly important in this battle against climate change, both in the urban and rural environment. In towns and cities planted garden space will help water uptake in storms and aid cooling in hot conditions. Trees play a vital role in this along with absorbing carbon and pollution from the air.

Gardens in an urban environment can become a corridor for butterflies, bees and other beneficial insects. A recent research study shows that bumblebees are doing better in urban areas than those on agricultural land because the successional flowers we plant helps to feed them. Our countryside gardens have a greater diversity of trees and plants than the surrounding monoculture fields. Plants capture carbon from the atmosphere and store it, composting and adding it to the soil helps this process work better.

NEXT MONTH

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