

New Book on Activating Care Home Gardens

Hello again! Many apologies for the lack of *Mulch* news in the last 12 months. My garden design colleague, Debbie Carroll, and I have been busy analysing and writing up the findings from our large-scale, self-funded research project we began in 2013, into why care home gardens were not more actively used.

As designers with experience in creating therapeutic gardens, we felt that this was an important question to ask, particularly as we wondered if we were all missing something crucial in our design practices. We had modest ambitions to recruit six care homes into a small research project that we could fit in between our other work. We intended to find out the reasons why and share them with our design sector colleagues. What we actually discovered has caused us to completely rethink the way we approach our work as garden designers with care sector clients.

We found that the care home's culture, rather than the quality of the garden design, plays a key role in how well care home residents use their outside spaces. We've since been busy sharing our findings with design and care sector colleagues through presentations, talks and workshops and with our unique and practical poster-format Map tool but we now recognise that we need to be doing this much more rapidly and more widely if we are going to be able to help as many people as possible living in care settings to enjoy their gardens.

We've now written up our findings in a book along with a guide to using the Map to help explain how care homes can engage more effectively with their outside spaces. We've funded the research and the creation of the Map tool ourselves so far and will continue to do everything we can with our limited resources but we've come to the reluctant conclusion that we are going to need some additional help to get the first print run of the book published.

We've found that our work has struck a chord already with so many people we've talked to about it, and so we're turning to the power of crowdfunding to help us get the book edited and printed this autumn.

The fundraising campaign is open till Monday 15th June and every pound donated, and every social media share, like and re-tweet that our supporters can make will help us spread the word about how to help care home residents go outside more often and as and when they wish to. We go into much more detail about our research and the sums we need to raise at our crowdfunding page:

<http://igg.me/at/lets-go-into-the-garden>

If you can help in any way at all, we'd be enormously grateful and incredibly humbled. Please help us spread the word by forwarding this copy of *The Mulch* too.



^ Explaining the Map diagnostic tool to our design sector peers in February

Our Top Ten Findings

We recruited 17 care homes across England and Wales into the research project and gathered almost 1500 pieces of data of interactions between residents living with dementia and the outside space around their home.

We started out as garden designers and quickly found that the answers we were looking for weren't to be found in the care home garden but deep inside the home itself. We then followed the evidence trail back indoors and it was then that we started to draw on our past careers and skills in retail management, the NHS, Armed Forces and project management to make sense of the complex role that the culture of the home played in their practices and attitudes towards, for example, Health and Safety, risk, dangers and the value of the outdoors.

We created two Top Ten summaries of our findings, one for the care sector and this for our designer peers:

1. Know where your clients are culturally

Your support needs to match the cultural position of the home along their journey towards greater relationship-centred care.

2. Fearful attitudes about Health and Safety effectively 'cap' how much the care home will use the outside space and the equipment available

Understand the culture of the care home so that you don't support them beyond their ability to confidently or willingly engage with the outside space or features in it.

3. They may not need just your design skills

Don't default to the design aspect of your work. You may not be required to be a designer, at least initially.

4. Can residents see the garden?

The garden is not separate from what takes place indoors. Can the outside space be seen and enjoyed from the inside daily?

5. It's not about creating a pretty space

The aim is for the garden to be a well-used and well-loved outside space by the current residents.

6. Avoid gimmicks

Features and elements in the garden should be what they are meant to be and what you would expect to see in a garden.

7. Gaps are good

There's no need to design to the last square metre. Allow for ownership by the residents and the home in what they put in their garden.

8. It's not about the money

It is the attention, imagination and resourcefulness of the staff, family members and the wider community in using what they already have that leads to meaningful engagement and involvement with the outside space for the residents.

9. Encourage relationship-centred design

Your aim is to get to know the care home culture well so that the support you provide matches the cultural position of the home and the needs of their residents.

10. Don't design back in the fear

Do you really know your assumptions and limitations as a designer? What would you do when there is a conflict between current disability design guidance and what would work best for the resident living with dementia in that home?

There's more information about our work at our website:

www.stepchange-design.co.uk

The Red...

Nature is nothing less than astounding. Did you know about the Hot Lips plant (*Psychotria Elata*)? No? Neither did I! But I won't easily forget it now. Take a look at this photograph of the plant in its pre-unfurling phase, when the 'lips' (modified leaves or 'bracts') will fully open to reveal the flower parts deep inside.

This plant grows in the central and South American rainforests of Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Costa Rica and is under threat from uncontrolled forest clearance operations.

www.amusingplanet.com



< Pucker Plant

This alluring tree can be found in the tropical rainforests of central and South America



Shifty Fades of Grey >

Rose specialists in Iran claim to have developed the darkest coloured Rose to date

...and the Black

I wasn't aware of a black rose until I came across an article in a Turkish online newspaper last year. If rose breeders in Turkey have managed to breed a black rose, it hasn't yet been released onto the gardening marketplace, as far as I know.

Currently, the nearest roses to the colour black would be *Black Jade* and *Black Bacarra* but they are really just very dark reds that lighten as the bloom ages. There's some confusion over the symbolism of the black rose in the Language of Flowers, possibly linking it to rebirth. Curiously, Ireland has also been described as the Black Rose, *Roisin Dubh*, in an old Irish song.

www.wisegeek.com/is-it-possible-to-grow-a-black-rose.htm

Round Up Downed

Readers of *The Mulch* will have been made aware of the dangers of Glyphosate-based weedkillers (including Round Up) for several years now but the outright banning of this particularly dangerous chemical has now moved a step closer following a decision recently made by a well-respected global health agency.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer, a part of the World Health Organisation (WHO) has reclassified the herbicide Glyphosate as "probably carcinogenic to humans" following convincing evidence the chemical produces cancer in laboratory animals. There are also more limited findings that it causes non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma in humans. The ruling was made in March 2015 and will have huge implications for industrial scale agriculture and GM science.

www.iarc.fr (search monographs volume 112)

Cuttings...

Yes We Have No Bananas

Panama disease or Fusarium Wilt (caused by soil-borne bacteria) is threatening crops of the Cavendish banana grown for consumption by consumers in Europe. While the bacteria is currently found in Australia, Asia and parts of Africa, efforts are being made to halt its progress in Africa and to prevent it from arriving in South America.

www.telegraph.co.uk (Article taken from 23.01.15)

Boxing Clever

Scientists believe they have found a second set of pathogens behind the Box Blight disease that has affected Box hedging in the UK (and 21 other countries) since the 1990s. This new development brings hope that the disease may be controllable.

www.hortweek.com (Article from 15.05.15)

More Research on Bee Colony Decline

A recent Swedish study has reignited the debate on the role of neonicotinoid chemicals on bee health and behaviour. Elado has been associated with reduced wild bee density and solitary bee nesting. The Crop Protection Association has called the research "questionable" but *Buglife*, the nature conservation charity has called on agri-chemical companies not to hide behind the absence of robust field studies. Worryingly, a separate study carried out by Newcastle University and published in *Nature* suggests that bees can become addicted to the neonicotinoid chemicals, Imidacloprid and Thiamethoxan.

www.hortweek.com (Article from 27.04.15)

It's Show Time!

Word got round last year that I had been judging national awards (with my colleague Debbie as part of our dementia design work) and I was approached by one of the local Flower Shows to help with the judging. This was a fascinating experience and I got to practise a little more Welsh. I shall be back at this Show again this September. Before then, I will be judging at another Gardening Show in Snowdonia in August, including looking at the best kept gardens across the village.

Another great show has been provided by a clump of Pinks, *Dianthus* 'Alan Titchmarsh', in the back garden. It's flowered reliably all through winter and I've been able to cut flowers for holiday cottage guests to enjoy on most weeks of the year. It has a delicate fragrance and is a long-lasting cut flower. In this photograph, taken at the end of November, the Pinks are joined by *Senecio monroi*, *Penstemon* 'Just Jane', *Lavender* and *Hesperantha*.



You can see more pictures and find out more about the holiday cottage on facebook (search Garreg Gron Cottages)

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