

THE GREEN CONNECTION

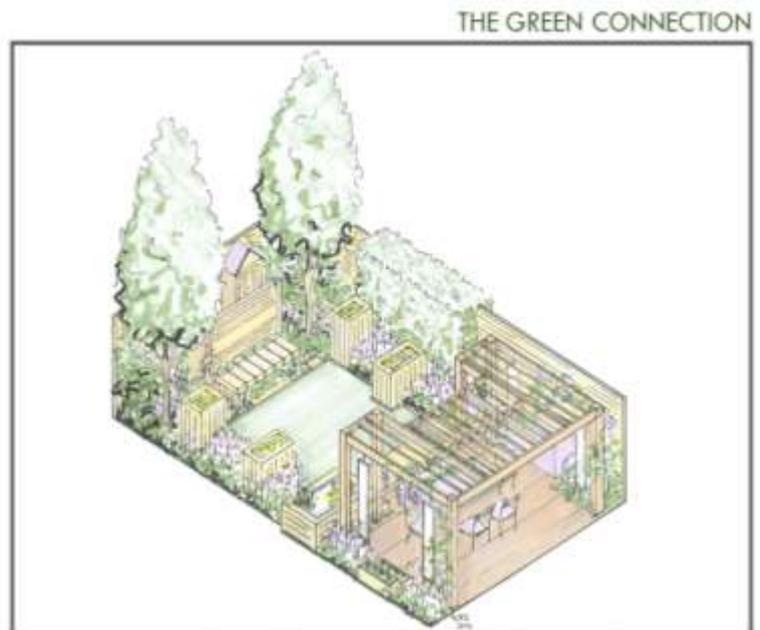
Making the connection between homes for nature and families alike

Genesis Landscapes and Wardrop & Stevenson's *The Green Connection*
An APL show garden for BBC Gardeners World Live 2016

The Green Connection is about reconnecting people to their gardens for their health and wellbeing by creating functional and attractive outdoor spaces. We want to encourage people into the open air and away from technology by creating space for families to enjoy.

It is also about connecting gardens to each other to become part of a large nature reserve and offset the increasing urbanisation of our country. Our small mammals, insects and birds need us to help them survive. This is a principle that people can adopt in their gardens, whether established or on a new build housing estate.

This is the future of garden design and the way forward for urban planning.



We can add huge value to our outdoor spaces and make our gardens more than just an outdoor room, providing a haven for our families and a 'home for nature'.

DESIGN BRIEF

The brief was provided by the Association of Professional Landscapers (APL) and called for a budget garden, with a build cost of £25,000 for a 'real' project. The design should be one that people could envisage in their own garden.

Brief for a back garden:

- Show how you can gain privacy between your garden and the adjoining neighbour's garden. The garden should facilitate access to the back door of the property. The existing garden has a slight slope.
- Planting to offer ideas for creating privacy from neighbours and include seasonal interest.
- To incorporate at least two of the following: pond or water feature, dining area and/or lounging area, garden seat, small children's play area, bird feeder and/or insect hotel.

Our brief:

The client - A young family in a new build house in Birmingham. The owners would like flexibility within the garden to be able to use the space in different ways; to be enjoyed by the children as they grow but not dominated by children's play equipment.

Style - They would like a contemporary style but also want to attract wildlife and to be beneficial to nature. (cont'd)

Dimensions - rear garden measuring 49.5 m². (width 5.5m x length 9m). There is a level change equal to one step.

Include - a dining area and sitting area and also incorporate space for play.

Planting and construction - to provide habitat and food sources for birds, insects, hedgehogs and frogs.

The house - a 3 bed semi detached house with rear access out of garden.

DESIGN CONCEPT

Symmetry - We wanted to create a contemporary yet wildlife friendly space. Symmetry is little seen in recent years in garden design and in show gardens. The human brain, however, responds to symmetrical design, which imposes order on the external environment and increases our sense of safety. The Green Connection is a symmetrical design.

Pergola - This is attached to the house. The pergola defines the patio area, extending the indoor space into the garden and creating privacy from neighbours. It is an opportunity to grow climbing plants which provide nectar sources and also shelter for birds. On the terrace is a table with a difference - the *Cable Table*, our own design. The table can be winched up to the pergola allowing the terrace to be a multifunctional space: down for dining, or provide a frame for a playhouse, or up for other recreational activities e.g. party zone. Bee friendly planting flank the terrace. In addition on one side there is a fold away wall mounted BBQ and the other we have a mini 4 bed rotational allotment for children to encourage their interest in gardening. This space could be for a raised garden bed for herbs and a few veggies.

Ponds - The rectangular raised ponds are the first of three pairs of bold stone 'pillars' bringing structure to the garden. The design of the ponds, with access for frogs via steps, incorporate marginal shelves and demonstrate that nature does not mind geometry. Even small water bodies are highly valued in the garden by insects and birds.

Pillars - The pillars, which increase in height beyond the ponds, also have stone running vertically. The tops of the pillars are alpines beds. The internal faces of the pillars have wider joints, filled with lime mortar, which is soft enough for masonry and solitary bees to bury into to make their homes. Some holes are already in place. The pillars are an architectural statement, inspired by Yew buttresses at Packwood House, Solihull (National Trust).

Timber - Beyond the lawn is a panel that acts as a false back and screens the view of the garden gate and storage area. In front of the screen is an architectural timber bench, providing a bold statement and focal point. It also forms a raised planting area and its strong lines visually link with the ground

Planting - we have a woodland area at the end of the garden which includes the English Oak, one of the UK's best species for insects. The fastigate form, with upward rising branches growing in a columnar shape and is a viable option for smaller garden offering longevity, and height whilst having minimal spread. Such trees can be allowed to grow to maturity and 'break' the roofline in urban areas. Our woodland area has perennials and shrubs selected for shade and partial shade. They are also chosen to provide shelter and food sources for our birds, mammals,

amphibians and insects. Climbers and shrubs that can be grown against a fence are key. Vertical planting brings many opportunities to increase vegetation in our gardens. *Pyracantha* is an excellent example flowering in mid-summer, followed by berries for birds. It's tough branches and defensive spines make it a choice nesting site in gardens.

Borders - flowers either side of the lawn and terrace are a combination of mauves, purples and yellows, colours that are particularly attractive to bees and insect. They are able to collect pollen from single-petalled flowers including tubular flowers such as *Campanula* 'Elizabeth' and flowers with clusters such as *Alliums* and 'the plant' of The Green Connection show garden – a giant clover *Trifolium ochroleucron*.

Boundaries - we have chosen fences which are more permeable than most and also allow sunlight to filter through. At their base we have hedgehog friendly gravel boards, which have small holes to allow hedgehogs, amphibians and slow worms to migrate between gardens. To really connect gardens and provide shelter we have planted a hedge. The perfect boundary solution - a permeable shelter-belt and home for birds and an architectural statement in this formal design.

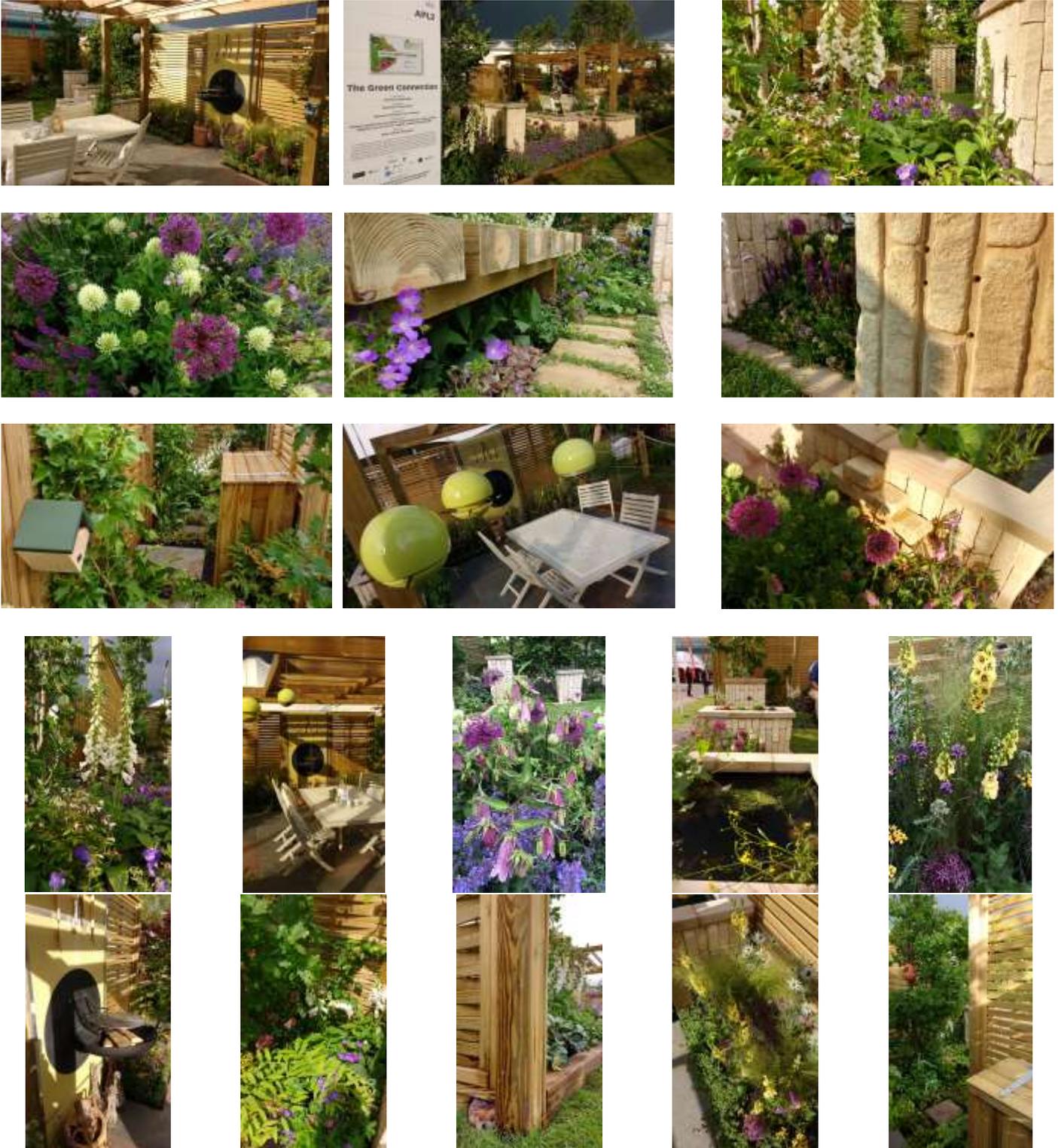
Wildlife features – we have some lovely contemporary wildlife homes and feeding stations together with some discreet ones hidden amongst the flowers and in nooks and crannies. These include bird feeders, birdhouses, insect hotels, frog pots and steps and a log pile.

Relocation – we are delighted that our contemporary Green Connection Garden for a small space, combining the needs of a family and that of nature will be given a new home with the charity CHESS.

Wardrop & Stevenson

June 2016

IMAGES



Wardrop & Stevenson
June 2016