



RHS

Reducing
environmental
impact of gardens

RHS Flower
Shows



The following points should be considered when designing your garden at an RHS Show.

Waste

- Design out waste from the outset, rather than dealing with it as an after-thought
- Incorporate composting facilities – if suitable
- Reduce the amount of soil removed from site by using cut and fill techniques. [Click here for further information](#)
- Remember that changes in land use can either increase or reduce carbon emissions. [Click here for further information](#)
- Reduce the amount of soil and other growing media that are brought to site
- Have a clear end-of-show plan for the garden, both immediately after the show and when it is rehomed in full or broken up into separate elements.

Carbon

- Electric tools on site that are powered by electricity generated from renewables
- Travelling to and from site in electric vehicles that are powered by electricity generated from renewables
- Suppliers who deliver goods in sustainably powered vehicles and who are based in the UK rather than internationally
- Porcelain and other paving, steel, concrete and cement, and stone have some of the highest embodied carbon of all hard landscaping materials.

Biodiversity

- Avoid loss of wildlife habitat, minimise any impacts on biodiversity and compensate for any losses, and even demonstrate a Net Gain in biodiversity, for example through creation of larger areas of new wildlife habitats
- A baseline ecology / biodiversity survey could be carried out on the garden.
- UK-native tree species

- Food webs - creating habitats to support broad groups of species, with plant diversity forming the foundation
- A mix of terrestrial, aquatic, and arboreal habitats enhances biodiversity. Opportunities for aerial species.
- Connections to off-site habitats, where relevant
- Shelter for small mammals, birds, amphibians, and reptiles
- Habitat creation using recycled materials e.g. deadwood and rubble
- Vehicle and tool-related materials, fluids, and liquids should be used with spills mats.

Water, irrigation and drainage

- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) according to Defra standards and recommendations from the Environment Agency. [Click here for further information](#)
- Ways to control the quantity of water runoff to support the management of flood risk and maintain and protect the natural water cycle, and managing the quality of runoff to prevent pollution
- Watering the garden – mains or rain?
- Permeable surface material.

Site and materials

- Climate resilient tree species. [Click here for further information](#)
- Wide range of tree, shrub and plant species
- Sourcing plants from Plant Healthy certified and peat-free nurseries
- Percentage of materials sourced from the UK
- FSC or GiB certified timber
- Reduce single-use plastic and minimise the use of recycled plastics
- Wildlife friendly lighting – warm LED is best
- Edible plant species
- Percentage of materials from recycled sources
- Sustainable materials such as:
 - Screw piles instead of concrete foundations
 - Jute instead of plastic membrane to protect the site where necessary

- Recycled glass rather than sharp sand
- Reclaimed materials such as timber and aggregate
- Reusable metal to line ponds (depending on the shape)
- Cement alternatives such as those based on lime, hemp and mycelium
- Rammed earth.

Do not settle for the normal way of doing things, research or seek advice from your contractor to see if there is a better way and share this with us so we can spread the word.

Top wins from previous shows

- Changing block-walling to a rented, reusable concrete structure
- Using low-carbon cement to replace standard cement
- Changing planter material from steel to timber
- Using fallen timber instead of felled
- Remove steel throughout garden

