



EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
with Tim Goom

Subdivisions: Refreshing an aging garden

The last decade has seen the rise of the subdivision in Christchurch, particularly in the post-quake environment which necessitated significant property development. Many of these subdivisions are approaching their 5-10 year anniversary, making it timely to assess whether a revival is needed.

- Plants:** Evaluate your existing plants; what grows well, what struggles, and what needs replacing? Some plants may require much more maintenance than you were prepared for and it may be time to get ruthless about removal. With the exception of trees, many plants do not have the extended shelf life some may assume. Numerous plant species will look their best for only a few years before becoming sparse and woody. Lavender is a prime example of a plant which can quickly go from looking attractive to an eyesore, especially when not well pruned and maintained. Examine whether existing plants are healthy and uncrowded. Plants could suffer due to compacted soils or poor air circulation. The thrips bug thrives where air circulation is poor. Moving any susceptible plants away from walls and fences will help, as will planting certain flowers which attract natural predators of thrips. The fool proof solution is to replace thrips prone plants with a thrips resistant variety, this will stop this pest in its tracks! Evaluate whether tree branches are dying, rubbing against your house or blocking access. If so, rejuvenation pruning will really help. A garden can be transformed by lifting the canopy of a tree to allow more light underneath. This is best done in winter or early spring before bud break.
- Design:** It usually takes a few years to assess the functionality of a new home and garden. As your garden matures you may notice that some plants have outgrown their garden bed, are shading parts of your home and stealing valuable sun. Other plants may have grown to the extent they are too close to your home. You now know how you like to live in your outdoor spaces, where the best sun lies and where the worst wind comes from - factor this knowledge into your redesign.



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Unfortunately, much subdivision landscaping was simply an afterthought to secure consent sign off from the council. Patios too tight for outdoor furniture, decks positioned which are hammered by the easterly or that hamper flow from indoors are commonplace. Don't let poorly designed hardscaping limit the enjoyment of your outdoor space. The sooner changes are made, the more time you will have relishing your perfect outdoor space.

- Soil:** Soil quality in many subdivisions may be inadequate to nurture plants long term, and therefore gardens may struggle. Subdivision sites are built on compacted shingle, meaning garden depths are normally lacking, and drainage can be an issue. Shallow garden beds won't have the space to provide healthy roots systems for plantings, which will then easily fall victim to pests and disease. Taking the time to deepen garden beds during a redesign project will help maintain lush healthy plants.
- Irrigation:** Consider how frequently you are watering your garden. Adding an irrigation system will save time and reduce maintenance. Including a greywater or rainwater collection system to supply your garden during droughts is a more sustainable irrigation option.

A garden revival should begin by removing the detractors before progressing to adding landscape elements that bring enjoyment and value to your home. A revamp could be a complete redesign or improving just one aspect of your garden. Goom landscapes specialises in big and small projects, and can assist you with choosing suitable plants for a single garden bed or redesigning your entire outdoor living space.

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