



PATCH OF PARADISE

How your garden can help you practise mindfulness

Words: Steve Warner

It has long been said that gardens can heal the soul and replenish depleted spirits. And for years, we have been coming together in one form or another to cultivate soil, produce food and experience a social connection. The term “therapeutic landscapes” is a great descriptive umbrella for this sense of community that can come from striking the right balance.

Most of us would agree that our life journey would benefit from the physical and mental wellbeing that a considered landscape can provide, but the design inclusions must be deliberate — this is where the research into wellbeing and the benefit of mindfulness is so compelling.

A place of escape

The thread that unifies every unique space is the inclusion of individual personality and goals; elements that create a home rather than a house or an experience rather than a place of routine. These are spaces that transcend the everyday, creating an escape or an outlet for a passion.

You don’t need a quarter-acre block or the rambling grounds of an historical garden, you simply need a space that will connect to you personally. A space

that you will feel safe in, also warm and relaxed. Let’s take a moment and consider elements that you could connect with; ones that create a mindful approach to the here and now. This could simply be the inclusion of some well-considered items, the introduction of natural materials and the sensitive selection of plants.

Being fully present

In your own outdoor space, you can strive to achieve mindfulness in a number of ways:

- Rest yourself upon a cushioned timber seat. Feel the sunshine on your face, the tactile timber under your fingers and the enduring nature of that support.
- Experience seasonal change under a deciduous tree. Watch as the autumn leaves become radiant in the sunlight and slowly float to the ground; listen as they rustle in the wind or are crunched under foot.
- Focus your gaze on the falling water that slowly trickles down the side of a water feature or listen as it cascades from one bowl to the next.
- Feel the calm movement of the breeze on your skin. Watch as it interacts in a tactile way with flowers or smell the scent of the blooms it carries.

All of this can be found in your own small patch of paradise and a skilled landscape designer can deliver these in a purposeful yet not scripted manner. Let’s face it, the world we live in sets high expectations, creating pressure and anxiety. We can’t always change that, but we can invest in a new space that helps regenerate the soul.

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