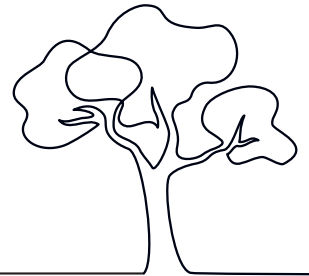
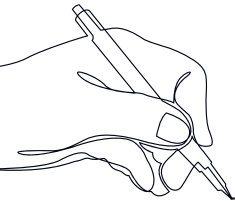


# QUESTIONING QUALIFICATIONS

SHOULD YOU NEED A QUALIFICATION TO CALL YOURSELF A 'GARDEN DESIGNER'?



**W**hat's the difference between a garden designer and a landscape architect? No, that's not the start of a bad joke; it's a common question. After all, a garden designer and a landscape architect can both design domestic and commercial outdoor spaces.

It's qualifications which separate the two – you need to undertake a course in order to call yourself a 'landscape architect'. Garden designers, on the other hand, need no formal qualifications to label themselves as such. But should this change? If so, what should this qualification include? And should top-up credits, such as CPD for landscape architects, be mandatory?

**“THERE ARE MANY GREAT DESIGNERS WHO ARE NOT NECESSARILY QUALIFIED IN GARDEN DESIGN BUT HAVE BUILT ON VARIOUS EXPERIENCE IN GARDEN RELATED AND OTHER SECTORS”**

**HOLLY YOUDE,  
URBAN LANDSCAPE DESIGN**

“Garden design has become extremely complex and having some form of professional qualification is really important to the novice designer,” says Holly Youde of design and build company Urban Landscape Design. “However, there are many great designers who are not necessarily qualified in garden design but have built on various experience in garden related and other sectors.”

The industry could end up losing these great designers if qualifications become compulsory,

says John Brooks of SketchUp for Garden Design, which offers training for design software SketchUp. “Garden designers should of course be encouraged to continually look to educate themselves, particularly on important subjects such as CDM, but we should look to judge designers' work on its merit not necessarily on the letters after their name.”

Being a member of an association, though, is crucial, says James Scott of The Garden Company. “What matters is that anyone calling themselves a garden designer is accredited or actively working towards accreditation. Accreditation with a nationally recognised institution – such as the SGD, the LI or BALI – demonstrates that an individual meets a particular professional standard.

“These standards will include quality working practices and proven skills which members of that professional community have committed to and can demonstrate. Designing a garden is complex, and it requires in-depth knowledge, skills and experience. For me, accreditation is the best way to ensure this.”

The Society of Garden Designers' (SGD) “professional route to becoming an established and recognised designer requires a qualification”, says garden designer Darryl Moore, who reports to the SGD council on education. “A qualification is important as it ensures that the designer has learnt about the many areas of practice that garden design entails, including spatial design and planting, construction, specification, tendering and project management.

“A qualification gives a client assurance that

a designer has learnt the necessary skills for the job, while full SGD membership is a mark that the designer works to the highest industry standards.

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**JAMES SCOTT,  
THE GARDEN COMPANY**

“Students can join the SGD as student members then, when qualified, transfer to pre-registered membership. During this period, they submit three real-life completed projects for adjudication, to ensure that they are fully competent and meeting professional standards. Adjudication clinics provide support and advice during this process, looking at client briefs, contract documentation, site analysis and surveys, plans, schedules, construction details, specifications and project management.”

Construction is not always covered in

