

Palmstead Nurseries Soft Landscape Workshop – Strictly Sustainable
Wednesday 16th September 2015 - Ashford International Hotel
Delegate registration via www.palmstead.co.uk click on events

Strictly Sustainable: The Ecologists Perspective



A stellar line-up of speakers have been booked to debate the topic of ‘sustainability’ at this year’s Palmstead Soft Landscape Workshop.

In this newsletter we feature an interview with Dusty Gedge the well-known biodiversity and green roof guru. Dusty will be speaking at Palmstead Nurseries Soft Landscape Workshop on Wednesday 16th September. As a former stage entertainer Dusty is very entertaining and engaging. As President of the European Federation of the Green Roof Associations, Dusty regularly speaks on the subject across Europe and features in the media and on social media. Dusty grew up in East Kent and now runs his successful practice from south London.



Palmstead Nurseries are focusing on sustainability at this year’s soft landscape workshop, what is the main issue for you?

Sustainability in landscape needs to be taken seriously by developers. The trouble has been a fixation with carbon but climate change will mean we will need to face issues of excessive heat and flash floods. Both of these issues are best dealt with through the design and use of good landscapes - plants and soils are our way to adapt to climate change.

How do we create successful, beautiful sustainable spaces more effectively?

The green infrastructure needs to be led by the landscaping and ecological world and then qualified by the traditional built environment professions. The really successful cities in North America are allowing **landscape and ecology** to lead the process.

What are the big barriers to sustainable design?

If we are to achieve proper sustainable design then a subtle change is needed to enable landscape architects to lead with urban drainage. At the moment, most of sustainable urban drainage is ruled by engineers, not landscapers. However, if you go to the US, somewhere like Portland Oregon, then you can see how successful they have been sustainably by allowing landscape architects and contractors to have more control over drainage. It makes sense.

Developers in Oregon are listening to the ecologists first unlike in the UK where engineers lead so water run-off and carbon are being reduced but vegetation and soil is left to the end of the conversation. It's not the developers fault that vegetation and soil is an after-thought, it's the way it is. In Oregon the landscape department took charge of storm water and then the engineers qualified the landscape architects work. Prior to this engineers were in charge and landscapers merely 'dressed' the space.

It's not going to work if the main issue of plants, soil and vegetation is begin dealt with by engineers, we really do need to argue for this subtle change in leadership so that engineers and landscape architects can work from the same page and achieve better sustainability in terms of vegetation and soil.

Why are green roofs so misunderstood?

At the moment, if you wanted to put up a good green roof, the green roof is going to be decided by a engineers; structural engineers and water engineers and then the landscape architect and or ecologist comes in at the end/structural/water engineer and does what he/she does, but essentially the project is being run by the building and construction profession.

If you are a landscape architect or contractor and you have to put a green roof around some solar panels, that solar roof has been sold as a solar engineered practise, so the landscaper has to come in and make good when really it should be a landscape run project and then subcontracted to solar. Please see <http://biosolarroof.com/>

9/10 green roofs with solar are not working well for vegetation or energy because they are led by a solar contracting firm who don't know about soil and vegetation - it's much easier for a green and solar roof to be run by a landscape contractor working with a solar contractor.

How can we improve our approach to designing green roofs?

We have produced a small scale green roof guide for landscape contractors and garden designers on how to do it at greenroofstraining.com where you can find out everything you need to know.