



GREEN GARDENING

CATEGORY: LANDSCAPE CASE STUDY YEAR: 2007

Business Details:

**Birkheads Secret Garden
Near Sunnyside
Gateshead**



<http://www.birkheadsnursery.co.uk>

Description:

Birkheads is a garden and nursery set in the countryside south of Newcastle; it was a brownfield site, which the owners have vastly improved. The attraction currently holds a SILVER award after adopting measures recommended after their first site visit. The owner is a qualified garden designer and many different techniques have been employed in the garden to minimise the impact the operations are having on the environment. Companion planting is used, encouraging predatory insects into the garden. Wildlife areas have also been created, including an unusual garden for spiders. The hedges around the site consist of native tree and shrub species and there are 2 large ponds and 2 smaller water features. Mulching is used to keep the flowerbeds moist and the plants have all been chosen because they can tolerate the conditions at the site, which is 650ft above sea level. Many of the features in the garden are created from waste materials, which the owners have reused.



Economic

The sympathetic gardening techniques employed at Birkheads are saving the owner significant amounts of money. The balance of plants, birds & wildlife is now perfect with no pesticides being used to control harmful plant pests. A great many of the materials used in the garden have been reclaimed and reused. Water use is minimised as far as possible and rainwater is harvested for garden use. Plant losses have been minimised through the selection of plants, which can tolerate the conditions on the site. Regular customers are encouraged to return the pots their plants came in, further reducing waste.



Environmental

The garden has been designed to be managed as sensitively as possible and the measures ensure impact is minimised. The benefits of not using pesticides are well known; they are polluting and persistent in the environment. Water minimisation is to be encouraged and due to the steps taken at the garden it has not been watered for ten years. Obviously the ponds are a magnet for wildlife and there are toads, newts and dragonflies living in the garden. Butterflies and moths are attracted to the garden and including plants which flower at night brings in more insects which the bats roosting in the property feed on. As well as minimising the environmental impact the business has they are also enhancing the environment.



Social

Birkheads take volunteers on, giving them valuable work experience. The gardens are wheelchair accessible with widened footpaths and ramps where there used to be steps. The business raises money for the British Red Cross by donating daily takings from two days a year. There is also a Macmillan coffee morning once a year.

WEB

Down Garden Services: <http://www.dgsgardening.btinternet.co.uk>
Garden Organic: <http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk>
Permaculture: <http://www.permaculture.org.uk>
Wild about garden: <http://www.wildaboutgardens.org>