

## Mind & Body

# WHY I BECAME A GARDEN DESIGNER

Robert Frier, 58, studied garden design in his 20s and now runs the award-winning Charlesworth Design in Sale, Cheshire – yet it all began at catering college...

### Did you start from a young age?

Dad was a keen gardener and he gave me my own patch quite early on. I used to collect rocks from a derelict site before school and use them to landscape it; once it was a racetrack, then a pool with a bridge over it, then an outdoor dining area. For a lad in my teens, the magazines under my bed were a bit unusual – brochures about patios, paths and bridges, and the Readers Digest guide to plants!

### So a career in gardening was an obvious choice then?

I wasn't academic – in my geography report, my teacher once wrote 'the boy does well to find his way home'! For some reason I ended up going to catering college, then worked in hotels as a catering manager and later, started my own catering business, but it was never where my heart was and I didn't like the unsociable hours. In my late 20s, I sold the business and went back to college to study garden design, sitting amongst 17-year-olds who were about as interested in garden design as I had been in catering. It was pre-Ground Force days and gardening wasn't seen as a very sexy thing to do...

### So it all came up roses after that?

I was so lucky. There was a new ITV series, the forerunner to Ground Force, called Surprise Gardeners, and they approached the college to ask for volunteers for the task force. After it aired, the college would get calls asking if it could supply people for private jobs and they usually sent me as I was the most enthusiastic! That helped me build a portfolio and it just grew from there.

### Are you up to your elbows in dahlias every day then?

There's very little hands-on planting. I survey the client's land and soil, look at neighbouring gardens to see what's doing well and what's not, discuss the client's wish list, budget and priorities. I'll then summarise what we've discussed and the next step is to provide pencil sketches of concepts – often nothing like the client's first idea! Once we've agreed on the final idea I do a to-scale pen-and-ink drawing which goes to a landscape contractor to quote. I stay on throughout the whole process and visit the site regularly – and follow up once gardens start to mature to see how they're developing. Skills like surveying,



**ACE OF SPADES** Robert Frier has designed projects of all sizes from small plots to large watercourses

## Wellbeing Coping with teens in a digital world

*Is social media the enemy many parents think it is or do parents need to keep up with the rapidly changing times? Mum of three Danielle Simpson investigates*

If recent headlines are anything to go by – 'Selfies Damage Mental Health', 'Smartphones Are Strongly Addictive', we should be worried. Our teens are spending more time on social media and screens are central to everything they do.

So it comes as a surprise that while a recent study in *Psychiatry Quarterly* revealed that 12 to 18-year-olds spend six to eight hours a day on TV, computer and smartphone screens, the study claimed that this has little impact on their wellbeing.

Mother of three Claire admits she has no idea how much time her two teens, aged 15 and 17, spend in

front of their screens. 'Their phones are generally always with them, so when they're not otherwise engaged they use them intermittently.'

'Other than a no-phones policy at dinner or when we have guests, we allow them to self-monitor.' Claire's children are conscientious about schoolwork and have a lot of extracurricular interests. She is confident that this helps balance their screen time.

And Simon Noakes, CEO and founder of Interactive Schools, sees social media as a beneficial medium.

'It's educational, social and collaborative. This generation can make friends, deal with issues, and learn instantly



Photography: Matt Stansfield

Supporting your digitally savvy teen

**Build trust** – encourage openness with them.

**Impose device-usage boundaries** – ensure they switch off at night.

**Discuss stranger danger**, over sharing, cyber bullying, hidden information in photos, the staying power of everything you post.



understanding drainage, planning applications and dealing with contractors are as vital as the planting scheme. That's why you can't just turn up with a wheelbarrow and fork after watching *Gardeners' World* and do this job properly.

### Still, it's a lovely stress-free job, pottering in the borders...

It can be, when people invite me to a garden party in one I've created, or I walk a client around their new garden. But I tackle some big projects which can be challenging – I designed a 120m-long watercourse in Yorkshire and in the process we lost an entire digger in the wet, blue clay, though we eventually retrieved it. I don't think the client really believed it could be done, but we did it, and it's stunning. No job is too big or small – I've designed everything from a 4x2m plot to projects with budgets in the £100,000s.

### Has your career blossomed in other ways?

I ended up teaching garden design at a Further Education college after the lecturer didn't turn up, and that led to an invite to teach young offenders. I got their attention by teaching them the Latin names of plants of the, er, 'herbal type' that some of them seemed familiar with, and ended up with an Ofsted A! I also received the Queen's Award For Voluntary Service as part of a group restoring Walkden Gardens in Sale.

### What's hot in garden design?

Modern, minimalistic, clean lines. I'm rarely asked for a formal garden now. Ceramic cladding and paving is very in and very forgiving if you spill your red wine on it! I like grasses, and my current favourite plant is an evergreen wallflower called *Erysimum* 'Bowles Mauve' – flowers forever and is frost hardy.

[charlesworthdesign.com](http://charlesworthdesign.com)



## Eat better to save the planet

*Be mindful of what you put on your plate says Patsy Westcott*

Healthy eating isn't just good for the body it's good for the environment too. So says a new report from the World Wildlife Fund UK published last week. The charity's Livewell campaign has published an updated version of their Livewell Plate, which outlines how we can tweak our eating habits to help keep a lid on global warming. Pictures of plates for teenagers, the elderly and vegans as well as adults aged 18-64, showcase the types and portions of foods each age group should aim for to benefit their health and the planet.

'Eating more veg and whole grains while moderating meat consumption will make a major contribution to improving our environment. This is something we all need to consider when loading up our supermarket trolley,' says Natalie Smith, head of corporate stewardship – Food & Freshwater, at WWF UK.

### Five ways to eat better

- Eat more plants eg veg and whole grains. Try **Waitrose Wheatberries Lentils & Green Vegetables**.
- Eat a variety of different coloured foods. Try **Waitrose Rainbow Salad**.
- Waste less – one-third of food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted. See our guide to portion size at [waitrose.com/inspiration](http://waitrose.com/inspiration).
- Eat less meat – and more peas, beans and nuts. Try **Waitrose Edamame Bean Salad**.
- Choose foods that meet certified standards. Waitrose has a wide range of MSC-certified fish as well as free range and Fairtrade options.



*Eating for 2 degrees - Livewell Plates illustrate the dietary changes the UK needs to make by two key milestones, 2020 and 2030, to keep the average global temperature rise below 2°C.*

# 24 HOURS ON MY PLATE



## Howard Jones

The singer, musician and songwriter owns up to the occasional slip-up in healthy eating

'I woke up at home in Somerset and did my Buddhist chanting before going on a bike ride. I then had breakfast with my wife, Jan, and daughter, Mica: a bowl of nuts, seeds and oats topped with fresh fruit and almond milk. I also had two coffees. I then tidied up the studio, stopping mid-morning for a strong tea with milk and one sugar. Lunch was quinoa salad with Quorn and leafy greens. I've been vegetarian for 40 years and find it exciting to cook and eat.

'I spent the afternoon sorting out my new best-of album. It was hot so I made an elderflower cordial to help cool myself down. We had supper at the Rising Sun in West Bagborough. I had a feta salad with halloumi and spiced butternut squash and a pint of Cornish Pale Ale. Back home I ate a slice of apple pie and yogurt before turning in at 11.30pm.

'I'm into the idea of food doing the least damage to our planet and not exploiting the people that produce it. I am not good all the time, though. I have been known to devour the occasional doughnut and eat a packet of chocolate biscuits in one go!

*Howard Jones is playing at The Walled Garden Music Festival, 14-16 July, [walledgardenmusicfest.co.uk](http://walledgardenmusicfest.co.uk). For more details about Howard's work visit [howardjones.com](http://howardjones.com)*

## The verdict

**Emma Williams, Waitrose nutritionist, says**

'Nuts and seeds are real nutritional powerhouses – providing micronutrients, particularly iron which is key to veggie diets. Oats contain beta-glucan for cholesterol lowering and almond milk provides a source of vitamin B12, important for red blood cell formation and reducing tiredness and fatigue. Up your 5 a day and add more fibre – adding beans and pulses will do both.'



**3.5/5**

what is going on in the world.' Nevertheless, anxiety and depression have increased in teens, especially girls. So what is the cause?

'Achieving likes and shares amongst peers is a part of daily life for many young people,' says Dr Richard Graham, consultant in adolescent psychiatry at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust. 'It can feel as if the world measures your value in how good you look.'

Sophia has teens aged 16 and 19 who spend three to four hours a day on social media. Her daughter became involved in a bullying issue because she 'liked' a name-calling post. 'She denied any wrongdoing as it was just a

"like",' Sophia says. 'I had to explain to her that by joining in she was reinforcing a form of bullying.'

Teenagers have always been social, but now they communicate through a different medium. And with the rapid development of technology, the knowledge gap between the generations has widened. Our children now know more than we do.

Social media is here to stay, so we need to focus on educating ourselves, leading by example and, if nothing else, building our teens' self-esteem in the offline world.

*For information and advice, visit [bbc.co.uk/guides/zs83tyc](http://bbc.co.uk/guides/zs83tyc)*