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The SGD Awards

Feedback from the judges

As we catch our breath after the 2013 SGD Awards ceremony, thoughts are already turning towards the 2014 Awards. Judge Richard Sneesby takes a look back at last year's entries and shares some pointers

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Richard Sneesby is an SGD Awards judge, landscape architect, garden designer and former course leader in garden design at University College Falmouth

THERE ARE 14 CATEGORIES

for the SGD Awards, plus a student award and the John Brookes Lifetime Achievement Award. Most of last year's entries were for residential gardens divided by size: Large, Medium and Small, with most submissions falling into the medium size category.

Most of the entries into Public or Commercial Outdoor Space were produced by designers working in landscape architecture. It would be good to see more entries from SGD members who produce high-quality projects for public open spaces, eg small parks, schools, hospitals, etc.

A new award – Big Design Small Budget – is intended to include gardens which show a clever use of the client's budget. With many designers working with tight financial constraints, this is arguably the most relevant award. This year we are especially keen to see entries into the exciting specialist awards including Garden Lighting, Garden Restoration, International Gardens and Paper Landscapes.

The judging process is in two stages. The first is shortlisting, which is done using the paper/digital submissions. Once the shortlisted gardens have been agreed by the judging panel, the gardens are visited by one or more judges to assess the design, context and quality of detailing and construction. At the first stage, the judges are looking at plans, images and statements. It is critical

that the quality of these submissions gives you the best chance of being shortlisted and that entries avoid some common mistakes. Here are some strategies to help ensure effective communication of the project.

- **ENGAGE THE JUDGING PANEL**
Ensure images are good quality, not too small or irrelevant.
- **PLAN FOR VISUAL SCANNING**
Organise your layout so that the viewer starts at the top left.
- **MAKE A CLEAR STATEMENT**
What is the project? What was the challenge? What was your approach?
- **AVOID MULTIPLE MESSAGES**
Keep the statements brief. Do not repeat yourself.
- **EXPLAIN** the size, scale and complexity of the project. Include statements about its context.
- **THE PHOTOGRAPHS** need to show the finished garden. Shortlisted gardens will be visited in the summer, so gardens which look good at other times of the year, especially where seasonal planting is a key part of the design, will need images to communicate this. Use images to reveal important details, both hard landscaping and planting. Provide captions.
- **THE PHOTOGRAPHS** need to be good quality. They will be used for judging as well as SGD publicity and in *GDJ*. Ensure that they capture the garden at its best and

that they are high resolution.

- **IF USING BEFORE AND AFTER** images, take photos from the same viewpoint.
- **IF THE GARDEN OR PUBLIC SPACE** is designed for use by communities, use images which are populated. Permission from people in the photograph might be needed to use these images commercially.
- **INCLUDE PLANS** and, for any garden which isn't flat, at least one section.
- **SKETCHES** and computer-based visualisations are a good way of illustrating projects, but are not critical. Bird's-eye views are useful to gain an understanding of the overall layout.

Not all shortlisted gardens can be visited. Some may be remote or abroad and in some cases owners may not want visitors, so check with your client. If visits are not going to be possible, make sure that the whole garden is captured visually.

For the Awards to properly celebrate the work of the profession we need as many entries as possible and representation from the widest range of designers – full members, pre-registered, sole traders, larger practices and students. For all designers it is the best opportunity to raise their profile and gain peer recognition. Why miss the chance? We look forward to even more entries this year and good luck!

