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Garden design solutions:

GARDENING IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

by Ian McBain

We all know that our climate is changing, and that the impacts of this are becoming noticeably more rapid and dramatic. We are now all too familiar with the seemingly continual reports in the media about record-setting temperatures and rainfall here in the UK, and across the globe we are seeing climate-influenced disasters almost on a weekly basis.

It is easy to feel overwhelmed by it all, but what does it mean for our gardens and the way we choose plants?

1. Longer growing seasons for many species

As our springs and autumns become warmer we are experiencing longer growing seasons for many of our favourite plants, and a longer period of activity for pollinators and insects. We need to plan for this, and introduce a greater variety of different plant types into our gardens.

2. Localised flooding

Extreme rainfall events are increasing in occurance and intensity, and the impacts for our gardens can be profound. Relatively few plants like being waterlogged, so we need to more proactively consider the benefits of rain gardens and more varied terrains. Flooding can also wash away bare topsoil, so we need to avoid clearing away vegetation in autumn and winter.



Image credit: https://rachelbaileystudio.co.uk/projects/apl-show-garden/

3. Not enough rain

We are also becoming increasingly accustomed to periods of drought, and many of our favourite plants (particularly those with shallow root systems or larger leaves) are finding it increasingly difficult to cope. Regular watering probably isn't going to be a sustainable option in the longer term, so we are going to need to use plants that are more adapted to drier conditions.

We can make a difference with our gardens, and by taking a few (relatively small) steps we can ensure our outdoor spaces are more suited to our changing climate.

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