

# Professional Edge Country Landscapes Ltd



01204 40 22 22

18 Years of Service!

Established 1991

## Customer Newsletter Issue No.15 : Autumn 2008

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### Challenges

Award Winning Gardens

For plenty of garden ideas please call us for a free consultation or visit [country-landscapes.com](http://country-landscapes.com).

### BEAT THE CREDIT CRUNCH

Get your garden ready for you to enjoy those nice days and evenings. As holiday prices have increased up to 30% this year, many are choosing to stay at home improve their homes and gardens. Like any part of the



home, gardens will usually benefit from a revamp and with raw materials etc. expected to increase by up to 30% in the next 12 months, now is a good time to do it!



Landscaping such as hardwood patios has enabled many to increase the usability of their property - for example doing away with boggy lawns and

bankings by creating beautiful patio areas.

Above: A fully planted presentable garden is vital for selling. This property in Ramsbottom sold within 8 weeks following planting in May 2008.

Right: Blueberries great for kitchen gardens!

Good plant knowledge is required to make the most of the possibilities in the garden and our plant collections are getting better and better! If you are looking to sell your property, or would love a kitchen and fruit garden or your own vineyard call now!



**"Judge each day not by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you plant" - Robert Louis Stevenson**

### A POSITIVE OUTLOOK

We are positive about future business. We have always strived to give a reliable, great value, maintenance service and we've won a substantial amount of landscaping work to take us well into 2009. We also know that people don't want to gamble on uninsured firms

who often let people down - and it's no fun having to pay to have the same work redone twice to get it done right!

However a shake out has already started. Due to increasing costs we are seeing many business struggling to keep going. Well known local garden brand Gem ceased to trade on 8th August 2008. Founded in 1887 the company had been losing money due to oil & fertilizer price hikes of 30%.

### SMART WAYS TO SAVE £££'s!

**Keep your future maintenance costs down by acting now! With increasing costs of labour and transport many of our clients are keeping their future maintenance costs down by mulching up their gardens, installing low maintenance groundcover and replacing high maintenance features such as fast growing hedges with better low maintenance alternatives.**

**Astoundingly, many plant prices have not increased for 10 years so now is a really good time to buy plants, spend those National Garden Gift Vouchers, and fill those gaps!**

**We have a range of smart initiatives to ensure that we can continue to provide you with the services you require and save you money - also please contact Anita now on 01204 402222 to schedule your winter works - pruning, leaf clearing, jetting, tidy ups and other ad-hoc now!**

### COMPANY NEWS

As Country Landscapes comes of age, we thought it time to update our brand image with a new logo and strap line. Hope you like it!

**"It's not just a landscape...it's a Country Landscape"**

### Why Do People choose Country Landscapes?

We've asked many of our clients why they choose us.....

**We're recommended - 100%** of our clients surveyed since 2006 would recommend us and use our service again

**Quality Assured - and quality is seen long after the price is forgotten!**

### Safer Services - CHAS Approved

(Photo: how many times have you seen contractors causing preventable dust clouds which can cause dust silicosis?)

**Customer Service** - it may cost more to employ English speaking staff nowadays but good honest communication is key to customer satisfaction. Our staff are qualified and take a pride in their craftsmanship.

**A Local One Stop Shop** - we put the customer first and being a small local business we can respond quickly to your needs and act fast!



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## NEW! FINANCIAL PROTECTION INSURANCE BACKED WARRANTY

As a TrustMark Approved company we offer a 6 year Insurance Backed Guarantee which also protects deposits and any down payments for made for materials etc.



With many firms - large and small on the brink, don't let them take your money without a watertight Warranty. We've been really busy since our 2006 Customer Newsletter, so here are some more updates and things we've achieved.....

## NEW! ConstructionLine APPROVAL-Sept 2007

Constructionline offers peace of mind that an approved company has met standards designed and agreed by construction industry leaders. It's low cost and streamlines the tendering process for selection of contractors in the private, public & education sectors.



*Since gaining the accreditation we have expanded our market share and undertaken extensive work for Bury MBC, Bolton Royal Hospital and Matthew Moss High School in Rochdale.*

## NEW! TrustMark ACCREDITATION

The Trust Mark scheme is supported by the Government and consumer groups to help you find reputable firms to do repairs, maintenance and improvement work in your home or garden. *Figures from the Office of Fair Trading show that last year there were more than 111,000 complaints about poor contractors!* Therefore if you want a good job guaranteed, use a TrustMark Accredited firm ([www.trustmark.org.uk](http://www.trustmark.org.uk)).



## New Membership: Association of Professional Landscapers

The APL is the main trade organisation for firms undertaking domestic work. Now every year our work is inspected by the APL to check it conforms to high quality standards. We are also required to be committed to the high standards set out in the APL Customer Charter - visit the APL web site at [www.landscaper.org.uk](http://www.landscaper.org.uk).



## NEW! Working Well Together

It's too late when someone is injured due to work - it could be an employee or a client or child. In December 2007 we achieved the stringent health and safety requirements of the CHAS and made a commitment to the Working Well Together Safety Campaign ([www.wwt.uk.com](http://www.wwt.uk.com)).

## INVESTOR IN PEOPLE AWARD 2008

**Better trained staff provide better quality services, however qualified gardeners remain rare.** Country Landscapes is proud to have always had an Apprenticeship scheme, and our loyal clients who've been with us from 1991 know that we've provided apprenticeships for many local people in that time. This Autumn, Anita Martin and Mick Doll have enrolled on NVQ3, and Gary Hunt on NVQ2 in Horticulture. Phil Johnson will hopefully be returning and enrolling on NVQ2 in Spring 2009.

In July 08 our business was reviewed by the Investor In People.

Since achieving this quality standard in 2005, we remain in a lean and mean position to enable us to react quickly and have the experience to tackle the challenges we face.

Staff were found to be loyal and highly motivated and the business was found to support staff positively; and a range of training opportunities were in place for staff, including NVQ' and the organisation's commitment in this respect was found to be impressive.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

**As many private and public sector clients specify a fully qualified workforce this is an essential aspect for us.** With a sense of confidence in management and an understanding of future purpose & potential, staff consistently confirmed that they felt appreciated for their efforts, receiving ongoing feedback from clients and management in terms of what they were doing well, and where there was room for improvement.

The Investor in People assessor also commented that the general organisation and structure throughout the business was extremely impressive for a business of this size.

**In summary the assessor gave a very positive report, commenting that whilst we still continue to meet the standard, we have exceeded the standard in some instances, due to being extremely committed to continuous improvement.**

## CUSTOMER NOTICE: IMPORTANT FUTURE CHALLENGES

*Whilst we have mitigated and absorbed unparalleled cost increases, particularly in fuel, but also substantial increases of raw materials and machinery of up to 30%, in order for the business to remain financially viable and to continue to sustain a level of service that you expect, we will have no option but to increase contract rates. We have also lost some qualified and capable staff due to being unable to pay rates sufficient to cover the real costs of living, and with minimum wages, costs have increased over 25% in the last 3 years. If we do not retain staff we cannot provide the services you require.*



*The good news is we expect to be able to off set some increases by working smarter! We've already been working with clients to save money in the long term, by installing low maintenance plantings, and replacing features such as fast growing hedges. We are also looking at grass growth retardant on bankings and*

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large areas, so please call us now on 01204 402222 to arrange a  
free SMART REVIEW (rather  
like an energy efficiency report) for your garden.

## AWARD WINNING GARDENS

We've created some pretty impressive gardens recently which we intend to enter in the APL and the Assoc. of Professional Garden Designers Awards. As seeing is believing there is no substitute for checking our work out and you'll see why a garden created by Country Landscapes is....

*"Not just a landscape.. ..it's a Country Landscape"*



See more garden photos & our RHS Flower Show Exhibit at [www.country-landscapes.com](http://www.country-landscapes.com) or call 01204 4022 22