

12 November 2019

## Policy Statement on Sustainability and Advertising/Sponsorship with the SGD

### Introduction

Given the on-going and escalating climate crisis, the SGD must understand and guide the role our profession plays within this context and ensure it is a positive one. Whilst much of what we as designers do has a positive impact, it can also have a negative one, especially in terms of carbon footprint, with regards to our selection and use of materials.

From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020 the SGD is taking a lead on this promoting only environmentally benign practices, methods and materials for the development of a space. This means that certain products and practices which clearly have a negative environmental effect will not be allowed promotion through the various channels which the society has, namely advertising and sponsorship. Conversely, products which can demonstrate a genuine positive impact will be encouraged and promoted.

### Principles

As a society, the SGD wishes to pursue the following principles:

- To design spaces that are environmentally positive, healing and beneficial to the site owner/user, the site ecology and to the wider local and global environment. This implies that we do not use products that produce degradation at their source; which cause excessive pollution in production or carbon footprint; which have a short life span and produce environmental disposal problems.
- To not produce substantial carbon footprint in the development of a space. Carbon accounting is crude and incomplete, but the excessive use of hard landscape materials is clearly carbon intensive in comparison to soft landscape. Import of materials from across the globe also increases carbon footprint and this needs to be minimised. The balance here is different for a private garden over a public space, simply because of the amount of use and effective benefit this generates.
- To produce spaces which do not increase substantially the resource-use for maintenance over the long-term. Designing planting and lawns with built-in irrigation systems is not a sustainable solution and implies planting which has not

been designed for the location or for climate adaptation. In an age of climate stress, this implies a failure of design. Irrigation systems also add complexity and reduce resilience.

- Designing to “do less harm” is inadequate and a failure of whole systems thinking. Ultimately everything we do needs to have a positive contribution to environmental enrichment. We will have to design positive, regenerative spaces. Our selection and use of products must therefore become more considered and discerning.

## Position

Following these principles, the SGD will from the above date, no longer accept products for advertising or sponsorship which conflict with them. This applies to the products and not to the company. These include the following:

- Artificial turf, plants and walls
- Exterior electric or gas-fired patio heaters
- Use of new tropical timber
- Irrigation systems for lawns and borders

### Artificial turf, plants and walls

Artificial lawns, plants and walls have many negative impacts on the environment, in terms of material production, use and disposal. They also degrade the environment into which they are put and kill off the soil ecology that would or could exist there with a real lawn. There are psychological harms that could be caused to people and children with respect to their understanding and connection to Nature (biophilia) and this could contribute towards Biophobia – fear of Nature.

### Exterior electric or gas-fired patio heaters

Heating the outdoors with electric or gas-powered patio heaters is an obvious waste of fossil-fuel energy and needless contribution to increased carbon emissions. Log or wood-based fires are not included in this definition as the source material is potentially carbon neutral, burning either coppiced wood, which regenerates, or log pellets made from compressed wood waste.

### New tropical timber

Tropical rainforests are being denuded at an alarming rate and this is a huge contribution to carbon emissions and of environmental destruction. Although there are some tropical timbers which are plantation grown and genuinely FSC certified, there could be substantial illegal timber exported and sold in this guise. Global transportation of timber is also a substantial contributor to carbon emissions. Given that there are alternatives (recycled wood and locally produced timber), and given the uncertainties, new tropical timber products cannot be promoted.

## Irrigation systems

Some gardens have complex irrigation systems built in, with pop-up sprinklers and other features. The inclusion of these systems is a design failure in terms of inappropriate selection of plants for the environment and space. Irrigation consumes resources (plastic) and carries a carbon footprint but the main issue is water use. Whilst these can be timed and efficient, using mains water for irrigation is an undesirable use of resource.

Rainwater or greywater harvesting systems that are used for irrigation are exempt from exclusion, but the emphasis must be on the harvesting of water for sustainable use.

## Future policy development

The SGD position and policy is not just one of exclusion. It is a policy of forward-thinking and perceptive design of gardens and landscapes into beautiful spaces which help mitigate the effects of a changing climate. It is hoped that product suppliers will see a benign motivation and a positive business opportunity in aligning themselves with the policies stated here.

Future policy will tighten on the suitability of products in all areas and will increase the opportunity for the promotion of products and materials essential for the development of vibrant and planet-positive landscapes.

## References

SGD sustainable design guidance notes:

GN 001: Artificial turf, plants and walls

GN 022: Tropical timbers

GN 024: Patio heaters & fire pits

GN 025: Outdoor kitchens & BBQs

GN 027: Garden irrigation