



Seen at the Chelsea flower show, and used for the first time in Ireland, this stunning glass sphere has been used to create a magical focal point and invitation, to tempt you into this beautiful country garden in County Londonderry. The strong architectural design contrasts with the natural beauty around it. It was positioned to create the effect of floating down the cascading stream, where the homeowner could escape to and relax.

IMAGES COURTESY OF KEVIN COOPER.

When inspiration comes to life

Whether a small courtyard makeover or a rolling acre site, landscape designer, Kevin Cooper brings his clients' inspirations to life, and completes their homes with attractive and useable outdoor spaces.

'Large or small, town or country, the principle aim remains the same, to create a unique and personal environment that is a natural extension to, and integral part of the home. Creating the opportunity to have a place where the homeowner can escape to, entertain and dine in, or just simply soak up the glory that is nature is the desired end,' explains Kevin.

Aesthetics and quality of life aside, there are significant benefits to the schemes created by Kevin and others like him, in the dramatically increased desirability and value put on the overall property, which in today's turbulent market and economic climate, add much validity to their justification.

'The myriad of materials, features and plants available to us today from all over the world is quite simply mind blowing; natural stone from India, specimen plants from Italy, thatch from Turkey, and even at home in Ireland, the materials and products I get from Wilsons Conservation and Building Products in Dromore are invaluable to my garden designs. Coupled with imagination these can combine to create some quite magical places,' adds Kevin.

Kevin's projects range from large country estates to subtle, chic town houses and here we look at a few of the changes he has made to his clients' homes, and in turn, their overall use of their home.



A Gentleman's Residence, Fermanagh *(above)*

This home required a sheltered and private space to provide a natural extension to the home, with facilities to enable both private relaxation and large family entertaining. The centrepiece and striking focal point is the oak framed outdoor kitchen, with its spectacular thatched roof. Inside this thatched hut, there is a fireplace and chimney made from reclaimed Fermanagh brick, this feature doubles as a BBQ grill, which when finished is replaced with a roaring log fire and the evening can be endless.

Nestled into the surrounding planting is the dramatic boulder of Mourne granite with water gently bubbling from its core and rippling over the course textured stone, the sound of which gives the space a relaxing character.

Bold use of gorgeous and genuine reclaimed York stone paving contrasted with walling of reclaimed brick creates a timeless feel to the space. The overall effect is completed with clever use of mature planting, including the spectacular 30 year old crimson foliaged Japanese Maple.

Although not in view here, subtly built into the brick raised beds and framed with a Bangor blue tiled gazebo, is the exciting and very relaxing hot tub, providing the perfect way to unwind while waiting for the BBQ to light.

A Town House, Belfast *(right)*

This home while large and impressive, was finished with a small garden space. To marry the outdoor and indoor design the decision was made to create an elegant courtyard space, which not only completed the look of the overall home, but creates a feeling of space in this relatively small outdoor area.

Random sized reclaimed paving was used to create a timeless, lived in feel to the space. Reclaimed Belfast brick was sourced to reinforce this authentic character.

Raised beds of planting were introduced to give the space its three dimensional depth, at the same time as developing a cosy feel to the dining space.

A fallen terracotta urn gently spilling water into the stone pool creates the living heart in the space, with the hypnotic sound of the water providing a relaxed feel.

Lighting was introduced into the planting and subtle downlighters fitted into the pergola to create a quite magical atmosphere at night.



Newbuild, Drumbeg *(right)*

Part of a new development, the brief here was to create a mature garden space to surround and bring life to this new home. Subtle, yet bold planting was used to complete this new build house, seamlessly merging house and garden together with the surrounding landscape to create a lovely and welcoming home. A quaint little cobbled patio flanked with bamboo creates a peaceful retreat to escape to.

Suburban development, Dunmurray *(below right)*

A completely different approach was created for this home, with the soft tones of the red brick being contrasted with the warm, rich colours of the lovely sandstone.

A series of circular paved rooms linked with sweeping pathways have been combined with soft, but powerful planting to create the depth and mystery into this scheme.

The pathway is part of a larger design which incorporates summerhouses, pergolas and other elements that have helped the homeowners to make good use of their outdoor space, which is now the perfect place to relax and spend time with friends and family.



'It is so important to give any space some three dimensional depth and character, creating a space that you have to walk around, through and under. Ideally it should have interest and mystery to tempt you in and not let you go.'

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