

# Contemporary, Unique, Bespoke, and Eco-friendly

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**Cube 1994** has been helping to set the standard for design and build companies for the last 30 years, but now, managing director **Sean Butler** is planning for the next generation

**S**ean Butler has always had a passion for the outdoor environment. So, when he launched bespoke garden design and landscaping company Cube1994, the business grew quickly and internationally. From urban contemporary gardens to formal traditional gardens, Butler was eager to explore it all.

Over the last 30 years, Cube1994 has made a name for itself across Essex and London, working on a vast array of residential and commercial projects as well as collaborating with other designers to build award-winning gardens at the critically acclaimed RHS Chelsea Flower Show and at the RHS Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival.

Whilst Butler's day-to-day is now more office based, he still likes to "oversee any very technically demanding projects" as his background in civil engineering provides the business with an increased understanding of more difficult projects, "which most landscapers, or even a lot of builders, don't even want to go near," says Butler. Take, for instance, a garden that is sloping away from or sloping up from the house and then building a garden on that foundation. "And by that, I mean it slopes about seven to 10 metres out from the house, so it's really steep," says Butler.

His in-depth understanding of the construction of each project leads to Cube1994 being recommended by a lot of architects who know that the company is able to take on these more difficult builds.

But despite working with these challenging landscapes on a regular basis, it is the show gardens that present the most complex barriers. "We've built some really beautiful gardens over the last few years," says Butler, his favourite being

“Everybody cares within the business. They've all got each other's backs”



**Bodmin Jail: 60° East – A Garden Between Continents.** "That was particularly difficult because of the sheer number of rocks that was involved in creating that garden."

Having had to prefabricate the stonework in Russia before shipping it across to the UK in three artic lorries, Butler's knowledge was well and truly put to the test as he was tasked with positioning the top-heavy rocks in extremely specific positions as directed by designers Ekaterina Zasukhina and Carly Kershaw. Winning a Silver-Gilt medal, all efforts paid off; however, the project Butler is most proud of from his show garden career thus far is the Breakthrough Breast Cancer Research Garden as it was awarded the People's Choice Award in 2015. ▶

**1** RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2021 Rock Bank Garden '60 Degrees East' Build by Cube 1994

**2** Bespoke Black Feature Frame Fence to Hold Original Indian Carved Door, Courtyard Garden. Design and Build by Cube 1994

## BUSINESS

“That meant something to me because it was the public saying that this is the best garden in their minds,” says Butler. “Again, that particular garden was very technically challenging with all of the water features that we had to design.”

The dark blue water pools rippled every 10 minutes to represent how frequently a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer in the UK. “It meant that there was a lot of off-site testing and prefabricating to get things working properly before they were brought to Chelsea.”

Even when running multiple projects at one time, Butler is confident that the teams will be able to stand together as one. “Everybody cares within the business,” says Butler. “They’ve all got each other’s backs.”

Keen to keep the family-feel atmosphere that Butler has created; Cube offers regular team building exercises and celebrations whenever possible. “We’ve become known for being the first-choice company – not just for clients, but for employees too.”

Whilst one of the hardest challenges within the industry at the moment “continues to be the skill shortage,” Cube1994 chose to take matters into its own hands, becoming the first landscape company in the UK to create an in-house “Master Academy”, says Butler.

On joining the Cube team, candidates are automatically entered into the bespoke training programme which is individually tailored to meet the needs of all employees: apprentices, landscapers, managers, designers, and leaders.

Delivered by experts in their field, Cube trainers help to build and develop individual skills and talents whilst also ensuring that each member retains a superior level of craftsmanship in order to produce high quality gardens at the same standard every time.

“The academy has been going for more than five years now and is another thing which we are recognised for, because of the way we look after our staff,” says Butler.

Taking a very personal kind of approach, the training depends on the individual. “So, if an individual comes in with basic labouring knowledge, they might have a quicker and easier

“Cube aims to foster and encourage a culture of continual learning through practical, hands-on training and mentoring”



route through the system,” says Butler. But this isn’t to say that someone with no experience would not be accepted.

Developing and mastering soft and hard landscaping skills, use and maintenance of machinery, health and safety and raising awareness of eco-friendly practices which reduce the impact on our environment are all included within the programme. Cube aims to foster and encourage a culture of continual learning through practical, hands-on training and mentoring, as well as encouraging those who aspire to join the landscaping profession by offering apprenticeship experience through recognised awarding bodies.

Continuing their father’s aspirations, and with plans to venture further into the commercial sector, Butler’s sons Myles and Izaak have joined the business, having inherited their father’s drive for business and love for complex landscaping design.

Both sons began a career in landscaping at a young age, working alongside Butler in between their studies and working hard over the last decade to hone their skills in preparation to take over the family business. Now, Izaak and Myles provide on the job training and give support to the teams, to ensure all projects are completed to the highest specifications.

Butler has spent the last 30 years building a reputation for Cube1994 as the go-to for complex schemes and as a company that really cares, and now his sons look set to continue that legacy.

3 Cube 1994 3D Garden Design Visuals

4 Chic Entertaining Garden Fullbridge Quay, Essex.  
Design and Build by Cube 1994

