

## **Gilchrist Horticulture – David Gilchrist - NDH (Hons), M HORT, PD Arb, DHE, Cert Ed, FArb, N Sch**

**Review of proposed planning policy changes published by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea( RBKC).**

### **Executive Summary**

- **One metre of soil is sufficient depth located above a basement structure to plant and grow any deciduous or evergreen shrub, deciduous or evergreen tree, herbaceous perennial, bulb, conifer, fern, alpine, ornamental grass, annual, biennial, vegetables, soft fruit, top fruit and lawns.**
- The initial depth of planting will vary according to the pot/container or root ball size that the plant is supplied. This could range from 50mm to 600mm depending on plant type – This is significantly less than the 1m of soil above any basement.
- Removing the old potentially contaminated soil and replacing it with fresh fertile soil to BS 3882:2007 would be good practice and is a positive feature of the Basement process.
- The new land drainage that is essential to the Basement construction, would improve the growing environment for all the plants planted in the new fresh soil.
- **There is no requirement to limit the size of the basement garden as one metre of structured top soil will provide a suitable growing environment for all plant types as outlined above.**
- **With the introduction of Fresh Topsoil - Biodiversity is greatly improved when there are a wide range of plants species used in garden planting.**
- The design and character of the garden will be a matter for the owner, given that there is no restriction or limit on the plant types that can be planted and grown.
- One metre of soil depth provides adequate area for plants to obtain moisture and nutrients to sustain healthy growth.
- The planting and growing of trees above the Basement should not be restricted as many trees have the greatest percentage of their root systems in the top metre of soil (Forestry Commission: Information Note: The Influence of Soils and Species on Tree Root Depth: November 2005).
- 1m of good quality, well drained topsoil above a basement structure will provide an excellent environment for the growth of plants and shrubs whilst strongly encouraging biodiversity.
- **Restrictions to the size of basements below gardens should not be made based upon concerns over planting or biodiversity**