

PRESS RELEASE

Twenty acclaimed gardeners and garden experts to present at the Carlow Garden Festival 2024

Expert advice, workshops, gardening displays and food fest events combine to make the Carlow Garden Festival one of Ireland's finest annual garden festivals

The gardening paradise of County Carlow, best described as one county, one garden, will open its garden and castle gates to gardening enthusiasts for the Carlow Garden Festival at the end of July.

This annual festival, organised by the Carlow Garden Trail, and renowned as one of Ireland's finest garden festivals, takes place from Saturday, 27th July until Sunday 4th August.

Now in its twenty-second year, this eight-day festival will see twenty acclaimed gardeners and garden designers from Ireland and the UK deliver an inviting range of events that includes specialist talks, garden tours and workshops. Afternoon tea and evening meals along the Carlow Garden Trail add to the mouth-watering mix on offer.

Launching this year's programme, Robert Miller, Chairperson of the Carlow Garden Trail said: "The festival opens with a double line-up of two acclaimed UK gardeners in Arboretum Home and Garden Heaven - Ann-Marie Powell is fresh from her win of the People's and Children's Choice Awards in Chelsea and Alan Gray of East Ruston Old Vicarage in Norfolk shares the meticulous process of transforming a blank canvas into one of the UK's finest contemporary gardens. This sets the tone for the rest of the festival with visitors sure to gain practical information and advice from renowned gardening and horticultural experts. From the amateur to the expert, there is something for everyone, with talks marrying traditional gardening values with biodiversity to create the ideal garden space." added Mr Miller.

Earlier that day Pádraig Webb leads a walk and talk in Leighlinbridge – the Garden Village encouraging both young and old to explore the natural beauty along the serene banks of the River Barrow while learning how to identify various songbirds, butterflies and wildlife.

While the extensive listing of events is posted on the [Carlow Garden Festival website – www.carlowgardentrail.com](http://www.carlowgardentrail.com), of particular note is the visit of Arthur Parkinson, heralded as one of the most influential new voices in UK gardening, who visits Duckett's Grove Historic House and Walled Gardens for a talk titled "*Seasonal Splendours and Creative Planting*". Praised by Joanna Lumley for his book "*The Flower Yard*", Arthur brings a treasure trove of ideas and inspirations for gardening enthusiasts of all skill levels with the opportunity to learn all about seasonal planting ideas and recommended varieties to spark creativity and create the perfect flower border.

Earlier that day in An Gairdín Beo, Niall McCauley of Niall Gardens, shares how his garden has transformed his life in unexpected and rewarding ways. This talk will delve into how gardens can be a source of food and joy, a sanctuary for wildlife and biodiversity, as well as a springboard for community engagement and personal wellbeing. This is a great opportunity to hear from the winner of the Garden Media Guild's *Alan Titchmarsh New Talent of the Year Award 2022!*

Monday, 31st July will see Northern Irish gardener Neil Porteous visit Huntington Castle for an interesting talk on five of the most captivating gardens there – Mount Stewart, Rowallane, Castlewellan, Rostrevor and Brook Hall. Later that day Irish horticulturists Kitty Scully and Colm O'Driscoll from RTÉ's *Home Grown* deliver a practical workshop that focuses on transforming traditional garden spaces into productive edible landscapes without sacrificing aesthetic appeal. *The Art of Harmony: Blending Edibles and Ornamentals* provides useful tips on how to thoughtfully select and position vegetables to complement a garden's current design and planting scheme.

On Tuesday, 30th July in Hardymount Gardens, Matthew Reese will follow the famed UK garden Malverleys from its beginning, discussing its design and layout. Strongly influenced by the writings and gardens of Christopher Lloyd, Vita Sackville-West and William Robinson, Malverleys' classical design highlights include colour-themed gardens, a white garden, hot garden and a cool garden. This afternoon concludes with a fantastic afternoon tea on the lawns of Hardymount, prepared by its owner, Ballymaloe-trained Justina McKeever. Earlier that day, Margaret Gormley, Chief Superintendent of the Phoenix Park presents a talk in Altamont Gardens *A Feast for the Senses – OPW Gardens Countrywide*. Margaret has a great understanding of the beauty and significance of these public spaces so expect to hear about some of the country's favourites including Doneraile and Ilnaculin in Cork, Emo Court in Laois, the gardens of Kilkenny Castle and of course Altamont in County Carlow as well as many others.

Dr Darach Lupton, Curator with the National Botanic Gardens discusses the loss of plant diversity and the urgent need for conservation action in a wide-ranging talk that focus on *How Botanic Gardens are Contributing to Global Plant Conservation* in Burtown House on 1st August. That afternoon Klaus Laitenberger, the well-known horticulturist makes a welcome return to Shankill Castle and Gardens and the Carlow Garden Festival for an enlightening and practical session on "*Growing Your Own Healthy Vegetables*". As an expert in organic gardening and sustainable agriculture, Klaus shares his extensive knowledge and hands-on experience to help you cultivate a vibrant and nutritious vegetable garden.

"Highgrove" and "My Grove" – A Comparison of two very different gardens – King Charles' and Bunny Guinness's is sure to attract the attention of many when Bunny appears in Borris House on Thursday morning, August 1st. This promises to be an exceptional talk at the historic Borris House and is a remarkable opportunity to delve into the world of one of Britain's most distinguished gardens and Bunny's own garden. Highgrove, the private residence of

His Royal Highness King Charles, which Bunny has been closely involved with, is renowned for its organic principles, vibrant flower meadows and eclectic design elements, all reflecting the King's deep commitment to sustainability and the environment. In parallel, Bunny will share the inspirations, challenges and triumphs behind her personal garden, which blends traditional and contemporary elements to create an enchanting space. Terri Conroy visits nearby Kilgraney House and Herb Gardens for a fascinating talk on healing herbs in ancient Ireland and how these same herbs can now be used for everyday health on Thursday afternoon.

The impressive line up continues for the second weekend of the event programme as it draws to a close. A festival first for two well-known UK gardeners, Tom Stuart-Smith and Matthew Pottage happens in Altamont Plant Sales on Friday, August 2nd. Having won a gold medal on every single occasion since he has exhibited in Chelsea, and that's nine in total!, Tom presents his extensive experience designing public gardens that invite and inspire visitors in his talk *Gardens are for People*. From the serene Le Jardin Secret in the heart of Marrakech to the contemporary elegance of the Hepworth Wakefield Garden in Yorkshire, Tom's designs exemplify how public gardens can be both beautiful and accessible. Matthew Pottage, former Curator, delves into the captivating world of Wisley's extraordinary plant collections, which are cherished for their historical, botanical and horticultural significance. This talk provides a rare behind the scenes glimpse that makes Wisley one of England's most extraordinary gardens and a treasure trove for plant enthusiasts.

In the *Healing Power of the Garden*, horticultural therapist and holistic gardener, Fiann O'Nualláin explores how gardens can be sanctuaries for the mind, body and spirit on Saturday, August 3rd, in the special location of Delta Sensory Gardens. Fiann also delves into the world of herbs and healing plants, sharing insights into how these natural remedies can be incorporated into daily life to promote health and wellness. His talk concludes with a "safari plant" experience which invites participants to discover and connect with a particular plant, learning about its unique properties and how it can contribute to a healthier lifestyle. That afternoon the UK gardener John Little talks on the vital role of gardeners in transforming garden spaces in Huntington Castle, Clonegal in a talk titled *Gardeners are more important than designers – how investing in people not stuff could change the world!* Well-known for captivating his audiences with his no nonsense and enthusiastic approach, this is a talk not to be missed! John explains how prioritising people over products can lead to more sustainable, resilient and beautiful environments.

A final day treat is in store when Paul Smyth visits the beautiful Barrow Experience Gardens on the banks of the River Barrow in Bagenalstown on Sunday, August 4th where he leads a walk and talk through the ten small, organically worked, interlinked gardens nestled into this one-acre site. Known as one of the most important new voices in Irish gardening, Paul will share his key insights about gardening, offering valuable tips and techniques for creating beautiful and sustainable gardens. The festival concludes as it starts with a walk and talk through one of Carlow's finest natural forests – Rath Wood Forest, near Tullow – where Patrick Hunt, gardening and biodiversity specialist guides visitors on a leisurely walk, sharing his extensive knowledge and passion for trees, shrubs, wildflowers and the intricate eco-systems of forests.

Summing up the value of this annual gardening festival, Chairman of Carlow Tourism, Michael Walsh said: “Diversity and inclusion is most certainly the focus of this amazing festival; it is all encompassing addressing topics as diverse as garden design, vegetable and herb gardening, year-round garden colour and biodiversity, while also recognising Carlow’s profile for its quality food offering. It takes place at one of the loveliest times of the year with the main gardening work in gardeners’ own garden havens completed, giving them the opportunity to down tools and travel to our beautiful county. The festival brings together, in one location, an unrivalled variety of Irish and UK gardening and environmental experts to share knowledge and information about a host of topics”.

The Carlow Garden Festival caters for everyone from the novice gardener to the garden connoisseur and with special accommodation packages available for the festival, it provides the perfect opportunity to travel around the county to see the many spectacular gardens on the Carlow Garden Trail. Visitors can also partake in the two food fest events in Arboretum Home and Garden Heaven and Hardymount Gardens, enjoy lunch and evening meals in the eleven premises on the Carlow Food Network as well as savouring treats in delightful cafes and tearooms in the many garden locations throughout the county.

For more information and to book tickets visit www.carlowgardentrail.com

For a copy of the event brochure call 059-9130411 or download from www.carlowgardentrail.com