

# PRESS RELEASE

## The Carlow Garden Festival 2025 - Nineteen Experts, Nine Days, One Unmissable Festival

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

From Saturday, July 26th to Sunday, August 3<sup>rd</sup> 2025, the beautiful gardens and stately homes of County Carlow will host the Carlow Garden Festival 2025, a spectacular celebration of gardens, heritage, nature, horticultural inspiration and sustainability. Now in its 23<sup>rd</sup> year, this beloved festival brings together some of the most celebrated gardening minds from Ireland and the UK in a nine-day programme of talks, guided tours, garden visits, workshops and culinary experiences. Informative demonstrations and talks will be delivered by some of the top names in gardening circles including Adam Frost of *BBC Gardeners World* along with Peter O'Mahony, Irish rugby international and passionate gardener.

Organised by the Carlow Garden Trail, the festival continues to grow in reputation as one of Ireland's premier gardening events. With a rich line-up of almost 20 gardening experts, including familiar faces and exciting new voices, the 2025 festival invites visitors of all levels – from budding gardeners to seasoned professionals – to explore the beauty, creativity and ecological value of gardens. This year, sustainability takes centre stage, with the introduction of a dedicated shuttle bus service connecting all garden festival venues across the county from five locations in Carlow Town including the Seven Oaks Hotel, Talbot Hotel, Woodford Dolmen Hotel and Carlow bus and train stations. Visitors are encouraged to leave the car behind and enjoy the stunning Carlow countryside in a more environmentally friendly way. The new service supports the festival's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint while making it easier for attendees to access multiple events with ease.

Highlights include:

- **Celebrity Appeal and Unique Pairings** | Peter O'Mahony, rugby legend and passionate gardener | Adam Frost: *BBC Gardener's World*
- **Blooming Gardens and Big Houses: Iconic Locations** | Huntington Castle and Gardens | Altamont Gardens, OPW | Borris House, Gardens and Woodland | Duckett's Grove Historic House, Walled Gardens and Pleasure Grounds
- **Nature and tree trails** | Signature experiences | Foraging adventure | Gardening Naturally | Appreciating our forests
- **Community** | Involvement of community gardens | BEAM, An Gairdín Beo and Delta Sensory Gardens: testament to inclusion and creativity
- **Food** | opportunity to combine garden talk and local food | afternoon tea with Ballymaloe-trained cook

- **Accessible and Inclusive** | Two barrier free gardens BEAM and Delta Sensory Gardens | ITRS (Irish Text Relay Service) registered
- **Learning Opportunities** | Broaden your knowledge through expert garden talks, historical perspectives, and travel-inspired themes that explore gardens and ideas from across Ireland and beyond.
- **The Festival Bus** – daily shuttle service from five locations in Carlow Town (Seven Oaks Hotel, Talbot Hotel Carlow, Woodford Dolmen Hotel and Carlow train and bus stations) to key garden venues – seamless travel to festival highlights!

The festival programme includes:

- **Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2025 - Adam Frost and Peter O'Mahony in Conversation:** Renowned garden designer and *BBC Gardeners' World* presenter Adam Frost will share the stage with Irish rugby legend Peter O'Mahony at Arboretum Home and Garden Heaven. Their discussion will delve into their shared passion for gardening, offering insights and inspiration.
- **Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> July 2025 – The Bountiful River Barrow: A Foraging Adventure:** Mary White of Blackstairs Eco Trails will lead a foraging walk in Leighlinbridge, introducing visitors to the edible treasures along the riverbanks.
- **Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2025 - Gardening Naturally with June Blake:** At An Gairdín Beo Community Garden, acclaimed plantswoman June Blake will conduct a workshop focusing on organic and sustainable gardening practices.
- **Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2025 -** Garden designer and broadcaster Matthew Wilson will present "*A Tale of Two Gardens*," exploring the designs and planting schemes of RHS owned Hyde Hall in Essex and Harlow Carr in Harrogate at Duckett's Grove Historic House and Walled Gardens.
- **Monday 28<sup>th</sup> July 2025** – in what promises to be a captivating event, historian, author and tree enthusiast Thomas Pakenham shares fascinating insights from his latest book *The Tree Hunters: How the Cult of the Arboretum Transformed Our Landscape*. Set against the stunning backdrop of Huntington Castle, renowned for its champion and heritage trees, this richly illustrated talk uncovers the lives of 19th-century explorers and botanists whose passion for exotic species reshaped the landscapes of Ireland and Britain.
- **Monday 28<sup>th</sup> July 2025** - At Delta Sensory Gardens, *Irish Times* gardening columnist Fionnuala Fallon will guide attendees on creating perennial cut-flower gardens that are both beautiful and eco-friendly.
- **Tuesday, 29<sup>th</sup> July 2025** - Dr. John McCullen, esteemed historian and former Chief Park Superintendent, will delve into a century of transformation within Dublin's iconic Phoenix Park over the period 1880 – 1980 during a talk at Altamont Gardens.
- **Tuesday, 29<sup>th</sup> July 2025** - "*Roots and Rhythms: The Heritage and Revival of Danesmoate Gardens*" is a talk by Head Gardener Darragh Stone, scheduled for Hardymount Gardens. The event delves into the rich history and restoration of Danesmoate Gardens, originally established between 1766 and 1802, and later revitalised by U2 bassist Adam Clayton. Attendees will explore the estate's architectural and horticultural significance, followed by a leisurely garden tour and a delightful afternoon tea prepared by Ballymaloe-trained cook Justina McKeever.

- **Wednesday, 30<sup>th</sup> July 2025** – Seamus O’Brien presents a richly illustrated talk at Burtown House & Gardens recounting his 2024 expedition to Yunnan Province, one of the most botanically diverse regions on Earth. Meanwhile Tanguy de Toulgoët, a French-born horticulturist will share his expertise at Shankill Castle and Gardens demonstrating how to create a productive and resilient kitchen garden using French-style potager techniques, permaculture principles and biodiversity-friendly practices tailored to the Irish climate.
- **Thursday, 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025** - Sarah Eberle, renowned for her record 19 gold medals at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, will share insights from her illustrious career in garden design during a talk at Borris House. Sarah will discuss the creative process and evolution of design trends that have shaped her award-winning gardens, offering inspiration and practical advice for gardeners of all levels.
- **Thursday, 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025** - In two inspiring workshops at the beautiful Kilgraney House and Herb Gardens, Michael Kelly of GIY explores the powerful concept of food empathy – the deep connection we form with our food when we grow it ourselves.
- On **Friday, August 1<sup>st</sup> 2025**, at Altamont Plant Sales, Rosy Hardy, a renowned UK plantswoman and RHS Vice-President, will share her journey from selling plants in her back garden to earning 24 RHS Chelsea Gold Medals, offering insights into her experiences at major flower shows and practical gardening advice. Later that day, celebrated UK gardener and BBC personality Nick Bailey will present "Design Your Garden in 10 Easy Steps," providing a straightforward guide to garden design, from plant selection to creating year-round interest, aimed at both beginners and seasoned gardeners.
- On **Saturday, August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2025** Mary Keenan delivers an inspiring workshop focused on the art of creating fragrant gardens that awaken the senses and elevate the experience of outdoor spaces in Delta Sensory Gardens. Later that same day Robin Lane Fox, esteemed garden writer and classicist draws on decades of hands-on experience and a deep understanding of garden history, to share insights into evolving gardening styles and practical techniques to create beautiful, effective gardens at Huntington Castle.
- **Sunday, August 3<sup>rd</sup> 2025** - Rosie Maye, also known as The Insomniac Gardener, provides a guided tour through the Barrow Experience Gardens in Bagenalstown. This series of ten interconnecting gardens, each reflecting the rich history and folklore of the Barrow Valley, offers visitors practical gardening tips on topics like composting, seasonal planting and pollinator-friendly practices in a serene riverside setting. Later that day environmentalist Éanna Ní Lamhna will lead a walk through Rath Wood Forest in Tullow. Participants will explore the 170-acre woodland, learning about its diverse flora and fauna, and gaining insights into the ecological importance of forests in Ireland.

Chairperson of the Carlow Garden Trail, Robert Miller of Altamont Plant Sales, said: “This year’s festival brings together a fresh and exciting line-up of speakers who offer practical tips and inspiration for all kinds of gardeners. With the addition of our new shuttle bus service, we’re delighted to be taking a meaningful step toward a greener festival experience in conjunction with the Climate Action Office in Carlow County Council and local service provider Ring-A-Link. At many venues, guests will have the chance to meet authors, purchase their books or bring along their own copy to be signed which makes the experience extra special”

Meanwhile, Michael Walsh Chairperson of Carlow Tourism, emphasised the inclusive and wide-ranging appeal of the programme: “The Carlow Garden Festival is an enriching mix of expert insight, seasonal food and natural beauty. It offers something for all gardeners and nature lovers and reflects Carlow’s leadership in both horticultural excellence and responsible tourism. With gardens in full bloom and the majority of gardening work completed, the festival is the ideal time to pause, relax and take inspiration from some of the finest horticultural experts, and make plans for the months and year ahead”.

The full festival schedule and ticket booking options are now available at [www.carlowgardentrail.com](http://www.carlowgardentrail.com). Garden lovers are encouraged to explore accommodation packages, local cafés and other attractions across the county to make the most of their visit with information available on the same website.

**For more information and to book tickets visit [www.carlowgardentrail.com](http://www.carlowgardentrail.com)**

**For a copy of the event brochure call 059-9130411 or download from [www.carlowgardentrail.com](http://www.carlowgardentrail.com)**

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