

**RHSI AFFILIATED CLUBS AND SOCIETIES LECTURE SCHEME 2023**  
(Talks in person or by Zoom as negotiated with each speaker)

**JIMI BLAKE** -Co Wicklow

Jim Blake is the owner of the 20 acre Hunting Brook Gardens in Co Wicklow. Internationally known horticulturalist, teacher and plantsman, his garden holds one of Ireland's largest private collections of plants and is famous for its eclectic ever changing flamboyant style.

**LIST OF TALKS:**

1. **A beautiful obsession:** a plantsman's journey in his own garden.

Jimi takes a journey through his collection at Hunting Brook Gardens, his travels to other nurseries and gardens and then shares how he incorporates choice plants into his own planting schemes in Hunting Brook .

2. **Late arrivals to the party-** plants which arrive late in the season, looking fabulous as the earlier plants start to look tired! Jimi shares the plants he uses to extend the season from summer into Autumn at Hunting Brook Gardens. He will also share various tricks he deploys- cutting back perennials that finished flowering, dead heading and adding in plants to extend the season.

3..**Colour tapestry at Hunting Brook Gardens-** pushing the boundaries with flowers and foliage. Jimi explores his use of colour and focuses on colour combinations of flowers and foliage across the gardens. He discusses his creation of colour tapestries through the exotic areas, the perennial beds and the woodland garden.

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087 285 6601

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Fee: €200

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**STEPHEN BUTLER**- Dublin

Stephen started work in 1981 as Head Gardener in Dublin Zoo where he was instrumental in changing the planted landscape, placing a greater emphasis on the zoo animal habitat. Cooperation with other Zoos around Europe ensured visiting zoos and botanic gardens throughout the continent during his career. He remains engaged with many horticultural associations including the design element of the World Association of Zoos since his retirement in 2018. His book Gardening for Gorillas, published in 2022 chronicals his 37 years at Dublin Zoo.

**LIST OF TALKS:**

1.**The Grand Tour:** An eclectic mix of plant related images from various gardens and zoHillsos around Europe.

2. **A Stroll in the hills :** A botanising trip to the Italian Dolomites, an early summer visit ranging from Crocus to Orchids.

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**SUZIE CAHN**- Co Wicklow

Permaculture is an approach to land management and settlement design that adopts arrangements in flourishing natural ecosystems. It includes a set of design principles derived using whole systems thinking. Suzie Cahn was encouraged to grow in her own little garden, in family gardens, small-holdings,farms and Camphill communities in Northern Ireland and has never lost her childhood connection to nature and understanding of a deeply interconnected world. She has helped co-create school gardens with volunteers, and community and national networks of community gardens and permaculture practice. In 2007 Carraig Dulra,a 3.8 acre Permaculture designed, organic demonstration site in Co Wicklow was created by Suzie, her husband and many volunteers. She designs and facilitates ecological approaches on projects of all sizes and has co-developed a Permaculture Design Certificate course with Hannah Mole of EarthCare with a large and diverse teaching team.

**LIST OF TALKS:**

1. **It's all connected:** what we do in our gardens is what we do to our world.

2. **Decolonising our garden practice-** soil care, no dig and the history of double digging and lazy beds.

3. **Can Permaculture feed the world?** Perennial food systems versus food as commodity

**CONTACT:**

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Web : [dulra.org](http://dulra.org)

[permaculture.org](http://permaculture.org) ( founder member)

Fee: €200.

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**DES DOYLE**- Co Kilkenny

Always a keen gardener, Des worked as a successful goldsmith for several decades before turning his creative talents to garden design. He has been developing the gardens surrounding his 1812 home Lavistown House, Kilkenny since 2010 whilst working as a garden designer and running gardening workshops throughout the year.

**LIST OF TALKS:**

- 1. New Adventures in Perennial Planting.** Exploring best performing perennials- interesting,hardy, all season winners.
- 2. Gravel Garden Heaven.** The making of his very successful gravel garden, started in 2015. The way forward-less watering, weeding and staking!
- 3. Plant Heroes.** Every year Des trials hundreds of plants from nurseries in the UK and Europe and finds plants that work for him. This talk explores 45 great plants from home and away, both rare and common, and how and where he uses them.
- 4. A New Planting Matrix- a System to Design Plantings.** Over the past 10 years Des has developed a highly distinctive planting style. Working to a specific plan and palette, this talk is for those who seek planting layouts with plants that are worth growing

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**HESTER FORDE**- Co Cork.

Hester Forde is a renowned plants person, lecturer and garden writer. Visitors to her garden Coosheen will know that she has an insatiable appetite for plants. Coosheen houses a unique collection of plants which provide year round interest. Alongside, Hester runs a small nursery with over 30 years experience in growing and propagating. Her garden has featured in The Garden and Gardens Illustrated magazines. Hester is well known as the driving force behind the the annual Snowdrop Gala and the Cork Alpine Hardy Plant Society. She has lectured extensively throughout Ireland and the UK.

**LIST OF TALKS:**

- 1. It's all about the plants.** Hester examines some of the choice trees and plants which are the backbone of her garden at Coosheen. She looks at moving things and making room, cutting down and pruning. A new greenhouse, plant hunting, starting a nursery, must-have plants are all discussed.
- 2. A tale of shade.**The wonder of a woodland garden is that it looks as if plants grow there by themselves. How to create a sylvan atmosphere, this lecture takes an in depth look at plant combinations that thrive in the shade.
- 3.Small treasures, troughs and raised beds.** An in depth look at troughs for sun, for shade and how to get most into a small space. Particular focus on planting an alpine trough.
- 4.Spring at Coosheen.**A virtual tour of the garden looking at the trees and shrubs that are looking good from Spring to start of summer.
- 5.Creative gardening with containers.** Choosing containers, care and maintenance of pots. Containers for all aspects and seasons. Achieving eye catching plant combination effects
- . 6.Spring Awakens.** How to have colour, scent, foliage, tracery and bark from mid winter to late spring. From the smallest spring plants and bulbs to the bigger flowering shrubs.
- 7. Treasures to dig for.** In the small garden, by underplanting with bulbs one can achieve layers of colour from spring through to autumn. Every garden, no matter what size can include a large variety of bulbs.
- 8. Autumn Glory.** How to ensure the show of colour with flower and foliage through autumn to first frosts. Late flowers, and particularly grasses that give great colour and movement into late Autumn along with fiery tree foliage add to the extravaganza.
- 9. Summer Charms.**
- 10. White Gold.** Hester organises the Snowdrop Gala every year and shares her expertise on snowdrops.

**CONTACT:**

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**MARY KEENAN**- Co Laois

With a degree in landscape horticulture, several years of lecturing in the National Botanic Gardens, and almost 20 years with South Dublin City Council in the management and development of public parks and street trees, Mary is now self-employed in running the very well-known Gash Gardens & Nursery in Co Laois which she owns along with her husband Ross Doyle. She also works as a garden writer and is now editor of The Irish Garden magazine. In addition she is a Past President of the Tree Council of Ireland, lecturer, Tidy Towns adjudicator and horticultural consultant with a very enthusiastic, hands-on practical approach to plants and gardening.

**LIST OF TALKS:**

- 1. For the love of trees.** Looking at Ireland's rich tree heritage, the benefits of garden and wider landscape trees. How to plant and care for trees. Suitable tree suggestions for different garden situations.
- 2. Gash gardens-**A tale of dreams, challenges and a passion for plants. Mary's father Noel Keenan was a dairy farmer with a big dream, a pioneering spirit and an insatiable passion for horticulture. From the mid 1980s to the present day, this is the inspiring story of the ever continuing development of Gash Gardens as it passes from father to daughter.
- 3. Hello Spring-** Lots to do to get ready for the season ahead. This talk looks at garden tasks for spring and what plants are providing this season's interest.
- 4. The wonder of Winter-** No need to have a bleak winter garden. This talk explores how to achieve liveliness, colour and interest in the winter garden
- 5. Making the most of shade-** Almost every garden has a shady spot. How to see this as an opportunity to grow a wider more diverse range of plants.
- 6. Desirable shrubs for flowers, foliage and other effects.** -Shrubs are the backbone of a garden providing structure, scale and permanent effects. This talk highlights a selection of highly gardenworthy shrubs for a variety of garden situations.
- 7. From blank canvas to colourful borders.**- Whether rethinking your garden or starting from scratch, this talk shares Mary's tips and ideas on how to design and create wonderful borders and combine plants to achieve best impact and effects.
- 8. Scents and scent-ability in your garden.**-How to incorporate and use scented plants and suggesting a selection of plants and foliage to provide scent through the seasons.
- 9. Planting for pollinators.**- Bees and other pollinating insects play a vital role in our gardens and are on the decline. Suggested bestplants to grow to encourage pollination of your fruits flowers and veg.
- 10. Good plants for problem places-** Suggestions for challenging and tricky spots in your garden such as north facing walls, steep banks, dry shade and more.
- 11. The beauty of leaves-** Looking at the role and value of differing leaves and leaf effects.

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Web; gashgardens.ie

FEE: €200 (or negotiable for small clubs)

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**KLAUS LAITENBERGER**- Co Leitrim

Living in Ireland since 1999, Klaus was formerly Head Gardener at the Organic Centre at Rossinver in Leitrim. With several books on organic vegetable growing to his credit, he now runs a seed company (Green Vegetable Seeds) specialising in vegetable seeds most suited to the Irish climate. He is an Organic Inspector for the Organic Trust Ltd, an organic advisor, runs gardening courses throughout the country and contributes to several magazines.

**LIST OF TALKS:**

- 1. Grow your own healthy vegetables**
- 2. Growing in polytunnels.**
- 3. Beginner's Guide to Organic Gardening.**
- 4. Lost crops of the Incas and other unusual crops.**

**CONTACT:**

Email:klausgardening@gmail.com  
Web:greenvegetableseeds.com  
FEE: €200

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**SHIRLEY LANIGAN**- Co Kilkenny

With a background both as a gallery curator and in journalism, Shirley is a keen amateur gardener and garden enthusiast. She has written about visiting gardens all over the island of Ireland for the past twenty years, recording her visits in three books. Her 2017 publication "The Open Gardens of Ireland" is the most comprehensive guide ever to the gardens of Ireland.

**LIST OF TALKS:**

1. **Gardening in a Covid World**- How our neighbours have saved our sanity.
2. **Art in the garden**- Beyond the Peeing cherub.
3. Gardens that stay with you- Special gardens and special people.
4. **From there to here and here to where**- Thoughts on how Irish gardening is changing.
5. **The West's awake**-Gardens west of the Shannon
6. **The only way is Green**- How are Irish gardeners performing as guardians of nature and how can we do better?

**CONTACT:**

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086 389 5638  
FEE:€200

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**TJ MAHER**- Co Wicklow

TJ Maher is both an artist and a gardener having built a reputation in both of these creative pursuits and is a graduate of NCAD and the National Botanic Gardens. He has created Patthana Garden in Kiltegan where he lives with his partner Simon and runs his own gardening courses. This sanctuary reflects TJ's deep spiritual connection with plants and animals. The garden has featured in numerous publications and on television

**LIST OF TALKS:**

1. **How to use colour in the garden**- An appreciation and understanding of colour theory can help greatly to elevate our use of colour in creative and exciting ways in the garden. Learn how to contrast, to calm, to set one colour against another, how colour works in different light settings and how to create a sense of either space or intimacy. How to set the tone of your garden.
2. **Patthana Garden through the seasons.**

**CONTACT:**

patthanagarden@gmail.com  
086 194 4547  
Web: patthanagardenireland.com  
Fee: €200

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**ROSIE MAYE**- Co Meath

Rosemary Maye is better known on Facebook and Instagram as the Insomniac Gardener. Along with her husband, she has been developing and documenting her garden over the past 20 years. Set on a hill opposite the Hill of Slane in Co Meath, their garden had mature trees, snowdrops and bluebells but little else when they moved in. Now her Facebook page has a daily record about her garden as it grows and changes. The successes and failures, the progress and setbacks are all detailed.....

**LIST OF TALKS:**

1. **The Greedy Gardener**-how to have colour in every season.
2. **"You could plant flowers in that"**- using containers and pots in the garden
3. **Learning to garden by trowel and error.**

**CONTACT:**

Email: rosemarymaye@gmail.com 087 830 9616  
FEE: €200.

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**CONRAD McCORMICK** - Co Antrim

Conrad is a garden designer, free-lance garden journalist and environmentalist. He has appeared on the RTE/BBC Gardening Together TV show and regularly contributes to Radio Ulster's Gardener's Corner programme he has been widely published in garden magazines in the UK and Ireland. He has a passion for growing unusual and exotic plants in his small coastal North Antrim garden.

### **LIST OF TALKS:**

- 1. Fantastic foliage and phenomenal flowers.**- A talk about the selection of plants (both rare and common , hardy and tender ) that Conrad grows to create his exotic garden.
- 2. Uprooting: New beginnings.** A tale of two gardens and a wheelbarrow-. The story of moving his previous exotic garden in its entirety by wheelbarrow to the site around his new house, the creation of this new garden with the trials and tribulations encountered. He details the broad range of plants used.
- 3.Lilies.**- Choosing from the wide selection of lily hybrids and species he grows, he describes how to get the best from the plants and how best to use them in the garden.

### **CONTACT:**

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0044 79 3452 7360

FEE: €200 (€250 in person)

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### **COLM O'DRISCOLL**- Co Waterford

Colm was head ornamental gardener in the historic Airfield Estate in Dundrum from 2013 until he was appointed Head Gardener of the whole estate in 2017, taking over management of the extensive Food Gardens. He was heavily involved in managing the transition post a major redesign to today's maturing landscape, and is passionate about the continued design and development of the gardens.

### **LIST OF TALKS:**

- 1. Airfield Estate-work in progress.** The garden's journey to date- challenges, successes and failures in the past 7 years.
- 2. Grow soil, harvest food.** Focus on soil biology to help produce healthy soil and healthy vegetables. How to cut labour and be sustainable. Evolution of the food garden in Airfield.
- 3. A to Zinnia of annuals.** Colm's experience of growing annuals in Airfield- from €200climbers to pictorial meadow flowers. Identifying the varieties that work best and how to grow them with confidence.

### **CONTACT:**

Email: colm.odriscoll@airfield.ie

087 414 1573

Fee: € 200

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### **SEAN O'GAOITHIN**- Co Donegal

Sean has been Head Gardener at the 27 acre Glenveagh Castle Gardens within Glenveagh National Park in Donegal for the past 28 years. He manages the rich collection of trees and shrubs as a horticultural conservationist, and the stunning walled garden's yearly changes- all the while continuing to enhance and develop this 1880s masterpiece. He has become increasingly active in cherishing and protecting the biodiversity of the plant world surrounding Glenveagh.

### **LIST OF TALKS:**

- 1.History of the Castle Gardens,** Glenveagh National Park.
- 2.The ecological approach** to historic flower garden conservation.
- 3.Plant hunting and garden plant conservation**
- 4.The cultivation of temperate flora species** in Irish gardens.
- Gardening with nature.
- 6.New Zealand plants** in Irish gardens.
- 7.Chilean Plants** in Irish gardens
- 8.Why less is more** in modern horticulture.
- 9.Cultural heritage** horticulture at Glenveagh.
- 10.Curation** of Glenveagh Castle Gardens, archives, statues and planting schemes. **11.Glenveagh Castle Gardens today.**
- 12.Historic figures of Glenveagh-** St Colmcille, Cornelia Adair, Arthur Kingsley Porter and Henry McIlhenny.

### **CONTACT:**

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087 641 6205

FEE: €200

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### **MAURICE PARKINSON** – Co. Antrim

Maurice has extensive experience in horticulture, from Edinburgh Botanic Gardens, to being Director of Parks with Belfast City Council and latterly as the creator and owner of Ballyrobert Gardens, a uniquely designed Ulster garden rated by the Guardian as one of the Top Ten Secret Gardens in the UK. He has been designing gardens and landscapes for many years and is a regular contributor to radio and TV.

#### **LISTS:**

**1. Less Effort and More Leisure in the Garden.** Designing and maintaining gardens effectively to help make more time for the more pleasant aspects of gardening.

**2. Spring into Action.** What needs to be done and how, and what to admire in the spring garden; a favourite time at Ballyrobert Gardens.

**3. Gardens by Design.** An introduction to the design of smaller gardens.

**4. Autumnal Splendour.** A wonderful time of year for the garden or at least it ought to be. Learn how to achieve magical autumnal displays.

**5. The Design and Planting of Borders.** An outline of the process, with lots of examples on how to make garden borders and displays exciting.

**6. Shady Plants and Shady Places.** Shady areas are often the forgotten part of gardens but this need not be so. Learn about the endless opportunities that enable these parts of the garden to come alive.

**7. Gardens of Inspiration.** A personal reflection on gardens that have 'left their mark'.

**8. Gardens of Ulster.** Despite not having the best climate for gardening, the province from the very earliest times has been steeped in gardening. Did you know one of the earliest gardens in Ireland was literally on the cliff edge at Dunluce Castle? An opportunity to focus on gardens in Ulster, old and not so old.

**9. The Creation of a 'Masterpiece'.** The development of Ballyrobert Gardens as a unique Ulster garden. A site steeped in built and natural history combined with horticulture to make this a very different place.

10. Bulbs and Bulb

**11. A Passion for Herbaceous Perennials.** Ballyrobert Gardens has 1000's of different species and varieties of herbaceous plants. See a range of them in this presentation and learn how they have performed so well in a difficult site.

**12. Combining Plants to Create Maximum Impact in the Garden.** It is often said that plants are at their best when used/arranged to maximise their effect. This talk provides a multitude of scenarios and examples of how to achieve impact with plants.

**13. Wild in the Garden.** One of the key principles in the design and upkeep of Ballyrobert Gardens was to create a garden with maximum wildlife. This will illustrate how this key objective was achieved.

**14. Performance Enhancing Plants.** With literally tens of 1000's of plants for sale on the 'market', how does one go about selecting plants for their own garden. A daunting task. Learn from an expert on this subject which is the foundation of good gardening.

**15. Making the Best Use of Snowdrops in the Garden.** Snowdrops are remarkable and brilliant plants to use in the garden. Learn from this talk how to choose and use snowdrops for maximum effect in the garden.

**16. Gardeners, your Climate Needs You.** At a time when most countries agree that the climate is in crisis, learn how gardeners could help in a time of need.

#### **CONTACT:**

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0044 7837 690332

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FEE €200

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#### **NEIL PORTEUS**

Neil Porteus is a gardening consultant working in Ireland with long experience of being a head gardener and gardens advisor, much of it for the National Trust. Most recently, he was head gardener at Mount Stewart, Co. Down. He has a love of garden history and received his M.A. in Garden History at Bristol. He approaches the subject as a gardener and not as an art historian. He continues to work as a head gardener at Glenarm Castle, Co. Antrim and has many advisory commissions throughout the island of Ireland. He enjoys botanical travel, as he believes it is important for gardeners to see how plants grow in their native habitat.

#### **LIST OF TALKS:**

1. **Plants of New Zealand** and how to grow them in Ireland – new for May 2023

2. **Five Great Northern Irish Gardens**, past & present. (Mount Stewart, Rowallane, Rostrevor, Castlewellan & Brook Hall).

3. **Annes Grove**, Past & Present.

4. **Mount Stewart**, Circe's Garden.

## 5. Brook Hall & Glenarm Castle.

## 6. A Selection of my Favourite Plants from Around the World.

## 7. Plant Exploration Today– A Gardener's Travels

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### **PAUL SMYTH** - Co Offaly

Paul is a plantsman and a native of Co Carlow and was appointed the first Head Gardener at RHSI Bellefield in Dec 2022. He has worked in two of the UK's top specialist nurseries. At Evolution Plants, described as a botanical ark for wild collected plants and then at the renowned Crug Farm Plants in Wales where he was the gardener and then propagator. In both 2016 and 2017 he went on plant hunting expeditions to North Vietnam. Since returning to Ireland he has worked both with Diarmuid Gavin and on his own as a plantsman, sourcing plants and designing gardens. He was the Horticultural Researcher and heavily involved in the popular Gardening Together lockdown programme. He has also established his own small specialist nursery on his parents' farm in Co Carlow and owns a garden he created in Snowdonia during his UK working days.

### **LIST OF TALKS:**

1. **Plant hunting from Ireland to Vietnam.**-Plants and encounters on expeditions in 2016 and 2017

2. **The long-handled hoe.**-Gardening from abroad. Creating and developing his parents garden in Co Carlow from a distance.

3. Snowdrops and spring bulbs. The good, the bad and the indifferent. Loves and hates and good spring doers from home and from his travels.

4. **The Plant Hunters' gardens.**- The story of the two different plant hunters he worked for in the UK- their gardens and unusual plants. And the garden Paul has started to develop for himself on the edge of Snowdonia National Park.

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### **PATRICIA TYRRELL**- Dublin

Patricia Tyrrell is an award-winning garden designer with two Gold Medals and Best in Category from Bloom. She holds an honours degree in Landscape Horticulture from UCD and is also a Masters Graduate of the School of Landscape Architecture at UCD.

Patricia seeks to create landscapes with atmosphere; living landscapes that are not just beautiful, but contribute positively to the environment, encouraging wildlife into the garden and fitting into and reflecting the surrounding natural landscape.

Planting combinations are inspired by natural communities and with the knowledge of years of experience of how plants grow and interact, to produce successful and easily maintained planting schemes, with attention to colour, texture and year-round interest.

### **LIST OF TALKS:**

• **Ornamental grasses** – how and where to use them

• **Extending the season of interest in your garden**

• **Planting for low maintenance**

• **Designing a biodiverse garden**

• **Bulbs for Spring colour** – A closer look

• **The language of plants**

### **CONTACT:**

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### **ADAM WHITBOURN**- Cork.

Adam has been Head Gardener at Blarney Castle Gardens since 2009. In conjunction with the estate owner Sir Charles Colthurst, he has been instrumental in transforming the gardens into one of Ireland's

finest horticultural gems. In addition to his love of design, Adam is a seasoned plant hunter having added to Blarney's impressive plant collection following trips to India and North Vietnam.

**LIST OF TALKS:**

1. **The story of Blarney Castle Gardens**- its history and development.
2. **Exploring North Vietnam**- plant hunting on the Chinese border and the collections in Blarney.

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