

FORTY SHADES OF GREEN THE GARDENS OF IRELAND

SUNDAY 9 – FRIDAY 14 JULY 2017 (6 DAYS)

LECTURERS: JIMI BLAKE, HELEN DILLON & TOM DUNCAN

£1895

- **Inspirational visit led by one of Ireland's most respected gardeners, Jimi Blake**
- **Gentle pace allowing plenty of time to absorb the 'spirit' and detail of each garden**
- **Wide variety of garden styles included**
- **Iconic gardens such as Mount Stewart & Hunting Brook**



Co. Wicklow, Jimi Blake's Hunting Brook Gardens

OVERVIEW

Irish gardening has undergone a remarkable transformation in recent years. What for centuries had been the preserve of the landed elite is now a source of welcome creativity for everyone as a generation of younger gardeners takes horticulture down new paths. Visitors quickly grasp that gardening in Ireland is not as 'conditioned' by received opinions about what is and is not acceptable, be it certain plants, colour combinations or design themes, as in some more traditional gardening environments. Of course the fertile soil, mild climate and generous rainfall mean that this enthusiasm has put down firm roots. As a noted writer on Irish Gardens, Patrick Bowe, once put it "Irish gardens, like Irish people, are a little wild. It's the moisture in the air."

For what is a welcome breath of fresh horticultural air, we have to thank key gardeners beginning with that irascible contrarian, William Robinson, Irish to his fingertips, who altered the course of gardening in these islands. At Mount Stewart, Edith, Marchioness of Londonderry pushed the bounds of 'good taste' beyond what anyone had hitherto thought appropriate. In more recent times Helen Dillon carried on this innovative approach, and never failed to amaze and inspire at her iconic garden.

Without doubt, these three remarkable personalities have between them shaped Irish gardening over the last century, inspiring a new, younger generation, above all the brother and sister gardeners, Jimi and June Blake.

Thus, we are indeed fortunate that Jimi Blake and Helen Dillon will join Tom Duncan on this visit to some of Ireland's finest historic and contemporary gardens. All three will share their knowledge, passion and enthusiasm for Ireland's horticulture, past and present.

In Co. Wicklow, Dargle Glen is a fine representative of William Robinson's influence and his careful use of nature to present trees and shrubs to great advantage. Kilmacurragh Botanic Garden offers an insight into what inspired plant collecting on a very large scale can achieve – its recent rescue under the guidance of Seamus O'Brien is a remarkable achievement. Mount Stewart is without doubt the country's most important garden and we shall spend a day with its Head Gardener, Neil Porteous. Jimi Blake's garden at Hunting Brook, together with his sister June's garden at nearby Tinode, could not be more different and stimulating. Other noted modern gardens will also be visited in and around Dublin.

We spend five nights at the **4* Davenport Hotel** in Dublin. It is situated in the city centre, just off Merrion Square and is within easy walking distance of some wonderful shops and restaurants.

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1: Sunday 9 July – We fly from Heathrow in the early afternoon to Dublin. We transfer the short distance by coach into **Dublin** during which Tom Duncan will introduce the group to an outline of Dublin's history. We continue to our hotel, the **4* Davenport Hotel** and that evening we have dinner in a local restaurant. Wine, water and coffee are included with most group lunches and all dinners.

Day 2: Monday 10 July – We drive south to Co. Wicklow and our first visit will be to **Hunting Brook**, the garden created by Jimi Blake, who will be our leading guide. Lovingly created by Jimi, these gardens are an extraordinary rich and multi-layered experience with swashbuckling cultivars and zingy colours on arrival creating a richness of form and texture. In contrast, the nearby woodland glade is an oasis of meditative calm. After a light lunch we continue down the hill to **Tinode**, to visit June Blake, Jimi's equally talented sister, where her garden is set out amidst winding bark paths with stands of mature beech trees all about. June grows and trials perennials, shade loving plants and ornamental grasses with incredible flair. We return to Dublin and a free evening.

Day 3: Tuesday 11 July – We spend today at **Mount Stewart**, the ancestral estate of the Vane-Tempest-Stewart family, Marquesses of Londonderry, now cared for by The National Trust. This internationally famous garden was laid out in the early to mid twentieth century by Edith Londonderry, the great gardening Marchioness. We shall spend the day there, guided by the Head Gardener Neil Porteous, as we explore its many varied aspects and we will also be joined by Helen Dillon, the Doyenne of Irish gardening! It should be particularly interesting as the ongoing restoration of the garden, based on Edith's original planting plans, begin to mature. Lunch is included today and when we return to Dublin the evening will be free.

Day 4: Wednesday 12 July – Hidden away between Enniskerry and Bray, **Dargle Cottage Garden** is an enchanted place with seventeen acres of rare trees, shrubs and fine modern sculptures laid out on both sides of a river valley. Originally created by Sir Basil and Lady Valerie Goulding over several decades, the present owners have breathed new life into this garden, continuing to plant new introductions. The Head Gardener, David Koning will guide our private visit. It is then a very short drive to the nearby **Powerscourt**, which hardly needs an introduction. This great house, estate and formal gardens were created by the Wingfield family, Viscounts Powerscourt during the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Now owned by the Slazenger family, we have some free time for lunch on arrival, not included; we then have a guided introduction to the gardens followed by some free time to explore at leisure, before we return to Dublin and a free evening.

Day 5: Thursday 13 July – **Kilmacurragh Botanical Arboretum** is a remarkable survival. Once the centrepiece of a large estate owned by the Acton family (who now live in Melbourne, Australia), the garden is under the care of the National Botanic Garden. Its curator, Seamus O'Brien, will guide our group round its treasures, many newly introduced via his plant hunting expeditions to Chile, China and Nepal. This will be particularly interesting as Seamus is the author of the important *In the Footsteps of Augustine Henry & his Chinese Plant Collectors*, (Garden Art Press, 2011). We have a light lunch locally and then drive into south Co Wicklow to visit a **private garden** created in recent years. There will be a final group dinner in Dublin that evening.

Day 6: Friday 14 July – **Carmel Duignan's Garden** is the creation of one of Ireland's foremost horticultural writers. You will be amazed by just how much can be packed into a small space, all of it combined with imagination and wit. We return to the city centre where you will have some free time for lunch, not included. In mid afternoon we continue to Dublin Airport for the return flight to Heathrow.

PRACTICALITIES

Price £1895 **Without Flights** £1765 **Deposit** £275 **Single Supplement** £375 (Double for Sole Use)

Hotel 5 Nights with Breakfast at the 4* Davenport Hotel

Flights Aer Lingus

Outward: **EI163** Depart London Heathrow (Terminal 2) **1325**, arrive Dublin **1450**

Return: **EI178** Depart Dublin **1800**, arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 2) **1930**

Price includes 2 Dinners & 2 Lunches with wine, water & coffee, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities, the services of Tom Duncan, Jimi Blake & Helen Dillon

Not included Travel to/from Heathrow, 3 Dinners & 3 Lunches



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