



Laois

Garden Trail



# Foreword

by Dermot O' Neill: broadcaster, writer, lecturer and gardening expert



Dermot O' Neill

Since buying a small home and beginning to develop a walled garden in the foothills of the Slieve Bloom Mountains, County Laois, I have fallen in love with the place. I've had opportunities to grow a wide and varied range of plants from fruit and vegetables to trees and shrubs, and my special interest - roses. The county brings its own unique and special atmosphere, making it a magical place to create a garden. This new trail provides a unique opportunity to showcase some of the county's finest private and public gardens. You don't have to be an expert to enjoy the beauty of these places.

Included in the trail are famous public gardens such as Emo Court and Heywood, but there are also several uniquely styled gardens, where the personality of the owner shows through. A fine example is Dunmore Country School, owned by Tanguy de Toulgoët, a French horticulturist of great skill. There you will see a working French-style kitchen garden. Another garden which shows the owners' personality is Gash Gardens, owned by Mary Keenan and Ross Doyle. These gardens were started 25 years ago and have developed into a plantsman's paradise, full of interesting and beautifully arranged and grown plants. Another noteworthy garden on the trail is the garden at Ballintubbert, owned by Fergus and Orna Hoban. These gardens were started in 1999 and 20 garden rooms within 14 acres have been completed to date. Fruitlawn Garden, a one acre Walled garden, is created by Nationally renowned garden designer Arthur Shackleton. Beautiful plant combinations of Rare and unusual plants can be seen. The garden has a formal layout and is planted with artistic style. Arthur belongs to a famous Irish gardening tradition started by his father David at Beech Park.

These are just four of the fantastic gardens to be seen on this trail. Explore this brochure and take time to discover and be inspired by some of the country's finest gardens, both public and private.

—*Dermot O'Neill*

# Introduction



*The gardens in Laois attract novice and experienced gardeners from all over the world.*



This brochure invites you to explore the Gardens of County Laois. Laois is situated in the heart of some of Ireland's most beautiful landscapes, where history has left its marks in the remains of Celtic ringforts, medieval ruins and monastic buildings. County Laois is steeped in heritage and folklore and has many historic buildings and gardens testament to this.

The Laois Garden Trail features 10 gardens including great old gardens such as Emo Court and Heywood Gardens and smaller gardens which stimulate creativity and imagination. The gardens in Laois attract novice and experienced gardeners from all over the world.

Laois is located in the heart of Ireland and it's central location also offers the visitor the perfect base to explore Ireland and its neighbouring counties of Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny, Offaly and Tipperary. Portlaoise is the main county town and has a superb road, rail and bus infrastructure and is easily accessible to most towns and cities in Ireland. County Laois is located approximately 1 hour from Dublin, 45 minutes from Kilkenny, 45 minutes from the Rock of Cashel and 1 hour 30 minutes from Rosslare ferry port.



# The Garden at Ballintubbert



*A beautiful Arts and Crafts garden where visitors experience simplicity and complexity at the same time. Relaxing, but at times challenging, this 14 acre space stimulates the senses and the imagination.*



Lutyens Garden



White Garden



Canal and house



Karnak

**Owner:** Fergus Hoban

Ballintubbert, Stradbally, Co. Laois  
+353 (0) 85-8505876  
thegarden@ballintubbert.com  
www.ballintubbert.com

**Admission fees:** €10 per adult; €3 per child; €8.50 per person for concessions. Guided tours are only available at weekends by appointment

**Opening dates:** April – September

**Opening times:** 9am – 7pm (last admission 6pm)

**Facilities:** Toilets. The garden is suitable for coach tours, but is not wheelchair accessible. Nursery with plant sales will open in 2012.

**Refreshments:** 50-seater Tea Room. Booking is advisable.

**Children:** Children are welcome but must be supervised at all times as there is a large water feature.

This garden was started in its current form in 1999. It covers an area of 14 acres and continues to develop, consisting of 42 ‘rooms’ of which 20 have been completed to date. Some of these include The Victorian Secret Garden, the White Garden, the Little Orchard and the Theatre Lawn. As visitors choose their routes through rooms, they sometimes must choose between continuing on their way or doubling back to see a room, which they may have missed. This creates a tension in an otherwise relaxing space – all part of the juxtaposition of this enthralling garden.



Potager



Detail from ‘The Tree Kings’ sculpture



Canal from the house

Owner Fergus Hoban and Head Gardener Andrew Farrelly are Robinsonian in their outlook, placing an emphasis on hardy and native plants. This is best exemplified in the ‘Robinson’ room where native plants cohabit with less common Babbington leek, Burren onion, ginkgo and a European selection of hemerocallis. Here visitors will marvel at the ‘Green Man’ sculpture, which was carved from an old Spanish chestnut tree. Further on, visitors must concentrate as they ascend a series of steps to look through the Oval Window for an unusual vista of the house, the Lime Walk and the Canal, which measures 100 metres long and is 13 metres wide. The axis of the canal runs through the house, the Lutyens Garden, which is based on the original design for the Lutyens Garden at Heywood, and through the Irish Yew Walks. This axis almost splits the garden in two. It is made whole again by the Contemplative Walk, which runs for 2.5 kilometres around the garden boundary.

**Dogs:** Dogs not allowed

**Unusual plants:** An emphasis is placed on hardy and native plants.

**GPS Coordinates:** 52.985121,-7.086954

#### **DIRECTIONS**

**From Stradbally Village:** Take the Carlow Road/N80 south, travel up the hill and through the mountain

gap. As the road falls, look out for the sign on the left hand side. 4.6km from Stradbally.

**From Athy:** Take the Carlow Road south, travelling 5.2km out of town through the village of Ballylynan. After Ballylynan look out for the sign. At the sign, turn right towards Stradbally. After 4.5km look out for the sign on the right. Turn right and travel 1.2km to our car park.

# Castle Durrrow



*Demesne gardens with formal terraces, herbaceous borders, and a vegetable and flower garden with mixed annuals.*



Castle Durrrow



Castle Durrrow Gardens



Walled Kitchen Garden



Castle Durrrow Gardens

**Owner:** Peter and Shelly Stokes

Durrrow, Co. Laois  
+353 (0) 57-8736555  
info@castledurrrow.com  
www.castledurrrow.com

**Admission fees:** Free. Guided Garden tours available on request and must be booked in advance.

**Opening dates:** All year

**Opening times:** Daylight hours to view gardens.

**Facilities:** Toilets, Bar & Restaurant

**Refreshments:** Refreshments available in our bar and drawing room.

Renovations to the house and gardens started in 1999. South facing terraces were put in and planted with pink, blue and white flowering plants. At the bottom of the steps an avenue of scented roses was created, containing: The Mayflower, Brother Cadfael, Gertrude Jekyll, Rambling Rector, New Dawn, Mary Rose, and Grace.

Pink cherry trees draw the eye to the far end of the lawn. This area is called 'The Good South'. Adjacent is the Pleasure Garden, which is home to a tall monkey puzzle tree, a huge *buxus sempervirens* and a copper beech with a circumference of 7 metres! Paths lead to the gazebo, which is topped with a weathervane depicting a bridal couple.

Steps lead to the Courtyard, which has a rectangular lay out. Buxus topiary gives structure in winter, while scented roses provide a wonderful fragrance throughout summer. Among the roses are: Gertrude Jekyll, Jubilee Celebration, Winchester Cathedral, The Generous Gardener, Alnwick Castle, John Clare, Wildeva, Comte De Chambord and the thornless Zepherine Drouhin. From here visitors can look down on the Walled Garden, which is divided by

hedging into several 'rooms'. There is a Herb Garden and a Vegetable Garden, which is full of produce chosen by the Head Chef. Produce from the Fruit Garden is used for making jams, desserts and cordial. The Flower Border supplies the hotel with cut flowers – lilies and a variety of roses such as Queen of Sweden, The Fairy, Little White Pet, Rosa Mundi, Mrs John Laing, New Dawn, Adelaide De Orleans, Madame Alfred Carerra, Penelope and Ann Boylen.

The river walk, which forms part of the Laois Leafy Loop Walk, runs along the Erkina River. Along here, bluebells and wild garlic grow under the trees, which were planted in Victorian times. The walk ends behind the Church of Ireland graveyard where the original Castle owners, the Ashbrooks, are buried.



Gazebo



Courtyard

**Children:** Children are welcome but must be supervised at all times.

**Dogs:** Dogs allowed on leads

**Unusual plants:** *Quercus ilex*, Korean oak, David Austen English roses

**GPS Coordinates:** 52.86913,-7.396545

#### DIRECTIONS

**From Dublin,** take the M8 to Cork. Exit the motorway at Portlaoise, taking the old N8 to Durrow. In Durrow the entrance to Castle Durrow is at the village green.

**From Cork,** take the M8 to Dublin, exiting at Urlingford and travelling along the old N8 to Durrow. In Durrow, the entrance to Castle Durrow is at the Village Green.

# Clonaslee Garden



*One acre of enchanting, rural gardens developed around old farmyard.*



Under the Weeping Pear



Rambling rose 'Kiftsgate'



The Long Border



*Stipa gigantea*

**Owner:** Nancy Costelloe

Graiguefulla, Clonaslee, Co. Laois

+353 (0) 57-8648038

[annecostelloe@eircom.net](mailto:annecostelloe@eircom.net)

**Admission fees:** €5 per person including tea/coffee

**Opening dates:** March–September

**Opening times:** By appointment only

**Facilities:** Toilet. Partial wheelchair access. Some access roads not suitable for large coaches; please contact the owner for further details.

**Refreshments:** Tea/Coffee included

**Children:** Children are welcome but must be supervised at all times.

**Dogs:** Dogs allowed on leads

This floral oasis in the Laois farmland was established 15 years ago. In the old farmyard, a sundial is surrounded by box hedging and flowers. A rambling red rose climbs the gable end of an old stone farm building. Near the house, a seated area is shaded by a pergola covered in wisteria. From here visitors can admire the rockeries, the raised lavender bed, the upright yews and the weeping copper beech.



Courtyard



The Stumpery



*Cornus kousa satomi*

A stroll across a small stone path leads to a water feature, constructed to look like a natural spring. A quaint glasshouse, which houses tomatoes and beans, provides support to clematis. In front of this glasshouse there is a wonderful display of pink lilies and scented pink roses, which complement the pink *cornus kousa*. Passing tall foxgloves and arching Solomon's seal, visitors will come to a short beech walk. At the end of this there is a piece of bog oak, which is covered in clematis. This leads to a rectangular lawned area, where the lawn is so perfect that croquet is played on it. It is lined on either side by herbaceous borders, which are full of poppies, astrantias, lilies, delphinium, aquilegia, crocosmia, astilbe and *nepeta* 'Six Hills Giant'. Beyond the striking *Sambucus nigra* 'Black Lace' is the vegetable garden, which produces all the standard fare as well as the eye catching red chard. Opposite is the berry garden, which produces blackcurrant, raspberry, gooseberry and blueberry.

**Unusual plants:** *Sambucus nigra* 'Black Lace', *cornus kousa satomi*, and weeping copper beech

**Awards:** Won Best Garden in Laois 3 times in the VIKING Irish Garden Awards

**GPS Coordinates:** 53.162095,-7.489693

#### DIRECTIONS

**From Mountmellick/Portlaoise:** Proceed along the R422, after Rosenallis go through a crossroad, then take the next right. Drive for 1.8 kilometres. passing

a small stone cottage called 'Rose Cottage' on the left hand side and veering right at this cottage. A short distance later Clonaslee Garden is on the left.

**From Clonaslee village:** Drive toward Rosenallis on the R422. 0.5 kilometres after the speed sign on the edge of Clonaslee village, turn left. Drive for 1.8 kilometres. passing a small stone cottage called 'Rose Cottage' on the left hand side and veering right at this cottage. A short distance later Clonaslee Garden is on the left.

# Clonohill Gardens



*Clonohill Gardens are the splendid creation of floral artist Enda Thompson-Phelan, and feature many interesting and unusual plants on a one acre site surrounding Clonohill House.*



Carex evergold provides strong contrast with *Berginia cardifolia*



Delphiniums



Lakeside buttercups



Terracotta ducks in the Walled Garden

**Owner:** Enda Thompson Phelan

Laois Angling Centre, Coolrain, Co. Laois  
+353 (0) 87-9962864  
clonohillgardens@gmail.com  
www.laoisanglingcentre.ie

**Admission Fees:** €6 per person

**Opening Dates:** May-September

**Opening Times:** By appointment only

**Facilities:** Coach parking, refreshments and toilets.

The gardens are partly wheelchair accessible.  
Hospitality area and toilet are wheelchair accessible.

**Refreshments:** Available

**Children:** Children are welcome but must be supervised at all times.

**Dogs:** Dogs not allowed

**Unusual plants:** *Beesia calthifolia*, *Jeffersonia diphylla*,  
*Diplarrhena moraea*, *Triostemon pinnatifidum*,

The Gardens have been designed and developed to enhance the existing landscape with many mature trees providing a shady home for woodland treasures.

The looped trail begins at the woodland area where collections of Trilliums, Helleborus and Galanthus thrive. From there, the path leads on to Jacobs Walk, which provides a colourful surprise for the visitor with its meandering gravel pathway framed by sandstone stables constructed by Enda's grandfather, the late Jacob Thompson. Varieties of *Polemonium* (Jacobs Ladder) flourish in this area together with groups of Achillea King Alfred and the small *Ligularia* 'cafe noir'. Residing comfortably along the gravel pathway are many miniature Hostas. Heuchera varieties provide foliage colour and strong contrast with Sedums, Veronics and Candleabra primulas. Occasional evergreen planting of *Ilex crenata* and *Diplarrhena moraea* are notable plants during the winter months.

An archway frames the entrance to the North Garden where one is greeted by an attractive *Cytisus battandieri*. In this area mature trees provide a decorative home for a vast collection of interesting Ferns and leads on to an extensive open lawn area with its curving paths and many colourful Herbaceous borders. A secret area and popular with children is the 'Red Squirrels Den' with its majestic Sitka Spruce trees.

The sheltered walled garden overlooking the lake is a plant collectors' paradise where *Ramonda myconi*, *Roscoea* and *Celmissias* thrive alongside star performers *Paeonia mlokosewitschii*, *Mecanopsis grandis* and *Cardiocrinum giganteum*. Clonohill Gardens very much reveal the owners artistic sensitivity and attract much acclaim from visiting groups.



Left to right: One hundred year old *Thuja plicata* frame an entrance to the Walled Garden; A figurine rests comfortably with harmonising plant material; Archway view of Jacob's Walk; *Diplarrhena moraea* enjoys a sunny spot along Jacob's Walk

*Ramonda myconi*, *Cicerbita lactuca bourgeii*,  
*Aristolchia macrophylla*, *Peltoboykinia watanabei*.

**GPS Coordinates:** 52° 59' 04" N 7° 37' 29" W

#### DIRECTIONS

**From Dublin M7:** Take Exit 18 for Mountrath (R445) and drive through town towards Limerick. Travel 1 mile from Mountrath, take the 1st right turn signed for Coolrain. Continue straight for 4 miles approximately arriving at a crossroads junction with a stop sign and sign for Laois Angling Centre. Continue

straight through crossroads and at T-junction take left signposted for Laois Angling Centre. Entrance 100 metres from junction.

**From Limerick M7:** Take Exit 22 and drive towards Roscrea. At roundabout take 4th (last) exit signed for Dublin. Travel 3 miles approximately and take 2nd left turn after Roscrea Golf Club, signed Ballaghmore and Laois Angling Centre. Entrance is signed and is 3 miles from Ballaghmore. Clonohill Gardens are adjacent to Laois Angling Centre.

# Dunmore Country School



*Working/ teaching kitchen garden developed along the lines of a French 'potager' (kitchen garden)*



Green Pepper



Borage



Conference pears

**Owner:** Tanguy de Toulgoët

Swan Road, Durrrow, Co. Laois

+353 (0) 87-1258002 / +353 (0) 57-8736578

tanguy@dunmorecountryschool.ie

www.dunmorecountryschool.ie

**Admission fees:** €5 per person. Groups of 10-20 only

**Opening dates:** March – November

**Opening times:** By appointment only

**Facilities:** No. Not wheelchair accessible. Gardening tool sales

**Refreshments:** Available by request to groups

**Children:** Children are welcome but must be supervised at all times.

**Dogs:** Dogs allowed on leads

**Unusual plants:** Sorrel *Rumex Montanus*, white blackcurrant

Although this garden was only established in 2005, it has already featured in the *Farmers Journal*, *Irish Times* and *Irish Independent* as well as Jane Powers' book *The Living Garden*. Dunmore Country School has also featured on RTE's *Nationwide* and *Dermot's Secret Garden*. It covers approximately 1 acre. It is not a show garden, rather a working kitchen garden, which is dedicated to teaching. It is, in Tanguy's words, "not a display garden but a garden in progress".



Red Gage



Swiss Chard



Dunmore Country School

Tanguy follows traditional gardening methods and believes in biodiversity.

Tanguy keeps bees at Dunmore Country School. So, there are plenty of flowers for bees to feed on, such as *nepeta* 'Six Hills Giant'. Green manures phacelia, buckwheat, mustard and clover are grown. Herbs are also produced including absinthe, angelica, various types of mint and hyssop. Some of these are used for herbal medicine.

This garden overflows with fruit and vegetables. A range of vegetables are cultivated such as Japanese squash, courgettes, oca and rocket as well as unusual produce like purple carrots and purple potatoes. 48 varieties of tomatoes were grown in 2011 including some Mexican varieties. A selection of berries fruit in the garden; tayberry, gooseberry, blackberry, blackcurrant and the unusual white blackcurrant. There are interesting features such as a medlar tree, a fruiting quince, and a fruiting hedge, which is planted at 45° angle. Everything is used and processed. Tanguy saves a lot of seeds.

**GPS Coordinates:** 52.854374,-7.397125

#### **DIRECTIONS**

From Durrow, take ROSCREA direction continue for 1 km and take first right on L1652 and immediately left. Drive for about 100 metres. The entrance is the first one on the right, first house behind the trees

# Emo Court



*100 acres of parkland with formal lawns, mature trees and a nursery lake all located against the backdrop of a stately 18th century building.*



Lake at Emo Court



Yew Tree Walk



Emo Court from the Wellingtonia Avenue



Walnut Tree

**Owner:** Office of Public Works

Emo, Portlaoise, Co. Laois  
+353 (0) 57-8626573 / +353 (0) 86-8107916  
emocourt@opw.ie  
www.opw.ie

**Admission fees:** Free admission to gardens but garden tours must be booked in advance

**Opening dates:** All year for the Gardens (Daylight hours). House open Easter to September

**Opening times:** Gardens (Daylight Hours).  
House (Guided Tours available 10am–6pm daily,  
Easter to September)

**Facilities:** Wheelchair accessible with disabled toilet

**Refreshments:** Tea Rooms on site

**Children:** Children are welcome but must be supervised at all times.

**Dogs:** Dogs allowed on leads

The historic Emo Court was designed by James Gandon in 1790. In 1995, the estate was handed over to the State by Mr. Cholmeley Harrison. 250 acres of the estate are managed by the Office of Public Works (100 acres of parkland including nursery lake).



Stone Tiger at Emo Court



One of the 'Four Seasons' statues



Polyhymnia surrounded by catmint

At the front of the house the Wellingtonia Avenue stretches for 1 mile. It is named after the *Sequoiadendron giganteum*, which line it. A beech walk behind the house leads to the nursery lake, which covers an area of 25 acres. Closer to the house there are formal lawns with a number of statues. The Four Seasons statues represent Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn. The bronze statue of Polyhymnia sits near the house and is surrounded by catmint (*nepeta*). The Huntsman and His Dog can be found in the area known as 'the Clucker'. Bacchus stands in 'the Grapery' while Ceres awaits visitors at the end of the yew walk.

Behind the house, the arboretum covers approximately 20 acres. Here, grass pathways meander through an impressive variety of trees such as the Bhutan Pine, the Tulip Tree (*Liriodendron Tulipefera*) the Handkerchief Tree (*Davidia involucrata*) and cedars including the Blue Atlas Cedar and the Cedar of Lebanon. A Walnut tree is a source of food for red squirrels, which live on the grounds. So is the large Spanish chestnut, which produces edible chestnuts. The bark of this tree has a wonderful texture. Also interesting is the lime tree avenue. It pre-dates Emo Court and is testament to the original building, Dawson Court.

**Unusual plants:** Evergreen oaks *Quercus ilex* and a large Spanish chestnut *Castanea sativa*

**GPS Coordinates:** 53.097426,-7.205057

#### **DIRECTIONS**

From the M7 motorway, take exit 15 for Emo/Portarlington. Follow the signs for Emo village. Take the 3rd exit off the roundabout for Emo. In Emo village turn right at the signpost for Emo Court.

# Fruitlawn Garden



*Walled-in garden of approximately 1 acre with richly planted perennial borders containing many unusual plants, Hornbeam tunnel, orchard, fruit and vegetable garden, oak copse, yew hedges, beautiful climbing roses and many other lovely trees and shrubs.*



Campanulas, Artemisia and Phloxes



Fruitlawn Garden



Fruitlawn Garden



Fruitlawn Garden

**Owner:** Arthur Shackleton & Carol Booth

Fruitlawn, Abbeyleix, Co. Laois  
+353 (0) 57-8730146  
shackletonarthur@yahoo.ie  
www.arthurshackleton.com

**Admission fees:** €5 per person without guide. €7 for guided group tours. No group discount. Guided tours for groups only.

**Opening dates:** May–October

**Opening times:** By appointment only

**Facilities:** Plant Sales. Wheelchair accessible garden, but no toilets

**Refreshments:** No, but there are plenty of cafés and restaurants in nearby Abbeyleix

Created 10 years ago by garden designer Arthur Shackleton, Fruitlawn Garden covers approx. 1 acre within a walled in setting. The garden has a formal layout with paths, hedges and a hornbeam tunnel dividing it across the middle.

The different spaces in the garden include large perennial borders which have a mass of changing colour and texture throughout the summer. There is also an Oak copse under-planted with lots of spring bulbs, a fruit and vegetable garden area, which includes more unusual plants like seakale, asparagus, blue potatoes and wineberries. A small orchard is set in a wildflower meadow. A small formal pool, a yew-hedged recreation space and many unusual and beautiful wall plants complete the picture.

The plants in the garden include many rare and special varieties collected over the years from some of Ireland's best gardens. Many of these are for sale in the garden.

Within the formal layout, hundreds of perennial plants self-seed freely giving the garden a relaxed and informal feel. These include: Agapanthus, Aquilegas, Campanulas, Geraniums, Oenotheras and Eryngiums.



Fruitlawn Garden



Oak Copse

**Children:** Children are welcome but must be supervised at all times.

**Dogs:** Dogs not allowed

**Unusual plants:** *Hosta krossa regal*, *aristolochia macrophylla*, fruiting quince

**GPS Coordinates:** 52.906624,-7.400687

#### **DIRECTIONS**

Take Ballacolla/Rathdowney road from Abbeyleix, after approx. 4km turn right to Shanahoe on L1653. Go approximately 0.75km, pass large white house on right, Fruitlawn is next entrance between two stone buildings.

# Gash Gardens



*A hidden treasure trove of interesting and unusual plants in an enchanting and tranquil setting.*



*Water-a linking element throughout the garden*



Eyecatching use of texture



Toadstools



Garden features blend harmoniously with lush planting

**Owner:** Mary Keenan & Ross Doyle

Gash, Castletown, Portlaoise, Co. Laois  
+353 (0) 87-2728337 / +353 (0) 57-8732247  
gashgardens@eircom.net  
www.gashgardens.ie

**Admission fees:** €5 per person. Guided tours for groups of 10+ is by appointment and requires advance booking.

**Opening dates:** Gardens open  
1st May–30th September.

**Opening times:** 10am-5pm from Mon-Sat. Closed on Sundays except by prior arrangement. Group tours by appointment.

**Facilities:** Parking. Plant Sales. Toilets. Visitors are welcome to picnic in the gardens. Wedding photography and photo shoots are facilitated subject to advance booking and fees.

**Refreshments:** Available by advance request to groups

**Children:** Children are welcome but must be supervised at all times due to water features and river. Gash Gardens are not suitable for small children.

Established for over 25 years, Gash Gardens has evolved from a farm paddock where cows once grazed into a plantsperson's oasis that now covers an area of approximately 4 acres.



Moonhouse



Water and lily

These well kept gardens progress through 3 distinct areas: a semi-formal gravel garden where rambling pathways lead through billowing displays of flower and foliage, a lawn area punctuated with colourful herbaceous borders and fine specimen trees, and a looped riverside walk where nature abounds. The distinguishing feature of the garden is a stone cavern known as the Moon House with a cascade tumbling past its circular window into a lily pond. Water is a linking element throughout the garden with meandering streams and soothing pond areas inhabited by frogs and newts. A laburnum archway leads through a fernery and along a path lined with beech hedging to the river walk, along the River Nore. Plenty of well-positioned seats and a gazebo invite visitors to pause a while and absorb the views, sounds and pervasive scents in this haven of peace and tranquility. Great emphasis is placed on foliage and texture. Beds are filled with rogersia, gunnera, astilbe, ligularia, darmera, iris, crocosmia, and eye-catching flowers like *Lilium martagon*, *Alstroemeria psittacina* and *Cirsium rivulare* 'Atropurpureum'. The garden hosts a particularly large collection of perennial geraniums teamed with old-fashioned roses and an ever expanding assembly of *Polygonatum* and other intriguing shade-loving plants like *Ypsilandra tibetica*, *Saruma henryi* and *Triosteum pinnatifidum*. Visitors will need at least one hour to enjoy Gash Gardens.

**Dogs:** Dogs allowed on leads

**Awards:** Gash Gardens has won awards in the Leinster and Midlands Regional categories of the Shamrock All Ireland Gardens Competition in 1990, 1995 and 1998 and took first place in the Laois County category of the Viking Irish Garden Awards in 2005 and 2007.

**Unusual plants:** *Cornus controversa* 'Variegata', *Acer griseum*, *Davidia involucrata*, *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*, *Picea omorika* 'Pendula', *Syringa x josiflexa* 'Bellicent', *Hydrangea aspera* subsp. *sargentiana*

**GPS Coordinates:** Lat: 52.9708 Long: -7.4867

#### **DIRECTIONS**

Located just over 1 kilometre off the R445 (formerly the N7) between Portlaoise and Roscrea, close to the village of Castletown. The garden is approximately 16 kilometres from Portlaoise. From the M7 at Portlaoise, take Exit 18 and follow the R445 through Mountrath to Castletown. Turn left off the R445 to enter Castletown Village. Follow the signs for Gash Gardens and Keenans Nursery.

# Heywood Gardens



*50 acres of woodland, lakes and formal gardens including the sunken garden designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens.*



Entrance to Oval Garden from lawn



Lilies in Oval Garden

**Owner:** Office of Public Works

Ballinakill, Co. Laois

+353 (0) 57-8733563 / +353 (0) 87-6675291

heywood@opw.ie

www.opw.ie

**Admission fees:** Free admission to gardens. Garden tours must be booked in advance. Tours are free during the week, but incur a cost at weekends.

**Opening dates:** All year. Weekend access through turnstile gate only.

**Opening times:** Daylight hours

**Facilities:** Car park

**Children:** Children are welcome but must be supervised at all times.

The centrepiece of these gardens is the Lutyens Garden designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, and dating from 1912. A pond with turtle fountains is surrounded by a range of plants; peony, miniature Iris, Bergenia, Anemone, Hostas, Geraniums, Heuchera, and Saxifraga.



Turtle at fountain edge



Window on original entrance drive



View of Oval Garden

Blue tones are provided by Nepeta, Aconitum, Delphinium, and Chionodoxa. These contrast nicely with the white Zantedeschia, *Iberis spervirens*, Anaphalis and white jasmine. The pink *Rosa 'Mevrouw Nathalie Nypels'* gives a hedge effect and is under-planted with bluebells for spring colour. From the elliptical, sunken garden, a hidden staircase leads to a series of 'rooms' which are divided by *Taxus baccata* hedging. One of these rooms houses old species roses and Iris from Dublin's Botanic Gardens. Another room has Astilbes, *Lilium 'Brunello'*, Dianthus and lupins.

A pleached lime alley planted in approximately 1906 leads from the Lutyens Garden to the Upper Terrace, where there are Alliums, wild rose, *Erinus alpinus*, hardy cyclamen, and Kniphofia. Nearby the Pergola has been recently planted with Hydrangeas, Wisteria, and Fuchsia. From here visitors can view the chain of three lakes below which are part of the older romantic landscape and can be accessed via the steps. A new pathway leads through beech trees down to the original drive. Along this drive visitors can admire the exterior of the partially restored Orangery, the Sham Castle and the old window. The landscape also includes the woodland of ancient oaks and beech, an obelisk, Claude's Seat and the bath house.

**Dogs:** Dogs are not allowed in the formal gardens and must be kept on a lead in all other areas of the grounds.

**Unusual plants:** Split leaf beech, *Lilium 'Brunello'*, old species roses

**GPS Coordinates:** 52.894613,-7.307281

#### DIRECTIONS

7km south-east from Abbeyleix off R432 to Ballinakill. (The gardens are on the grounds of Ballinakill Community School).

# Sensory Garden at Dove House



*Calm relaxed style of garden built and planted by service users at Dove House.*



Statue



Sundial



Maze



Sensory Garden at Dove House

**Owner:** Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary and the Muiriosa Foundation

Dove House, Main Street, Abbeyleix,  
+353 (0) 57-8731325  
dovehouse@scjms.ie

**Admission fees:** Donations at visitors' discretion.  
Groups of less than 15 people welcome.

**Opening dates:** Monday–Friday all year round

**Opening times:** 10am–4pm guided tours by appointment

**Facilities:** Wheelchair accessible. Braille signage for people with visual impairment. Plant sales–winter and summer bedding plants—as well as concrete garden ornament sales

Previously a Brigidine Convent, this 2 acre site was built and planted in 1996 by people with intellectual disabilities – all participants at Dove House. Their work sits against the backdrop of lime trees, which were donated by Lady de Vesce in 1840. The aim of the garden is to make visitors more aware of their five senses – Touch, Sound, Smell, Sight and Taste.



Hornbeam tunnel in the Sensory Garden



Loosestrife



Thatched Summer House

The Fruit and Vegetable Gardens stimulate taste while smell is stimulated by the Scented Garden, which is planted with scented geraniums, scented roses, philadelphus, oregano, lemon balm, honeysuckle and *Viburnum bodnantense*. Visitors can wander through the hornbeam maze under the pear archway, which is under-planted with gooseberries, towards the Sculpture Garden. In the Sculpture Garden, there is a willow arbour and a mosaic has been started by the participants of Dove House.

An impressive feature is the Humming Stone with a hole carved in the middle of it. A person of any hearing ability can put his/her head in the hole and hear the resonance when others shout into the hole. The trickling water in the pond and fountain also stimulates the sense of sound. So do the chimes in the thatched summer house. A hornbeam tunnel was developed with visually impaired people in mind. The light draws the eye down the tunnel towards the fountain at the end. The sense of touch is stimulated by grass and pebbles underfoot and by the different textures of leaves and petals.

**Children:** Children are welcome but must be supervised at all times.

**Dogs:** Dogs are not allowed

**Awards:** Won an environmental award from ESB

**Unusual plants:** Box elder, *acer negundo*, flamingo rowan, and blue cedar trees

**GPS Coordinates:** 52.919874,-7.340584

**DIRECTIONS**

From Dublin take the M8 to Cork. Exit the motorway at Portlaoise, taking the old N8 to Abbyleix. In Abbyleix pass the Heritage Building on the left, go over the brow of a hill, turning left at the blue gates before the pedestrian crossing.

# Laois Garden Trail Map

## Garden Locations

The County of Laois is one of the most strategically located Counties in Ireland. Portlaoise, the County town, is located at the junction of National Primary Routes M7, N7 and N8, and the National Secondary Route N80. Laois is situated in the heart of some of Ireland's most beautiful landscapes, where history has left its marks in the remains of Celtic ringforts, medieval ruins and monastic buildings. Laois is located less than one hour from Dublin's suburbs, 45 minutes from Kilkenny, 45 minutes from the Rock of Cashel and 30 minutes from horse-racing at the Curragh. Portlaoise has a superb road, rail and bus infrastructure – one of the best in the country so it is in easy access to most towns and cities in Ireland and is in easy access from Northern Ireland.





# Resources



## FOR INFORMATION ON TOURISM AND GROUP BOOKINGS

Honor Deevy, Tourism Officer, Laois County Council, Aras an Chontae, Portlaoise, County Laois.

T: +353 (0) 57 86 74324 E: hdeevy@laoiscoco.ie

## FOR INFORMATION ON HERITAGE

Catherine Casey, Heritage Officer, Laois County Council, Aras an Chontae, Portlaoise, County Laois

T: +353 (0) 57 86 74348 E: ccasey@laoiscoco.ie  
[www.laois.ie/heritage](http://www.laois.ie/heritage)

VIEW ONLINE AT: [WWW.LAOISTOURISM.IE](http://WWW.LAOISTOURISM.IE)

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Laois Gardens location map by Penhouse Design.

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*“The love of gardening is a seed  
once sown that never dies”.*

— Gertrude Jekyll