



# REPORT

## Green Foundation Ireland

invites you to an evening online TALK

with **Stephen Shanahan** of  
**Hazelwood Landscapes**

### *Wild is Wonderful*



**Venue:** by Zoom (*details given after registration*)

**Tuesday 25 April 2023 – 19:00 to 20:00**

Admission to this event is **FREE** but you **MUST** register beforehand.  
You can do so through [our Eventbrite page here](#).

# Wild is Wonderful

## THEME

This talk looked at the making of a wildlife garden in Dublin 7 and the work of [Connecting Cabra](#), a sustainable energy community.

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## ABOUT OUR SPEAKER

### Stephen Shanahan



**Stephen** graduated from the National Botanic Gardens in Glasnevin, Dublin. He has a diploma in Amenity Horticulture. Stephen has HETAC qualifications in landscape design and AutoCAD.

With over 30 years' experience in the industry, Stephen worked with Temple Bar Properties as part of their Greening Temple Bar Project. While working in St. Joseph's School for Deaf Boys, Stephen used his extensive plant knowledge to help set up their horticultural therapy unit before establishing his business [Hazelwood Landscapes](#) in 1996.

Stephen has been passionate about gardening with nature in mind since he watched Chris Baine's *"The Making of a Wildlife Garden"* in 1984. He grew up in Artane in Dublin and now lives in Cabra.

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## ABOUT OUR FACILITATOR

### Donna Mullen

Chair of Green Foundation Ireland **Donna** is a farmer, consultant ecologist, and director of Wildlife Surveys Ireland, with an award-winning farm, awards and placements which include the RDS Sustainable Enterprise Award, the EU Rural Inspiration Award, and the Ellison Award.

She works as an ecologist, drawing up nature trails and sustainability plans. Her work involves spending many happy hours surveying buildings for bats.



## ABOUT OUR TALK

Donna welcomed everyone to our event and introduced Stephen Shanahan. Stephen began by explaining that he started wildlife gardening when he was a child, building his first pond and wildlife garden in his parents' house in Artane more than 30 years ago – long before wildlife gardens became fashionable!

Stephen studied horticulture and is a professional horticulturist. He showed us fabulous photographs of pictorial gardens – these look amazing and are reasonably good for wildlife, but he explained that native gardens are much better for wildlife. Pictorial gardens often give us unrealistic expectations of what a native hay meadow garden will look like.

Stephen spoke about the work of [Connecting Cabra](#), a group of local volunteers, with a vision for Cabra as a sustainable energy and biodiverse community, and a plan which includes warmer homes and clean energy. They are involved in local food production and distributed fruit trees, ran retrofitting webinars, and had cycling days – with free coffees for cyclists! They built bat boxes with GFI, launched their community Energy Masterplan, had a community fun day, took over parking spaces for the day to have street food, had a bat walk and an energy information day, launched their biodiversity action plan, and distributed 3,000 pollinator bulbs, 100 fruit trees, and 1,000 trees to local residents, along with wildflower seeds.

One of their initiatives is [Space to Grow](#), where they pair up older people, with large gardens, who need gardening help, with young people who live in apartments or small garden areas, and who want to grow their own food. This initiative has been extremely successful in promoting food growing and intergenerational friendships.

Stephen then took us through the wildlife in his garden – an amazing array of species for a garden in the city, with many species of bat, bee, butterfly and moth.

He then gave us some ideas on wildlife gardening which we could try at home.

His first suggestion was to create a pond – even a basin of water will do. Put it away from overhanging trees, in a sunny place on a level site, close to the house so you can enjoy it. The pond should be as big as possible, with shallow edges for frogs and pond liner of EPDM Butyl rubber or Bentonite Clay, with an underlining of sand or TERRAM to prevent puncturing. It is important to ensure that any pond plants are non-invasive (beware of Canadian Pond weed!) Also, don't put in goldfish as they will eat your frogspawn!

Stephen continued by talking about meadow creation. He advised us first to do nothing and see what appears in our seed stock. If we are to plant, it is really important to use native seed stock from reputable stockists, such as from **Sandro Cafolla** at [Design by Nature](#), or from [Eco Seeds](#) (which is based in Northern Ireland and so their prices are in sterling). Use clean, weed free soil which is not fertile, cut it on an annual basis and introduce [yellow rattle](#) which will reduce the vigour of the grass.

Stephen also showed us bee hotels which were being used in his gardens, and an amazing photograph of a frog spider on an oxeye daisy in his front garden.

We then had a lively questions and answers session where, amongst other things, we discussed hedgehog corridors, and also our worries concerning the latest fashion craze of plastic grass. Mention was also made of the [All-Ireland Pollinator Plan](#), which is a framework bringing together different sectors across the island of Ireland to create a landscape where pollinators can survive and thrive. It is implemented by the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

This was a wonderful talk which has inspired us all to get out and garden for nature.

You can [access our video of the talk here](#).

**Green Foundation Ireland**

**28 April 2023**