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Cork garden designer builds a Sustainable Dairy Farm Garden at Bord Bia Bloom 2022

The National Dairy Council is to present a show garden at this year's Bord Bia Bloom. After a two-year hiatus, Ireland's largest gardening, food and family festival will take place in the Phoenix Park, Dublin from Thursday, June 2nd to Monday, June 6th.

Designed by Cork landscape designer Seán Russell, the National Dairy Council Sustainable Dairy Farm Garden resembles a traditional, old-style Irish country farm, complete with milk churns, dry stone walls, a mature grass clover pasture and an old open structured farm outhouse. Elements such as the bespoke metal furniture and a specially commissioned metal wire woven cow will make this a unique space.

The garden is designed to emphasise the importance of grass-fed dairy animals in Ireland and the quality of milk which is produced. It allows the viewer to understand that the basic methods of milk production remain largely unchanged to the present day. Much of the material used in this garden can still be seen throughout the island of Ireland.

Seán says "We have used only native planting in this garden to reflect a real Irish dairy farm, we've used Alder, Common Birch and wildflowers such as Red Field Campion and Cow Parsley. The whole garden is designed to look like a real Irish dairy farm with old reclaimed props like farm gates, old wooden windows and milk churns, you really could be stepping back in time".

Irish dairy farmers are continuing to play a central role in protecting and improving our precious rural biodiversity, by planting native hedgerows and trees, offering pollinator patches for bees and wasps, and by protecting watercourses via the ASSAP (Agricultural Sustainability Support

and Advisory Programme scheme). The Bloom Garden tells this story, explaining how Nitrogen is essential for plants and grasses to grow and develop and how Farmers must replenish nitrogen to ensure successful grass growth and to replace nitrogen removed in the harvested crop.

Seán has also used white clover in the garden as it naturally attracts and retains nitrogen from the atmosphere, making it available for plant growth.

Cathy Curran, Communications Manager NDC said of the garden "We are really excited to tell the dairy farm story to a largely urban audience at Bloom. There is still a disconnect between parlour to plate and we need to capture these opportunities to tell the dairy production story and the efforts being made by Irish farmers to reduce emissions and to farm more sustainably. Farmers' actions throughout their farmland play a key role in maintaining and developing habitats and wildlife, whilst also reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Biodiversity plays a key role in sustainable farming and Ireland is proud of its natural, grass-based farming systems. Grassland accounts for 90% of the agricultural land area (DAFM, 2019), which forms a solid basis for supporting wildlife. Planting native trees and hedgerows such as whitethorn, holly, blackthorn, and gorse to increase wildlife value and natural habits. These also provide natural cover for wild birds.

As well as visiting the stunning garden, NDC is planning a number of events and panel discussions in the garden over the five days where people can come and listen to some interesting and thought-provoking talks:

Wednesday 1st June – World Milk Day

NDC will be activating from the garden on social media and holding a photocall with Seán Russell and his kids to celebrate World Milk Day 2022.

Thursday 2nd June

Sustainable Diets – where are we going?

11am Nutrition Panel Discussion with RTE's Kathryn Thomas, Dietician Orla Walsh and Nutritionist Sinead McCarthy from Teagasc.

Friday 3rd June

Feeding the future: A sustainable approach to dairy farming

11am Panel: Irish Farmer's Journal will chat to Deirdre Hennessy, Grassland Officer from Teagasc and will be joined by some Farm Ambassadors

Saturday 4th June

The future of food: What's on the menu for saving the planet?

11am Panel: MC RTE reporter Suzanne Campbell, Food journalist and commentator Dee Laffan and chef Conor Spacey of Food Space.

The NDC Sustainable Farm Garden has been kindly part funded by the EU Sustainable Milk Programme, Bord Bia and NDC.