**Garden Encouraging Biodiversity in Housing Developments Wins at Bord Bia Bloom**

**At home with nature – Bord Bia Bloom cultivates sustainable living and excellence in garden design**

***Ireland’s favourite festival of flowers, food and fun returns May 30th –June 3rd 2024***

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**Thursday May 30th 2024:** A show garden encouraging developers to incorporate biodiversity, planting of new woodlands and sustainable urban drainage systems into housing developments has been awarded the best large garden at Bord Bia Bloom. The **‘Coming Home to Nature’ garden designed by Nicola Haines for Fingal County Council\*** also received a new special award for sustainability as judges said it showcased best practice in sustainable garden design while communicating an important message on water conservation, which is key to the future of housing development.

A total of **19 medals\*\*** were awarded to **show gardens**, including eight medals to garden designers exhibiting for the first time at Bord Bia Bloom. Other gardens receiving best in category accolades included the medium Citroën Floating Lounge Garden designed by Joe Eustace, while the best overall small garden was awarded to Óir – The Zarbee's Garden designed by Leonie Cornelius. The best concept garden went to ‘In Perspective’, designed by Oliver and Liat Schurmann, sponsored by the European Commission.

Congratulating the award winners **Jim O’Toole, Bord Bia Chief Executive**, said “*It is wonderful to see such a strong focus on sustainability and biodiversity among our stunning show gardens this year and I would like to congratulate all of the designers who have been working incredibly hard for months to bring our show to life. We are confident that attendees will leave not only with fantastic inspiration for their garden, but also with the motivation to incorporate more sustainable practices into their homes and lifestyles.”***Cultivating Talent**Last year, Bord Bia launched ‘Cultivating Talent’, an initiative designed to support emerging garden designers by giving them a platform to design a show garden at Bord Bia Bloom. This year’s initiative, sponsored by Westland, brought two new garden designers, Sarah Buckley and Nóra Tombor to the festival who received a Gold and Silver-Gilt medal, respectively. In addition, 2023 Cultivating Talent recipient, Joe Eustace returned to Bord Bia Bloom this year and received a Gold Medal and Best Medium Show Garden for the

Citroën Floating Lounge Garden.

*“It is so encouraging to see so many first time show garden designers take part in this years event and deliver exceptional show gardens which impressed the judging panel. We are immensely proud of the success of our three Cultivating Talent award recipients and we can be confident that the future of the horticultural sector is in great hands,”* Jim O’Toole added.

The judging panels for Bord Bia Bloom includes 13 Irish and international horticultural experts who judge show gardens, postcard gardens, nursery displays, and botanical and floral art.

**Other horticultural awards**

In the Nursery Village, a total of 18 medals were awarded to new and returning plant nurseries. **Daphne Shackleton, a judge at Bord Bia Bloom commented** that in a “difficult year for every grower, with lots of rain and not much light” that “a wonderful display” was achieved. This year’s Postcard Gardens, which are small but perfectly formed gardens created by community groups received 13 medals. The standard of this popular feature wowed judges, with **John Wheatley, RHS Vice President and Bord Bia Bloom commenting, “**For the last 25-30 years, I’ve seen some community features but I have never seen the quality that I have seen here at Bloom today. Everything about the display impresses me, from the choreography, the planning, to the level and involvement of children and young people. Some of the dedication is actually inspirational and if we can make a difference to this earth it’s going to be through engaging children, young people, and communities.”

**People’s Choice Award**

Visitors to the show are invited to vote for their favourite show garden using the unique text number located at each garden, with the winner announced on Sunday.

**Opening day**

Later this morning, the festival will be officially opened by Bord Bia Bloom patron, President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, who will be accompanied by his wife Mrs. Sabina Higgins. Tánaiste Micheál Martin is due to visit the show today and An Taoiseach Simon Harris will visit tomorrow morning (Friday).

Bord Bia Bloom continues in the Phoenix Park until Monday June, 3rd. To stay up to date with #BordBiaBloom news, sign up to the Bloom Ezine at bordbiabloom.com and follow us on social media – @BordBiaBloom on  [X](https://x.com/bordbiabloom), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/bordbiabloom/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/BordBiaBloom).

**ENDS**

Media Contacts:

Email: BloomPR@bordbia.ie

***\*\* A full list of all awards can be accessed here:bordbiabloom.com/2024winners***

\***Coming Home to Nature for Fingal County Council**

This large show garden is directly linked to new design guidance for building developers which demonstrates how biodiversity can be incorporated into housing developments.

The design focuses on managing rainwater through using sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS), while also catering for tree and shrub planting, wildflower meadows, nesting facilities in building facades, green roofs, dead wood, and natural play.

The garden incorporates elements of a housing estate and follows the passage of rainwater as it is captured and utilised to benefit both wildlife and residents. The rain water’s passage through the garden is visible in stages cut through the ground. Viewing windows below ground level demonstrate in cross section how the drainage feature works to slow down surface water runoff and help the soil absorb water. The diverse planting scheme includes a range of woodland plants and trees, demonstrating the many benefits of planting new woodlands in housing estates.

**About the Designer**

Nicola Haines studied architecture at the Bartlett School in London before completing horticultural training with the RHS. She worked in a number of architectural offices before setting up Tierney Haines Architects with her husband, Stephen. Nicola works on all scale of public, commercial and private projects, as well as community-based and educational gardens. An enthusiastic member of the Garden Landscape Design Association, she is passionate about connecting people to nature through design. Nicola has won numerous awards at Bord Bia Bloom, including a gold medal and Best in Category award for her Citroën Power of One garden last year.