

TIM AUSTEN: TEAM ARCHITECT

Tim Austen has an advantage over some of his fellow landscape architects: he came from gardening (his parents' garden was once part of the Wicklow Garden Trail). So, he's good with plants – which means that his creations don't just have nice bones, they're well-dressed, too. His large show garden at Bloom this year is entirely different from last year's classic offering (pictured right, which won a gold medal and the People's Choice award). This year's is a chic, contemporary space, with steel-edged pool, glass-flecked paving and wood composite decking. There is naturalistic woodland planting under multi-stemmed river birches, and sun-loving species around the pool. His cousin Simon Austen has made two sculptural sun loungers (see panel, far left).

The garden, like many of those at this year's event, is more the product of teamwork than usual. DoubleL Concrete, for instance, is not only donating the special paving, the company is also helping to construct the garden – as is Grangemore Plants, the nursery supplying the trees. Austen's "Garden Lounge" should cost €70,000 to €80,000 to build, but the bill will be considerably less because "we're pooling our resources, and many people are volunteering". It's a lot different from the heady days of the boom, with "a sponsor throwing a lump of money in, and everyone getting paid".

Away from Bloom, Tim is active in his own local area, and is involved in the Harbour View



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Community Garden in Wicklow town, an evolving allotment scheme with at least 40 individual plots. "Our commercial work is quieter than before, but we're doing more garden projects. We're busy and happy."

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