



Noël van Mierlo's  
Japanese water garden



**Ali Rochford** Noël van Mierlo is among the top landscape architects coming to Dublin for the Designed Garden conference

# Time to go Dutch

A well-designed garden belies the amount of work involved in its creation. It is the result of a series of processes, the culmination of the work of a number of people with different skills – the nursery people who grew the plants, the designers, the contractors and the craftspeople who make the garden owner's vision a reality – and let's not forget the gardeners who maintain it.

They are all interdependent and perform an essential role in the process of creating outdoor spaces that fulfil the needs of the users. Good designers make use of the synergy of these processes and bring them together to make gardens that are more than the sum of their parts.

This is the idea behind this year's Garden and Landscape Designers Association annual seminar to be held in Dublin next month. The Designed Garden – Completing the Picture is the title of the event which will bring speakers from around Europe to share their knowledge and inspire, not just those involved in the business of making gardens in Ireland, but anyone who is interested in creating well-functioning outdoor spaces.

One designer who will be speaking at the conference is Dutch garden designer Noël Van Mierlo. In an increasingly busy and crazy world, more people may turn to their gardens as a means to destress and decompress and to be closer to nature.

Van Mierlo's tagline is that he creates 'natural wellness experiences' and even just looking at photos of his gardens creates a feeling of relaxation and release.

Van Mierlo was born into the business. He describes his parents' land-



The natural pool that won Noël Van Mierlo an award from the International Organisation for Natural Bathing Waters

scaping company as his "crib" and has been designing his own gardens for nearly 20 years. He is becoming increasingly well known and believes that what makes him stand out from other designers is the way that he mixes contemporary style with nature. He says that, in Holland, gardens are usually either very contemporary or very natural. He loves the contrast between contemporary and natural styles and uses this to great effect in his gardens.

Conventional swimming pools are expensive luxury items, but with natural swimming pools, you can swim and also add a pretty, natural-looking element to the garden.

Van Mierlo has won multiple awards for his work and in 2015, won an award for the best natural pool from the IOB – the International Organisation for Natural Bathing Waters. From

photos of his gardens, it would appear that he likes to use water a lot, and while he says that he likes the dynamics that water brings to a garden, his designs are client-led.

Van Mierlo uses bold structures such as in the modern Japanese-inspired water garden, and has used a recycled greenhouse to create an industrial-looking awning in another.

He highlights the importance of reflecting the lifestyle of his clients in the gardens he designs for them. And having been brought up in the business, he places a high emphasis on attention to detail and craftsmanship.

Van Mierlo has visited Ireland several times, although not in a horticultural capacity.

He is looking forward to talking attendees through some of his designs at the upcoming conference.

Also speaking at the conference are:

- Modern-day plant hunters Sue and Bleddyn Wynn-Jones of Crüg Farm Plants in north Wales, who have introduced many new species of plants to science and to gardeners. They travel for three months of the year collecting plants and then trial their new finds at their nursery before making them available to the public.
- Thomas Doxiadis, an award-winning landscape architect from Greece who has worked on many large-scale and high-profile projects in Greece and internationally, including the new Acropolis Museum in Athens. He believes that man and nature are allies and the interplay between man, ecology, landscape and urban spaces is of great importance to him. He is currently the chairman of the Natural Environment Council of the Greek Society for Natural and Cultural Preservation.
- Emma Mazzullo, who has worked for more than 20 years with the acclaimed designer Arabella Lennox-Boyd, who is responsible for the redesign of Airfield in Dundrum.

In 2014, Mazzullo set up Mazzullo + Russell Landscape Design with Libby Russell and projects they have worked on include large estates, high-end commercial developments, show gardens at Chelsea and domestic gardens in Britain and further afield.

Previous seminars have included speakers from China, India, America and France, as well as homegrown talent. But wherever they come from, the guests are always chosen with care to ensure an informative and enlightening series of talks.

*The Designed Garden – Completing the Picture – garden design seminar takes place on Saturday, February 11 at Crowne Plaza Dublin, Northwood Park, Santry, Dublin 9. To book go to [glda.ie/glda-seminar](http://glda.ie/glda-seminar)*



Van Mierlo's awning was made from a recycled glasshouse



Van Mierlo believes in creating natural wellness experiences



Van Mierlo's work creates a feeling of relaxation and release



A design by Greek landscape architect Thomas Doxiadis



Van Mierlo uses foliage to soften a contemporary garden



Van Mierlo likes to reflect his clients' lifestyles in his gardens