

# Nature's Acre



An Irish Garden Memoir  
of Making a Place Where Life Grows  
Ciarán De Buitléar

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Where Life Grows

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### Quick facts

<b>Author</b>	Ciarán De Buitléar	<b>Publication date</b>	10 December 2025
<b>Genre</b>	Memoir / Nature Writing / Irish place-based nonfiction	<b>Page count</b>	104
<b>Setting</b>	Stamullen, County Meath, Ireland (Spring 2020 onwards)	<b>ISBN (paperback)</b>	1919392815
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		<b>Editor</b>	Cynthia S Reyes

### One-line hook

A lockdown phone call gives a tired Irish father the keys to a neglected walled garden - and the work of bringing it back becomes a quiet, stubborn recovery story where wildlife, neighbours, and community arrive as the garden comes alive again.

### Short description

Nature's Acre is a memoir set in Ireland during Spring 2020. A phone call draws Ciarán De Buitléar into an overgrown Victorian walled garden and a project that changes his family and his community. Part nature writing, part recovery story, it's about attention, physical work, and making space for life to return - both inside a ten-foot wall and inside a person.

### Long description

In early 2020, as lockdown tightens around a small Irish town, Ciarán De Buitléar finds himself retreating into the quiet routines of home - the greenhouse, the garden, the small steadying rituals of growing things. Then the phone rings. A woman offers him something he'd been searching for for years: land to grow on. But it isn't an allotment. It's a Victorian walled garden hidden behind ten-foot brick walls in the centre of Stamullen, Co. Meath - a place he has walked past hundreds of times without knowing what was inside.

Nature's Acre follows what happens next: first cuts through the overgrowth, plans made at the kitchen table, compost bins christened "the Taj Mahal", tomatoes that refuse to behave, bodies that ache, projects that teeter, and the slow transformation of a neglected space into something shared. This is not a how-to manual. It's a lived story about recovery through attention, making room for wildlife, and how a patch of earth can become a commons - a place with a name, held by many hands.

## Positioning

It is: memoir · Irish nature writing · community story · recovery through making

It is not: a practical gardening guide (though real gardening and wildlife knowledge is embedded in the story)

## Key themes

- Recovery through attention and physical work
- Fatherhood, family life, and building something together
- Community effort and belonging rooted in place
- The shift from tidy control to living systems
- Wildlife returning when a space is allowed to breathe
- Grief, friendship, and legacy
- Hope that is practical (not shiny)

## Praise

*"a family discovers the magical world of an old Victorian walled garden. Gardeners will love this book."*  
— Temple Grandin, Author: *Visual Thinking: The Hidden Gifts of People who Think In Pictures, Patterns and Distractions*

*"Ciaran has a gentle and sensitive approach to gardening with nature in mind, leaving wild space for our shared kin, and growing chemical-free food and native plants. It is the future of landscape design."*  
— Mary Reynolds, author, designer and founder of *We Are The ARK - Acts of Restorative Kindness to the Earth*

*"Ciaran has always strived to bring gardening to the people, and people to the garden. His passion for community gardens, space for nature and challenging conventional thinking is a breath of fresh air."*  
— Darragh McCullough, *Elmgrove Farm and Garden Centre*

*"I would highly recommend Nature's Acre... It resonated with my experience of communities coming together to preserve nature and build connection."*  
— Brian Gormley, *Head of Sustainability Education, TU Dublin*

## Short excerpt (opening)

*I step out the back door. A spring day, bright and sunny enough, making an effort, but not quite succeeding. It smells of rain and is not quite warm enough to sit outside on the granite patio. I retreat to the greenhouse.*

*Inside, it's warm and still as if waiting for my company. The worn black parquet under my feet feels familiar. The hexagonal frame, though modern, evokes another age.*

*Outside the glass ferns and foxgloves crowd in, the latter a rosette of leaves with the promise of flowers to come. A maple I planted when we first moved here has grown from restless youth into comfortable middle age, sheltering the greenhouse on one side. On two other sides, a beech hedge still wears its winter coat, brown leaves rattling softly in the wind. Beneath it, wild garlic I planted years ago now spreads with feverish vigour.*

*Close by but hidden, the road. Life passes by, as it always does. I sit and open a paperback book, "Silent Earth" by David Goulson.*

*The phone rings.*

## About the author

Ciarán De Buitléar is an Irish writer based in Stamullen, County Meath. A long-time gardener, he founded GardeningWell, a family-led wildlife gardening and climate action initiative. By day he works in the tech sector and he is a trustee of FreeTrees Ireland. Nature's Acre is his first book.



## Suggested interview angles

1. The phone call moment: when a project becomes a turning point
2. Recovery through small daily work (not big dramatic reinvention)
3. Walled gardens: history, symbolism, and second lives
4. Fatherhood and building something alongside children
5. Community effort: how places gather people
6. Letting wildlife in: what changes when you stop fighting nature
7. Grief, friendship, and legacy

## Suggested interview questions

- Why did that phone call land so deeply for you?
- What did the first day inside the walled garden feel like?
- What was the hardest moment to keep going?
- How did the garden change your family's daily life?
- What surprised you about wildlife returning?
- How did community involvement change the meaning of the place?
- What does "hope that is practical" mean to you now?
- What do you hope readers feel after finishing the last page?

# Images (selection)



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