

## INTRODUCTION

The house is situated on a hill in an estate, Co Cork. The whole site is about 240 square metres; 87 square metres in the back garden. The house was built in 2003. The back garden is South-West facing with a slight slope going up from the back of the house to the back boundary. The house is on mains water system, electricity, phone and sewage system.

- The main design considerations for the garden are to
- + create a garden with a cottage garden / wild-flower look
  - + create a seating area outside the back door
  - + have privacy from neighbours & mask noise from crèche
  - + have more interesting planting in front garden

- + have interest all year round / changing seasons
- + have herbs and fruit & flowers for the house
- + encourage birds & bees
- + provide for utility functions for washing line, storage, compost etc.

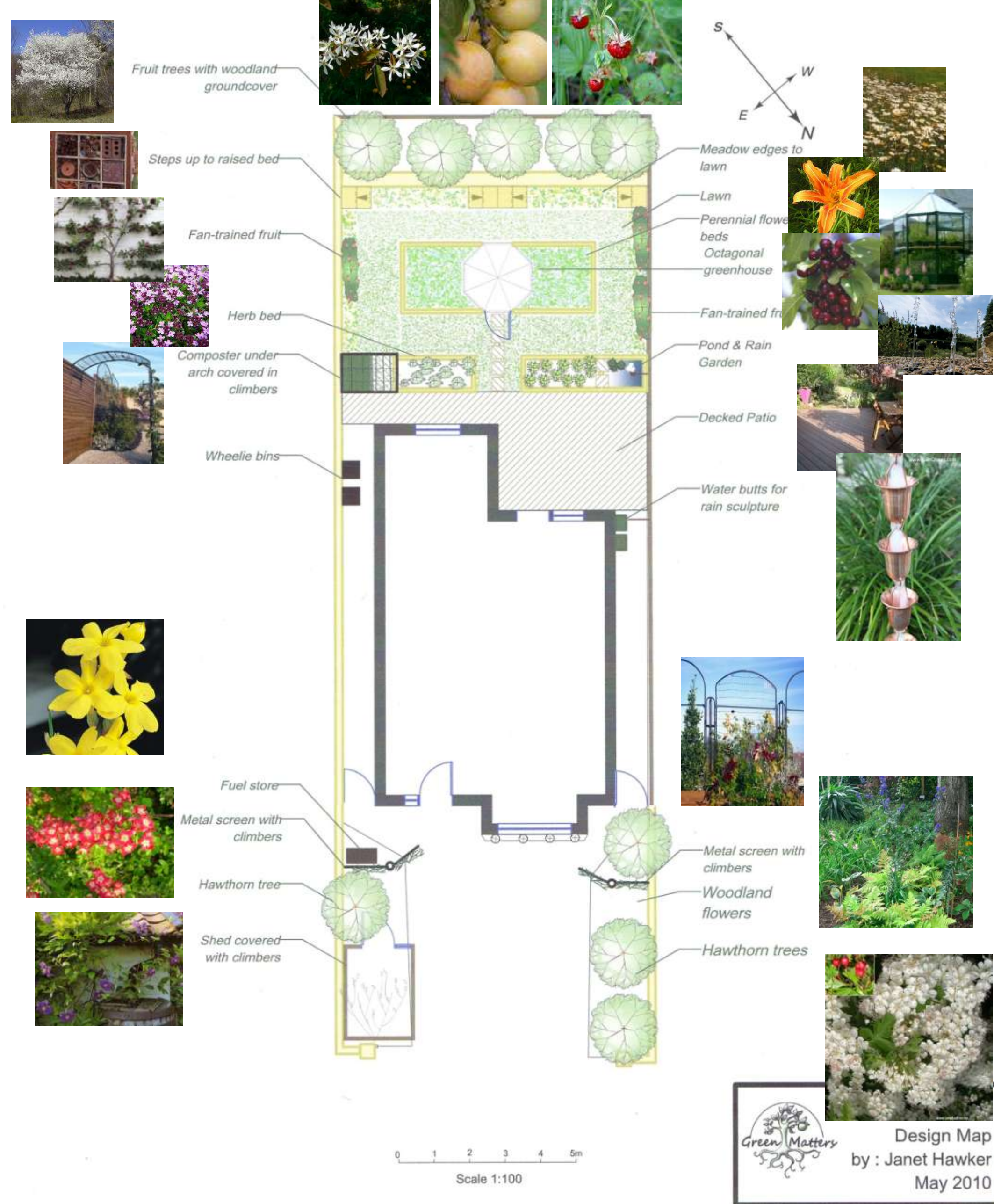
## CURRENT STATE (Mar 2010)





**DESIGN CONCEPT**

To create a luscious landscape of fruit with a “contained wildness” to quote Bernadette. To this end the underlying shapes in the back garden are very geometric and formal – that is the contained part. The planting is the wild part. The concentration is on exotic and unusual fruits with the main structural planting of trees and shrubs. For the perennial planting the look is cottage garden meets wild flower meadow – but again concentrating on edible flowers and herbs. So wild in look and wild in the aim of producing lots of exotic edibles.



Green Matters  
 Design Map  
 by : Janet Hawker  
 May 2010



**THE BACK GARDEN - STRUCTURE**

The shapes in the back garden follow on from the existing large raised bed at the end. They have been kept largely rectangular and symmetrical which will give the garden a strong underlying structure to hold together the softer planting. As this is your main private area, the shed and most utility items have been moved to the front or side paths to maximise the space you have. This will immediately make the garden appear larger. By painting the wooden fencing a cream colour like the rendered walls you will also enhance the impression of size as well as bringing more light into the garden. All the new bed edges and steps should be rendered block painted the same colour too. The new beds will be raised but with low walls (20-30cm high). The idea is to give the impression of movement around the garden – out from the patio; around the main bed; up to the raised woodland bed.

**Raised bed retaining wall :**  
Increase height with stepped back low retainer so soil in bed is level

**Steps to raised bed :**  
4 sets of steps will break up the look of the wall, they can be used as occasional seats to view the garden from a different angle. The fronts will be made into insect ‘hotels’



**Compost :** the Little Pig composter is fixed to the side wall. It will be screened with a metal wall arch going from the herb bed to the wall. The area in front of the composter is decked to make a clean working area.



**Wooden fences with cement base:** paint cream to match walls



**Octagonal greenhouse :** this small attractive greenhouse softens the geometry of the rectangular shapes whilst still having a strong symmetry.



**New beds :** low rendered block wall edges, painted cream

**Decked Patio :** the patio is made of eco-friendly Earthwood composite decking. The angle of laying will give the impression of width. Deck ‘flags’ will make a path to the greenhouse and across the pond/rain garden.





## THE BACK GARDEN – PATIO AREA

The Patio area is the main outdoor sitting area as this is the sunniest spot and conveniently outside the back door. The material chosen is an eco-friendly Irish-made composite decking called Earthwood in a natural (sanded) finish and the burnt earth colour. It will be laid close to the ground on the diagonal which will increase the impression of width. The path will be covered with decking too to keep the number of different surfaces in the garden to a minimum.

As the area outside the door tends to get boggy before laying the deck it will be sloped slightly towards the rain garden so the water is contained there. The deck also will be graded so water runs into the rain garden.



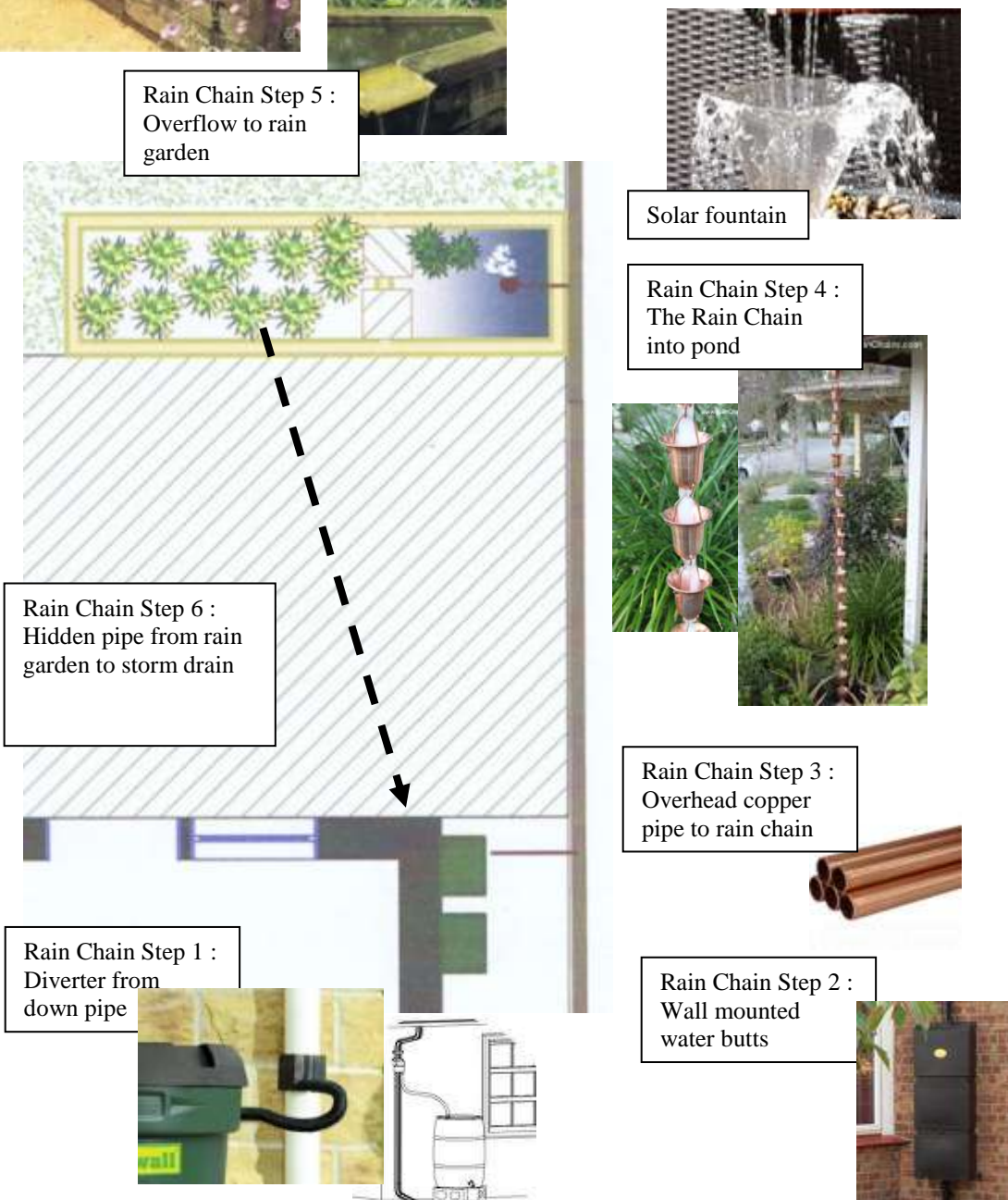
Two beds will border the deck. This will make 3 ways into the rest of the garden. A central path will lead to the focal point of the octagonal greenhouse and be made with decking squares set into the grass so they can be mowed over easily. Decking squares will make 'stepping stones' over the pond/rain garden bed. And lastly, a path through the arch screening the composter.



The central bed is outside the kitchen window and will be for herbs which like a warm sunny well-drained spot. All the Mediterranean herbs like Thyme, Rosemary, Sage, Marjoram, Oregano. Chives, Parsley and Dill can also be grown here.



The side bed consists of a small raised pond and a 'rain garden'. Water and wet areas are great for wildlife, will grow a selection of beautiful plants and can bring movement and sound into the garden. The pond will have a small solar powered fountain so on warm sunny days you get the sound of splashing water. The sound will also muffle external noises like at playtime in the neighbouring crèche. When it rains hard water will flow from water butts at the side of the house down a rain chain. As this can be seen from the house it will provide interest on wet days. The planting will be mainly native water plants such as Marsh marigold, Flowering Rush, Ragged Robin, Water Violet.



The rain garden has an underlying function which, in a small way, will contribute to lessening the risk of flash flooding. Firstly, water from the roof will fill 2 wall-mounted water butts at the side of the house using a special rain water diverter from the downpipe (Fix above head height if possible). When the butts are full an overflow pipe in copper will take water to the rain chain so water will splash down into the pond and overflow into the rain garden. From the rain garden water will seep slowly into the ground. But if there is a lot of water coming down there will be an overflow pipe that will redirect the water under the decking and into the drains. Additionally, if the rain garden overflow pipe cannot cope with the flow of water, the downpipe water diverter will automatically redirect it straight into the normal storm drains. The water butts will have a tap on so they can be used to water the garden too. An optional extra would be to have a small pump to circulate water around the rain chain system when it is not raining – but remember you have the solar powered fountain in fine weather.



**THE BACK GARDEN – GREENHOUSE, BEDS & GRASS**



The octagonal greenhouse will be the main focal point of the garden. It will provide a warm sheltered quiet sitting place on cold or wet days. As it is in the centre of the main perennial bed you will feel immersed in your garden. The greenhouse will provide ideal growing conditions for heat-loving herbs like basil or coriander and perhaps a lemon tree. Mount the greenhouse on the purpose built frame and plant into the ground. Make a small place for a chair or two with decking tiles. If water is collected from the roof and stored in a butt in the greenhouse that will make a heat store and provide water in situ for the plants.



The main perennial bed will change with the seasons. In the spring it will be awash with daffodils and other spring bulbs. As they die back the fresh young growth of herbaceous perennials will take over to become a sea of colour over the summer. In autumn the seed heads will provide interesting shapes and food for the birds. When they become shabby they can be cut down and the bed rejuvenated with a top dressing of compost. Briefly, in mid-winter, it will be bare until the brave shoots of the spring bulbs emerge. You can plant salads or other vegetables amongst the flower if you like. Several of the plants will have edible flowers that can be added to salads like the vibrant Day Lily.



The existing raised bed will be kept for trees, shrubs and a woodland groundcover. The crab apple will definitely remain. The ornamental cherry could be replaced or kept. The hawthorn will be moved to the front garden and the ash tree removed. Those trees will be replaced with some more unusual fruiting trees such as the evergreen Loquat, the multi-season interest Juneberry, the Snowbell tree with white flowers followed by edible pods and the like. The groundcover will be plants like wild garlic and wild strawberries. This bed would be a good spot for a bird table and perhaps a woodland sculpture from Ewe.



The walls of the garden will be used to grow some climbing and fan-trained fruit. The shady wall high wall to the east will be ideal for a fan-trained Morello cherry. A winter flowering jasmine could also be grown here. The south facing wall can grow a fan-trained peach, a greengage and, for an exotic touch, an edible passion flower. The passion flower can be planted in the main garden and trained along the wall beside the patio. The structure of the fan-trained trees will provide interest to the walls in the winter.



The edges of the grassed area will be mini wild-flower meadows. This will encourage wildlife, add interest to the garden and reduce mowing of the fiddly edges. They will only need cutting a couple of times a year. The main grassed area will form a wide path around the garden and can be kept short or mown at a slightly higher blade to allow low growing wild flowers such as daisy or speedwell to establish in the grass.





**THE FRONT GARDEN**



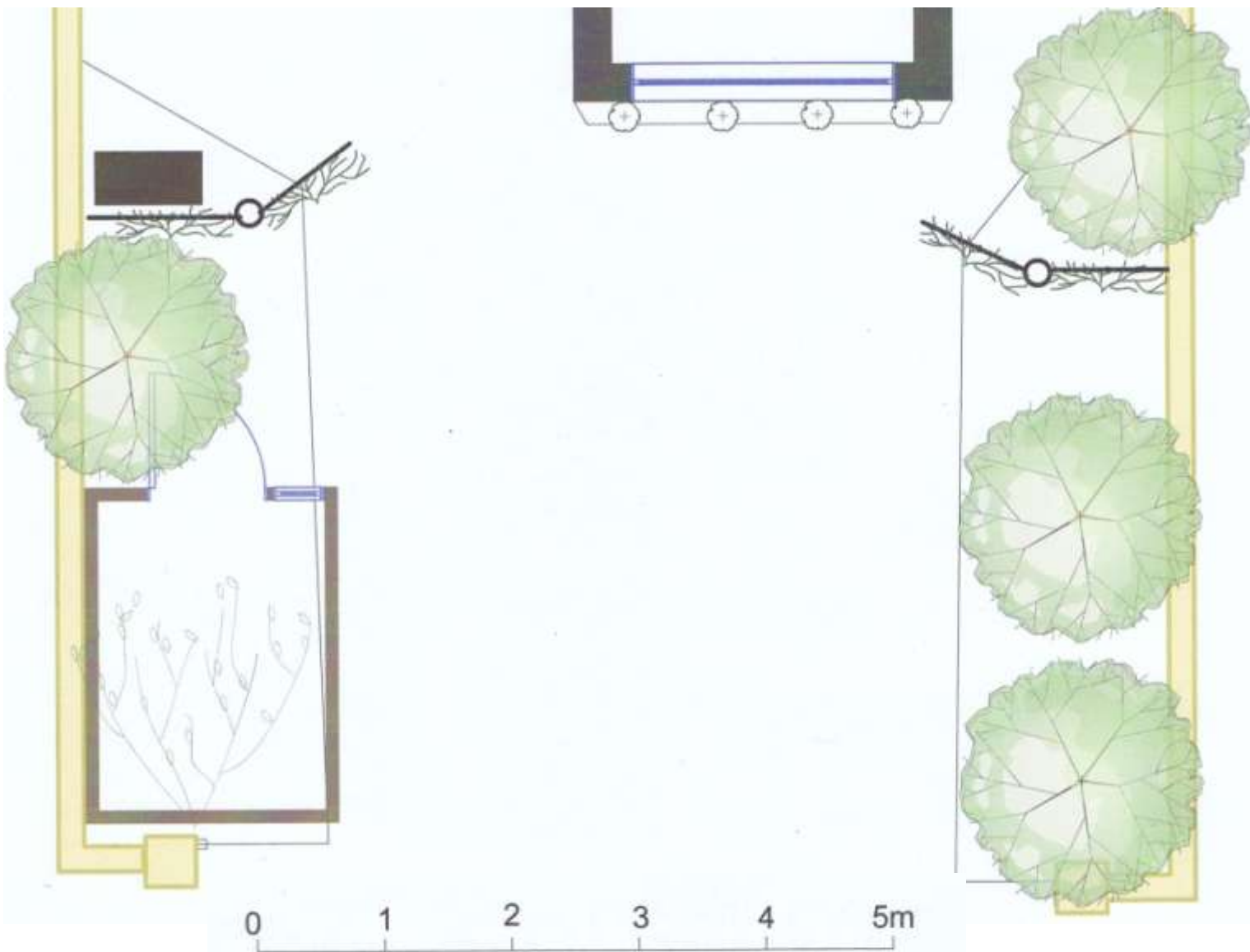
The biggest change here is to move the shed to the front. This frees up your main leisure area from utilitarian storage. The shed should be painted to tone in with the house and the road side planted with clematis. They will like the shady root run and soon clamber over the building covering it in colour. A range of clematis will give interest throughout the year.



The fuel store is also moved to the front, close to your front room where the fireplace is. It is screened from sight with some metal screens that tie in with the existing wrought iron side gates. These screens will be covered in climbers like honeysuckle. They will have the additional function of mitigating the effect of the wind funnel up the sides of the house. You can buy ready-made screens or consider investing in screens designed for you by craft metal workers such as Mojo in Clonakilty.



The rest of the front garden will be planted with your favourite hawthorns. The pink hawthorn can be moved from the back garden. The other 3 hawthorns can be the native white, a pink and the lovely dark flowered Paul's Scarlet. The flowers in spring, the berries in winter and the craggy branches in winter will give year round interest. They should be pruned so the canopy is high enough that the thorny branches are not a problem.



Underneath the hawthorns will be a mix of woodland flowers to give interest throughout most of the year. Such as ferns, Spruge and Dicentra.

