

This fine home will grow on you

Tommy Barker says the substantial size of this Model Farm Road home is matched by its generous gardens

The daffodils are just up and out and doing their business, all bright-headed and nodding in the winds of the past week, but once their race is run, it's the roses that will hold most sway at Willowmeade. The award-winning roses, that is to especially mention, plus the feature weeping willow tree at this house's back boundary which lends the property its name.

Set at the very western end of the Model Farm Road, just west of Cork's western suburbs, and just on the city side of the Poulevone Roundabout, Willowmeade is a 1976-built family home par excellence, in the same family's ownership since 1978. Then, it was bought with its gardens little other than a 'cottage on an acre' field, all raw potential and marked out by a stately weeping willow: now, they're abundant, floral and delightful, pretty as a picture.

Much of that 'picture pretty' status is down to the green-fingered and artistic ministrations of the family now selling, following the passing away of one of the owners last year, Tony O'Riordan, who was predeceased by his wife TC O'Riordan.

TC was both a noted gardener and a talented painter and here at Willowmeade, those passions combined. Even today, as the family home for over 40 years come to market as an executor sale, its walls are graced by a very small selection of her paintings. Mixed in with her landscapes and still lifes on the various internal walls are paintings of flowers, grown by her own hands, and immortalised then in oils by those same talented fingers.

The cultivated output for Willowmeade's 0.7 of an acre, and especially its roses, went on to make floral displays and arrangements, entered into flower arranging competitions (usually, subsequently accompanied by prizes) or supplied to deserving causes, and the next/current generation recall careful ministrations to "drive carefully" when dispatched off with the latest competitive floral creations.

The other passion, painting, also

blossomed and Mrs O'Riordan went on to volunteer as an art teacher/art therapist in a number of hospitals and centres around Cork.

Originally built by the Keating family in 1976, this all-brick facade detached home stretches to 2,100 sq ft, already feels bigger than that, and has a rear attached double garage just crying out to be pressed into domestic service, one ringed in glass for essential garden views.

It's almost an anomaly the way the house's current layout and windows size ignore the attractions of the garden just literally on the doorstep.

The reason is simple: the house was configured before the gardens were initially set out and got so established. And, seeing as how the woman of the house spent so much time outdoors, she may not have felt the current architectural/horticultural imperative to 'bring the outside inside'. If she did 'bring the garden in', it was to be artfully arranged to be in a vase, or an arranger's oasis.

Even those blissfully unaware of plants' potential to enrich life (and

still-lives) will see the immediate scope to knock through and into the attached double garage for an enveloping wide open-plan 'great room', with patio/terrace/garden access and aspects.

And, for those already into their plants, Willowmeade is clearly well endowed with standard roses such as Special Anniversary and Arthur Bell, David Austen Fragrant and Floral Carpet.

Then, there's Magnolia, Dogwood, Cedrus, Spotted Laurel, Red Robin or course, Chinese Lantern, several Virburnums, Keria, Hydrangeas; Portuguese Laurel, Euphorbia, Holly and Mahonia, while more on the tree scale are Rhododendron, Camellias, and standard and weeping birch.

Elsewhere are Japanese Maple, Liquid Amber, Berberis, mature Weeping Willow, a Norway Maple, Twisted Hazel intertwined with Asian crimson glory (Vitis Coignetiae) vine, two Cherry Blossoms, and further up the side of the garden are Apple trees, Pear and a smorgasbord fruit salad of raspberries, loganberries and gooseberries among others.

Almost surprisingly, given the

verdant nature of the surrounds, the house's brick exterior walls haven't been softened by the expected climbers: instead, they've so far at least been consigned to creepers around the garage, such as various Ivies, Winter Jasmine, Honeysuckle, climbing Wisteria and, unsurprisingly, climbing roses.

We haven't forgotten the house, by the way, and it stands on its own merits: the amount of space, inside and outside, will widen the property's appeal far beyond the gardening community.

It's detached, two-storey, and four-bedroomed, well-kept and well-laid out for day-to-day family life, with three reception rooms, front and inner hall, kitchen, utility and WC, plus four overhead bedrooms, one with dressing area, shower en-suite, main family bathroom and a walk-in hot-press.

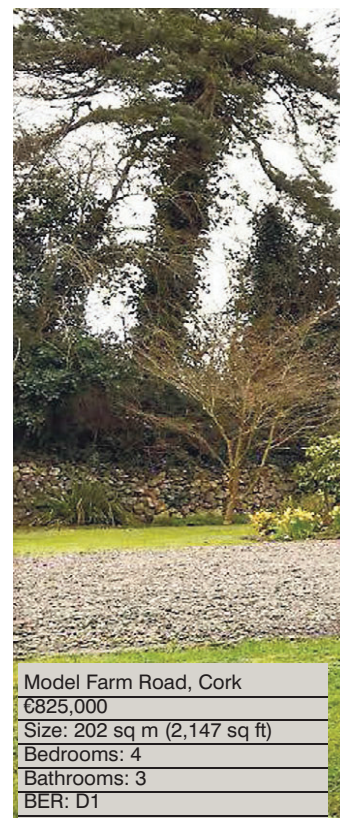
Decoratively, it's now a tad on the dated side, but it has been a very well-minded home. Selling agents Malcolm Tyrrell and Suzanne Tyrrell of Cohalan Downing Associates guide the 2,100 sq ft build (plus its attached garage) at €825,000, and say that thanks to regular interventions it now gets a D1 BER, after walls were injected with eco-beads, and it has Hele double glazing.

Bidding interest can be expected from business execs, either in Cork city or in Ballincollig's IT companies, relocators back to Cork sensing a bit of a prize here, families into their outdoor spaces, and from medics, many of whom will be in the price bracket to compete for this home, within a few minutes run of the CUH, Bons Secours and the Mercy Hospital complex.

The overall Model Farm Road area is due a decent surge of new homes' stock in the next several years, including at Carrigrohane, by Hill Farm, at the Killumney Road and at Nangles' Nurseries site.

In fact, with Nangles Nurseries now departed, Willowmeade is probably a contender for one of this sought-after stretch of road's most diverse gardens.

VERDICT: Model gardens.



Model Farm Road, Cork
€825,000
Size: 202 sq m (2,147 sq ft)
Bedrooms: 4
Bathrooms: 3
BER: D1

