

All-Ireland Pollinator Plan

Local Authority Pollinator Award



Newsletter 2018



Geashill TidyTowns group accepting the Local Authority Pollinator Award 2017 from Heritage Officers and National Biodiversity Data Centre staff at the Tidy Towns awards ceremony at the Helix, on September 25th 2017.

In 2016, when the Local Authority Heritage Officer and Biodiversity Officer Network offered to establish and fund the special Pollinator Award in the national Tidy Towns competition, the team behind the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan were delighted to support this new way to create awareness of pollinators and increase pollinator-friendly habitats right across the country.

There has been an amazing reaction to this special award and reading about all the achievements and actions taken for pollinators in towns and villages across the country is truly inspirational.

2017 was the second year of the Local Authority Tidy Towns Pollinator Award and there was a significant increase in interest and in the quality of entries.

There were 70 entries in 2017, filled with wonderful projects, each improving and creating much-needed habitats for biodiversity and pollinating insects. The judging process was very difficult as the standard was so high and it is only a pity that there were only eight prizes! Unfortunately capacity issues prevent us from sending feedback to each entrant, but we hope this newsletter may provide some assistance for future applications.

We would like to thank you sincerely for all you are doing locally to help create a more pollinator-friendly Ireland, and wish you every success in 2018!

- the Pollinator Plan team

Supporting Pollinators and TidyTowns



Dearbhala Ledwidge, Kilkenny County Council Heritage Officer and Chair of the Local Authority Pollinator Award Committee, explains the background to the special Pollinator Award

A special pollinator award which encourages TidyTowns groups to implement pollinator-friendly actions in their town or village is open to all groups who enter the National Tidy Towns competition. The award, now in its third year, has generous cash prizes – totalling €9,000, and many successful applicants have increased their points in the overall competition.

Local Authority Heritage Officers and Biodiversity Officers initiated and run the award, in partnership with the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

Local Authority Support Networks

Most Local Authorities in Ireland employ a Heritage Officer, and some also employ a Biodiversity Officer. Heritage Officers and Biodiversity Officers provide strategic advice, support and information to Local Authorities and the public on protection and enhancement of built, natural and cultural heritage.

Many TidyTowns groups are at the forefront of managing and maintaining our heritage, including old historic graveyards, streetscapes or wildlife areas.

Heritage and Biodiversity Officers have a long history of working with and supporting the work of Tidy Towns groups, providing advice and information on conserving and enhancing local heritage. This new award builds on this relationship.



Joint Heritage Officer and Heritage Council guidance for community groups on conserving wildlife in towns and villages (2004).

Sowing the Seeds

In December 2015, Dr Una Fitzpatrick (National Biodiversity Data Centre and Project Coordinator of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan) gave an inspiring presentation to Heritage Officers about the *All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020*. Heritage Officers agreed that this was a very important initiative and that we should work with local communities to help pollinators. The idea of a special award in the national TidyTowns competition was born.

We set up a committee comprising Heritage Officers, Biodiversity Officers and the National Biodiversity Data Centre to develop a competition which would encourage and reward TidyTowns groups for protecting and supporting pollinators in their local areas.

Growing Participation

Two of the 8 categories in the national TidyTowns competition are of particular relevance to actions for pollinators:

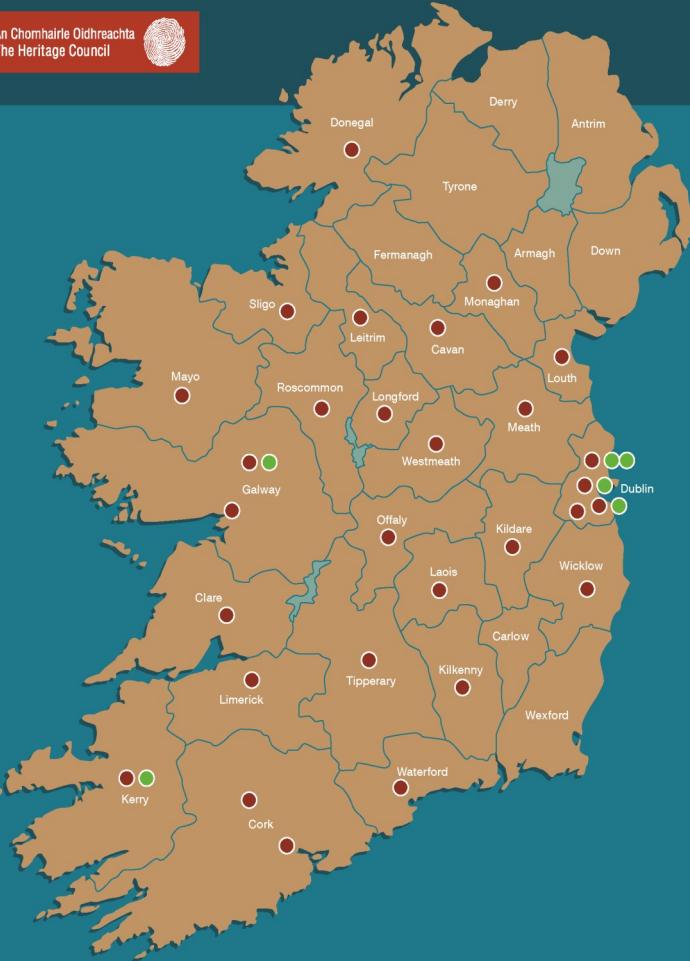
Landscaping & Open Spaces

Wildlife, Habitats & Natural Amenities.

We knew that many TidyTowns groups were already doing fantastic work in these areas, and that the award would be supporting groups to improve their points in these categories.

Win-Win: Reasons to Enter the Pollinator Award

With two years of the award under our belts, our committee took a look at the national TidyTowns adjudicator reports for the towns and villages who had taken part in the Pollinator award, and an interesting picture was starting to emerge. Not only do TidyTowns groups who enter the special award have an opportunity to win a generous cash prize, many have also gained extra points from the TidyTowns judges – win-win!



Local Authority Heritage Officer & Biodiversity Officer Networks

Location of Heritage Officers

Cavan	Limerick
Cork City	Longford
Cork County	Louth
Clare	Mayo
Donegal	Meath
Dublin City	Monaghan
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	Offaly
Fingal	Roscommon
Galway City	Sligo
Galway County	South County Dublin
Kerry	Tipperary
Kildare	Waterford
Kilkenny	Westmeath
Laois	Wicklow
Leitrim	

Location of Biodiversity Officers

Dublin City
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown
Fingal (2)
Galway County
Kerry

There are 29 Heritage Officers and six Biodiversity Officers in Local Authorities in Ireland, working to protect and enhance Ireland's built, natural and cultural heritage. The Heritage Officer Programme is a partnership between Local Authorities and the Heritage Council.

TidyTowns adjudicators look favourably on actions to support the Pollinator Plan

A case in point is Geashill Tidy Towns, Co. Offaly, overall winner of our Local Authority Pollinator Award 2017. They received a cash prize of €2,000 and very positive feedback in their adjudicators' report.

"The sensory and pollinator garden in the school looked stunning on adjudication day and the pencil gate adds a fun element. Some of the picnic area is left un-mown for pollinators. The Árd Ríadha estate is well-landscaped including some pollinator planting. It's great you now have a local Bumblebee and Butterfly recorder." Tidy Towns Adjudicators Report, Geashill Tidy Towns, 2017.

Many groups who do well in the Pollinator award also increase their points in the Landscaping and Wildlife categories of TidyTowns. In a competition where one point can

mean the difference between a gold or silver medal, this is very significant.

The Bigger Picture

Local Authorities are key partners in supporting and implementing the *National Biodiversity Plan 2017-2022* and other important policy areas such as Climate Change. Helping pollinators to thrive and survive can play a vital role in addressing these plans and policies. This special Pollinator award is one practical way we can help achieve these objectives. It's a positive example of how local authorities working together, with communities, can make a big impact.

To find out more about the Pollinator award, contact your Local Authority Heritage Officer or Biodiversity Officer, or see www.pollinators.ie

Some highlights from the TidyTowns Local Authority Pollinator Award 2017

We were really delighted to hear about all the amazing pollinator-friendly projects happening around the country. Here is just a selection of good ideas from great projects initiated by TidyTowns groups in 2017.

Maynooth Tidy Towns:

Maynooth TidyTowns group planted over 500 hardwood willow cuttings adjacent to a stream to provide future food for pollinators in spring.

They relied on manual labour to remove weeds from along the base of walls, kerbs and trees, using only limited amounts of pesticide to control knotweed. They are working with Kildare County Council on this.

Kilbeg Staholmog Tidy Towns:

Ran a pollinator fruit tree project and distributed 60 fruit trees to the community. Doubled the size of their flowerbeds using 100% home-grown perennial plants, which were grown in their greenhouses. Added 20 winter-flowering shrubs (*Viburnum tinus* & Charles darwim, Saracocca, Mahonia Charity to extend the pollination season

Ballboughal Tidy Towns:

In their square planters Ballboughal replaced some traditional annual bedding plants with Dahlias, Snapdragons, Bidens and Bacopa.



Before



Maynooth

Dromiskin Tidy Towns:

Based their local action plan for pollinators based on the TLC principle—‘Teaching, Learning, Caring’—to raise awareness across the entire local community.

Donnybrook Tidy Towns:

In the heart of Dublin, Donnybrook TidyTowns created a ‘Buzz Shelter’ to create a mini oasis for pollinators and also to raise awareness to passing commuters.



After
The Buzz Shelter, Donnybrook

Gallery 2017

Killane Development Group, Wexford:

What Killane are doing for pollinators is very encouraging. Their sites for nesting solitary bees are astounding, with almost 2,000 nests in one graveyard!



Killane's teapot bee hotels



Ballycanew TidyTowns distributed pollinator-friendly plants to local schools

Ballycanew Tidy Towns: Showed an in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by pollinators and great enthusiasm for helping bees. They also clearly appreciate the value of brambles, ivy and hedgerows. Distributed pollinator-friendly plants to local schools.



Bee mural at Mountmellick



Mountmellick Tidy Towns:

On one of Mountmellick's derelict buildings central to the town, two local artists painted a pollinator mural which included tips on how to help bees in your garden.



Delayed mowing in Askeaton



Paths cut through meadows in Arklow help to encourage public use

Arklow Tidy Towns:

Arklow Tidy Towns worked with the local council to identify 'No Mow' areas and 'Delayed Mow' areas.

Gallery 2017

Tuam Tidy Towns:

'Buzzing in the Park' public event at the Palace Grounds Park, incorporated local schools, Scouts group, Rural Social Scheme, Intercultural Development Association, Galway Beekeepers, Murphy Garden Centre and Galway County Council. This day included a 'Big Bug Hunt' and was a huge success.

Tuam also ran a competition for 'Best Pollinator-friendly Garden' which is a great idea.

Ballintubber Tidy Towns:

Solitary bee boxes were created using tin cans with bamboo inserted, and the tin cans painted like bees!

To create awareness, Ballintubber Tidy Towns entered a 'Young Pollinators' float in their St Patrick's Day Parade, and even took home a prize!

Mullaghmore Tidy Towns:

Created a new apple orchard at Mullaghmore Peace Garden.



Clonmel

Clonmel Tidy Towns:

Reduced grass-cutting in four local parks, covering an area of over 70,000m². Working with local apple orchards, Clonmel Allotment Group and Residents' Associations is a wonderful inclusive approach that should bring huge benefits.



Ballintubber bee hotels

Abbey Tidy Towns, Co. Galway:

Encouraged local home-owners and gardeners to adopt a six-week mowing regime to allow dandelions and clover to bloom. Public exhibition explored pollination and showcased the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.



Abbey Pollination Project exhibition



Gallery 2017



Bee and butterfly sculptures at Ennis



Ennis

Ennis Tidy Towns:

Ennis created three pollinator-friendly roundabouts, and by mowing a 3-ft perimeter, this showed management was purposeful. Beautiful bee and butterfly sculptures made from recycled watering cans were added.

Ennis Tidy Towns engaged with local landscaping contracts to ensure pollinator-friendly cutting regimes. Created new community orchards at three sites—an amazing way to help pollinators and people alike!



Planting Knapweed at the Play Park Meadow in Buncrana



Buncrana

Buncrana Tidy Towns Initiative (BTII):

Very inclusive Pollinator Plan planning took place in advance with NPWS, Donegal County Council, Wild Inishowen, BTII and town gardener—committed to a five-year plan, where a number of public and private areas were identified as long-term pollinator sites.

BTII also gave presentations on the Pollinator Plan to other Tidy Towns groups in the county—an amazing way to create more awareness.

Gallery 2017

Carrigaline Tidy Towns:

Wildflower Garden in Public park: Seed sows in May 2017 with 30 local national schools. A local horticulturist also gave a talk on how seeds are sown and how wild-flower gardens are maintained.

Bumble-bee Plaza Project: After discussions with the Business Association and Cork County Council, a pollinator-friendly area on the main street was identified to incorporate seating, potted trees and bumblebee-friendly flowers.



Carrigaline's Wildflower Garden project



Bee hotels at Rothe House Orchard, Kilkenny



Keep Kilkenny Beautiful:

Roth House Garden planted perennials, bluebells, snowdrops, eliminated pesticides, and reduced mowing, as well as running a 'Bee awareness Day'. The team managed to incorporate the actions of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan within a formal garden setting.

Ferns Tidy Towns:

Identified flower-rich roadside verges and old hedgerows as being important sites for pollinators, which is to be commended. Made great use of 'existing' pollinator-friendly sites, which is often more valuable than trying to clear areas and then plant new species.

Working with local housing estates in encouraging them to keep dandelions and delay mowing is excellent.

Gallery 2017

Ballyduff Development Group, Co. Wexford:

Ran a Bee colouring competition in local school, made fridge magnets, badges, seed envelopes and even a bee tractor tyre planter! Some of the schoolchildren built bug hotels and a bee mosaic for the school garden.

Protected areas of bramble as important food source in autumn.

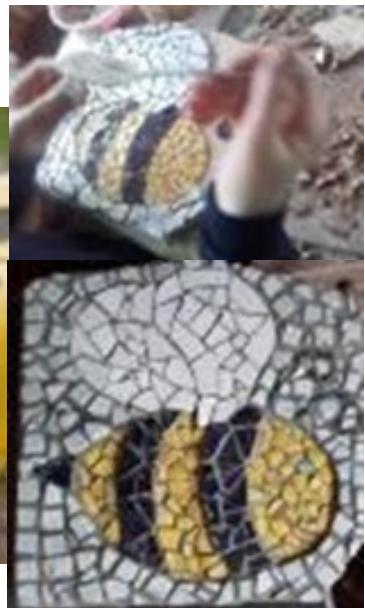
Birdhill Tidy Towns:

Birdhill drew up their 'Birdhill Pollinator Plan'. Located and weeded earth banks to provide nesting areas for mining solitary bees on the Ullord and Pollagh Trail.

Added a 'bee' category to their Garden Photography competition to create awareness among gardeners.



Bee Tractor tyre planter and bee mosaic by Ballyduff



Abbeyleix Tidy Towns:

'Incredible Edibles' window boxes were added along the main street in Abbeyleix to link food, biodiversity and planting for pollinators - a lovely idea.



Hollywood Tidy Towns:

Foxgloves were identified in the local area and allowed to develop into plants instead of being weeded out.



Local Authority TidyTowns

Pollinator Award Winners 2017:

Overall winner: Geashill, Co. Offaly

Regional winners - Large town category:

Midlands East: Maynooth, Co Kildare

South Mid West: Carrigaline, Co. Cork

South East: Clonmel, Co. Tipperary

North West West: Buncrana, Co. Donegal

Regional winners - Small town category:

Midlands East: Geashill, Co. Offaly

South Mid West: Askeaton, Co. Limerick

South East: Ballycanew, Co. Wexford

North West West: Ballintubber, Co. Mayo

Congratulations to Geashill

Pat Foley from Geashill TidyTowns provides an insight from the overall winner of the 2017 Pollinator Award

In 2016, the Local Authority Pollinator Award was launched as part of the National TidyTowns competition. Like so many other groups around the country, we were going down through all the special award categories - Waste Prevention, Clean Air Climate Action and the like - trying to find the perfect fit for us. That new Pollinator Award certainly looked very interesting, but what had we ever done for pollinators, regardless of what pollinators might have done for us?

In order to prioritize our projects, we returned to our 'Bible'. In 2013, a Wildlife Audit and 5-Year Management Plan had been suggested by the Heritage Officer and was carried out by Blackthorn Ecology with funding from Offaly Local Development Company. We have been implementing the actions from this plan since 2014. The following actions are relevant to the Pollinator Plan and have been carried out in Geashill:

- **Plant Native Trees**— Our Glebe Walk had suffered the loss of trees to old age and storms. We planted 150 in the Glebe Walk and over 300 throughout the village.

We entered this initiative for the Tree Project Award



Pollinator Award WINNER 2017

Winner of the **Tidy Towns Local Authority Award** for the preservation of bees and other pollinating insects



in 2015 and were awarded joint first prize with Newbridge. This was our first success at national level and gave us a new confidence.

- **Leave grassy areas unmown** - a suggestion that we more than happily embraced.
- **Retain dead trees** as wildlife habitats – done.
- **Record wildflowers** throughout the village. This was completed with the invaluable help of Botanist, Fiona Devery of Birr.
- **Sow native hedgerows** - so we planted over 300 metres of mixed native hedge of 24 varieties.

We had also - with the support of the Heritage Officer and Offaly County Council - enlisted the expertise of Lynn O'Keeffe, a Wildlife Horticulturist. She helped us plan our flower beds away from so-called 'begonia bliss' toward bee, bird and butterfly-friendly planting.

We were advised to provide habitats for insects - so with the help of the children of Geashill National School and the Killeigh and Geashill Boys Brigade we constructed two insect hotels.





Children from Geashill learning all about pollinating insects



We were also told to regularly update the records of the bees and butterflies in our Wildlife Audit. We tried our best to do so - in spite of a distinct inability to identify different varieties in those early years!

So, when we stood back and looked at the work we had done with fresh eyes, through the lens of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, we realised that yes, we had been doing some things right and perhaps we could, and should, do more.

Once we had committed to entering in 2016, we began to focus more directly on pollinator-friendly planting, establishing a Wildflower Wetland Area. We also created two Perennial



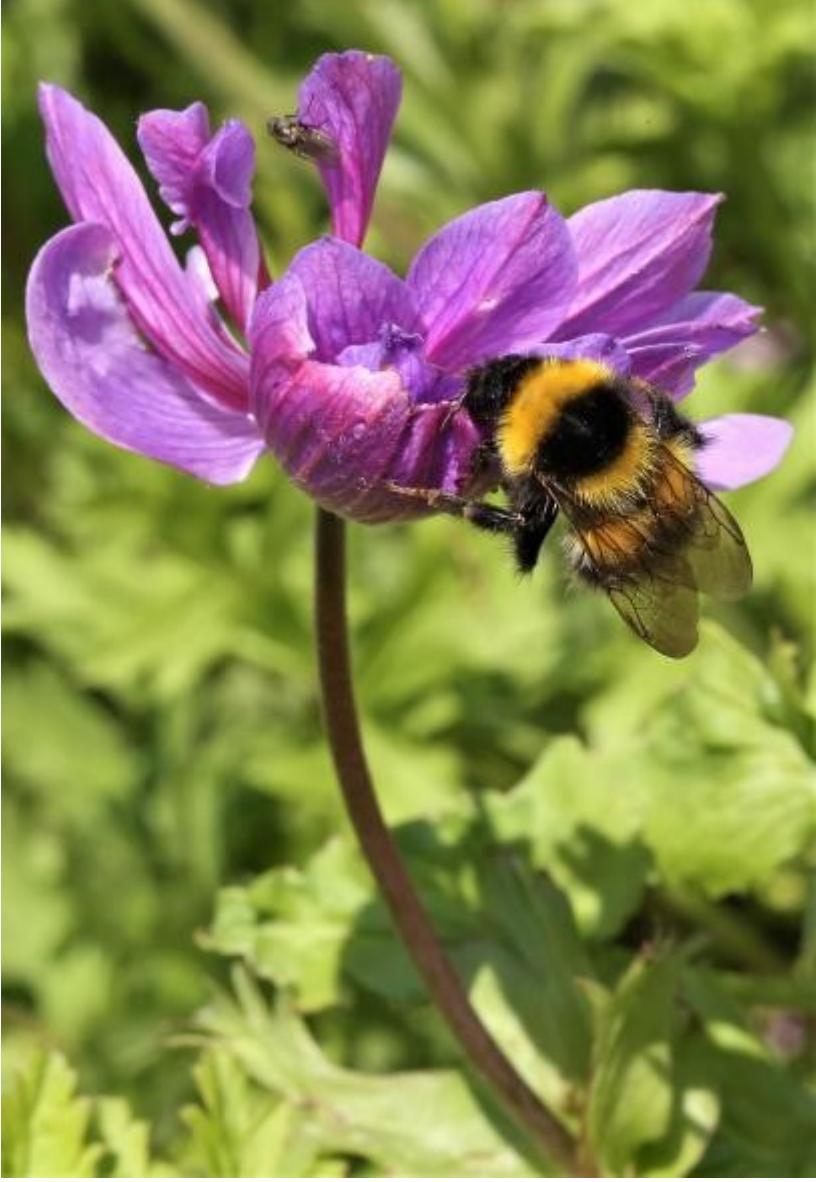
Garden Areas, right in the heart of the village. We organised an Art Competition and Window Display in Geashill National School with Biodiversity as its theme, and lots more.

Those dreaded dandelions we had cheerfully poisoned or decapitated over the years were now our friends.

During all of this time we were poring over the excellent All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020 brochures. There was so much to learn and even more to *unlearn*. Those dreaded dandelions we had cheerfully poisoned or decapitated over the years were now our friends. They should be protected from 'sprayer and mower' alike, so that early emerging bumblebees can feed on them. Bramble and thistle, affectionately referred to as 'dirt' in these parts, were now more prized than Japanese Acer or the now totally uncool double rose.

Ivy - long believed to be hell bent on strangling innocent trees and maliciously tearing down walls - is now cherished because it produces so much pollen and nectar for bees in the Autumn months. Even the nettle - whose evil sting was best cured with the swipe of a billhook or in more recent times a good dose of a strimmer - now had pollinator-friendly status.





Had the gardening world gone mad? No, the opposite in fact. We know now that in just three decades, flying insect populations in German Nature Reserves have plummeted by more than 75%. This brings to mind the Windscreen Phenomenon - how long has it been since we last had to squeegee crushed insects from the front window and lights of our cars?

The Moth Snowstorm is no more - gone the way of the clouds of crows and gulls that used to follow the plough. We are slowly becoming aware of the impact of our high yield, short-term economic actions as well as a preference for a 'clean and tidy' aesthetic on our shared habitat and the effects this has on our biodiversity.

The most important thing we learned in 2016 was how little we knew or understood about the plight of pollinators, but how their decline could be addressed and reversed. So, we began to do our bit; we entered the actions we had taken as best we could on the entry form and finally pressed 'Send'.

When our county compatriots Birr Tidy Towns were announced as joint winners of the inaugural Pollinator Award 2016 - along with Monaghan - we were thrilled for Fiona Devery and her team.

Around mid-March 2017 - with lots more bee-friendly planting underway and a new 600 sq. m. Wildflower Area sown - we made the decision to enter once more. The second time around, the language of those Pollinator Plan guides seemed easier to digest and the actions less daunting and more doable. We could now - with the help of our swatches from the National Biodiversity Data Centre - identify our butterflies with more confidence, even those confusing 'whites'! The bumblebees were still tricky, but now we know that you can always send a photo on to Tomas Murray in the National Biodiversity Data Centre for identification.

The entry form was more comprehensive and the only stones left unturned were ones that might have Miner bees nesting underneath them.

It was really thrilling for us when the invitation to the Awards Ceremony in the Helix arrived. We had made the last 8 - which in itself was recognition that our work on behalf of Pollinators had been given the stamp of approval. Being announced the overall winner was the proverbial icing on the cake. The excitement of the win has encouraged us to redouble our efforts on the job at hand.

We follow the example of the bees themselves: ***mobilising large numbers to work together; tirelessly repeating positive actions whether big or small, countless times for the good of all.***



Geashill Tidy Towns proudly display their Pollinator Award sign

Did you know there was discussion of the impact of lawns as far back as the 1800s?

In 1895, **William Robinson**, renowned Irish gardener, had some clear opinions on grass and its maintenance:

'Mowing the grass once a fortnight in pleasure grounds, as now practised, is a costly mistake. We want shaven carpets of grass here and there, but what nonsense it is to shave it as often as foolish men shave their faces! There are indeed places where they boast of mowing 40 acres! Who would not rather see the waving grass with countless flowers than a close surface without a blossom? Think of the labour wasted in this ridiculous work of cutting the heads off flowers and grass. Let much of the grass grow till fit to cut for hay, and we may enjoy in it a world of lovely flowers that will blossom and perfect their growth before hay time; some who have carried out the ideas of this book have waving lawns of feathery grass where they used to shave the grass every ten days; a cloud of flowers where a daisy was not let peep.'

Don't forget that all-important signage!

Action 20: Put up signage explaining the importance of pollinators and what is being done locally to support the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. This will help to explain to the public that areas are being managed in a pollinator-friendly way and are not simply forgotten or abandoned. By including the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan logo and website on your signage, you are also helping to spread the word about the Pollinator Plan to passers-by, local gardeners and businesses.

You should ask your local Biodiversity Officer or Heritage Officer for advice on signage.



Our signage templates for the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan
are available to download at www.pollinators.ie/resources

Tips to improve your chances in 2018

1. Please fill in the proper application form completely

Some 2017 entrants did not fill in the application form but provided their own project descriptions. Unfortunately no matter how impressive these entries are, this makes it very difficult to judge one application against the next. Points are awarded for each question so if any are skipped, you will lose marks.

2. Make sure your planting follows our Pollinator-friendly Planting Code

There are useful plant lists at the back of our 'Local Communities' guidelines, and the longer Planting Code is available at www.pollinators.ie. Daffodils and tulips produce negligible pollen and nectar, so while they have their place, they are not beneficial in pollinator-friendly planting schemes.

Care should also be taken to select local provenance when sourcing native wildflower seed, trees and shrubs.



How do you know if a plant is pollinator friendly?

- Single instead of double flowered varieties: double flowered varieties provide almost no nectar and pollen for pollinators
- Perennials over annuals: perennial plants are generally better sources of pollen and nectar
- Do you see pollinators visiting it? When choosing plants to buy at a garden centre, you will quickly realise what flowers pollinators visit most. Also keep an eye out for the Royal Horticultural Society's "Perfect for Pollinators" logo, which is now used by many suppliers of garden plants



Info Box:

Daffodils or Tulips are not a good source of food for pollinators. Bees will only use Daffodils if there are no other food sources available.

Info Box:

Traditional bedding plants like Geraniums, Begonias, Busy Lizzy, Petunias, Polyanthus or Salvia splendens have virtually no pollen and nectar and are of little value to pollinators.



3. Try to adopt a whole-town approach to your Pollinator Award entry

Where a project is limited to a small area, for example one town park, this can only compare poorly with entrants who have taken a whole-town approach, with pollinator-friendly sites at various spots around the area. So you will have more success in the Local Authority Pollinator Award if you use a whole-town or village approach.

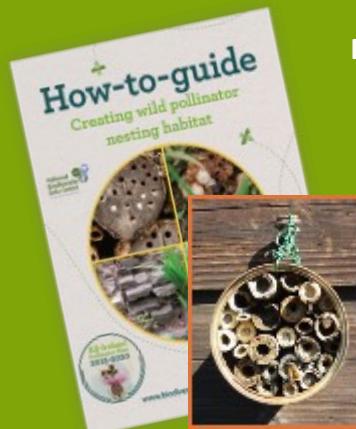
4. Remember to protect what you have

This is a very important aspect of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan—to protect what you already have (Action 1). Care should be taken not to remove good habitat in favour of new planting. This cropped up in a number of entries in 2017. Some groups removed areas of bramble and ivy—which are already really important food sources for bees and replaced them by planting wildflower seed. In such cases, we would encourage you to try to keep the bramble and ivy where possible, and choose different areas for new planting schemes. This will increase your bee area two-fold!



5. Nesting habitats

Creating nesting sites doesn't just mean bug hotels. Bare earth banks will attract our 62 species of mining solitary bees – many more species than catered for by bee hotels.



Bigger isn't always better!

The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan recommends smaller bee hotels. The very large hotels can be more susceptible to pests and disease.

See our How-to-guide 'Creating wild pollinator nesting habitat' for more details.

6. Don't forget to protect your hedgerows

We can't overestimate the importance of flowering hedgerows

(Action 12). Flowering hedgerows that contain Hazel, Willow, Blackthorn and Hawthorn provide food in spring when wild bees come out of hibernation. Bramble is a good source of food in summer, and Ivy in the autumn. Bumblebees often nest in long grass at the base of hedgerows.





REMEMBER: The more information you can give us in your application form to explain what actions you're taking the better. Remember, we won't know anything about your pollinator project unless you include it in your application.

7.

Don't forget that hanging baskets or planters can also be planted with pollinator-friendly plants such as Verbena and Bacopa.

Even small planters and window boxes can be planted with pollinator-friendly species.



A NOTE ON PESTICIDES:

While the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan recommends the reduction or elimination of pesticides where possible, it must also be noted that **it is necessary** to use pesticides to treat certain invasive species, such as Japanese Knotweed.

Please engage with your local authority in relation to mapping and treatment of Invasive species.



Tips to improve your chances in 2018

8.

Please include a map and captioned photographs with your application.

By including a marked map of your town or village, and well-captioned photographs, you will help us to fully understand your pollinator actions.



9. We have some new tools to help create awareness of pollinators

For the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020 to be successful we need to raise public awareness so that people know the importance of pollinators and understand why we all need to take action. Local communities can play a vital role in this regard.

Our newest How-to-guide explains how to make a Pollinator Plan for a school.

Both this new How-to-guide and the Junior version of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan can be downloaded from our website, www.pollinators.ie



NEW VIDEOS AND ANIMATIONS

With the support of the Heritage Officers of Kildare, Wicklow and Waterford County Councils, and through Creative Ireland, we have produced some videos and an animation to help explain the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.

Please help to show/share these in your community and through social media. See www.pollinators.ie or <https://www.youtube.com/user/biodatacentre>

10. Make sure you tell us about your good work - log your actions for pollinators on our online mapping system



We would like to encourage you to log your actions for pollinators on our online mapping system:

<https://pollinators.biodiversityireland.ie/>

This helps us to track the amazing work of community groups and new pollinator-friendly habitats being created around the country. It also helps us track progress of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, so we are very grateful when you sign up and record what you are doing in your local area for pollinators.

Our **Gallery** section, pages 4-9 contained just some examples of many, many positive steps taken by local communities for pollinators in 2017.

Our guidelines for Local Communities explain in detail 24 evidence-based actions that will help pollinators in your area.

By studying these in detail before carrying out works you will take the correct actions!

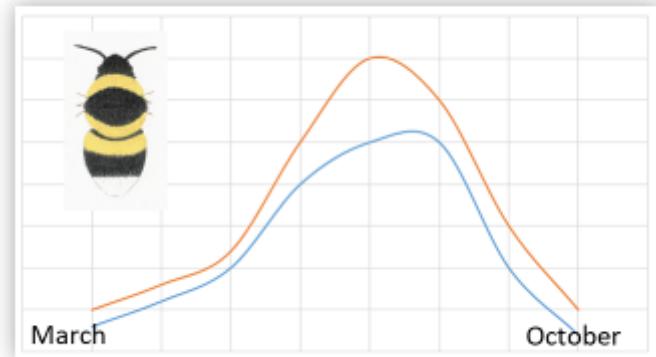


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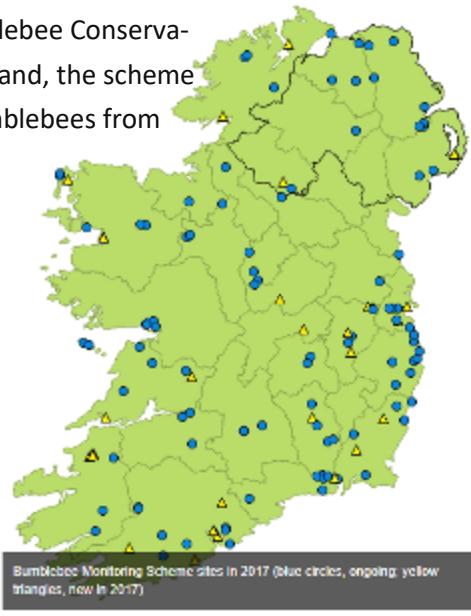
Bumblebee monitoring scheme

Action 23: Take part in the Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme. Identify interested people and set up at least one bumblebee monitoring scheme walk within your local community. In this scheme volunteers walk a fixed 1-2km route once a month between March and October and record the diversity and abundance of bumblebees that they see. The scheme is run by the National Biodiversity Data Centre who provide full support and training.

The scheme is vital in tracking what is happening with wild pollinators in the landscape, and can be used to assess the effectiveness of any pollinator-friendly actions that are being taken locally. If interested in taking part please contact: info@biodiversityireland.ie



The Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme supports and co-ordinates a network of volunteers across the island of Ireland. In collaboration with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust in Northern Ireland, the scheme now records >13,000 bumblebees from >100 sites each year.



Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme sites in 2017 (blue circles, ongoing; yellow triangles, new in 2017)



Don't be afraid! Everyone can take part in monitoring bumblebees, from bumble beginners to experienced recorders. See how to get involved at: <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/record-biodiversity/surveys/>

In other news...

Councils are also playing their part for pollinators

Anne Murray, Biodiversity Officer, introduces some of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council's pollinator projects

The work undertaken by DLR staff in the parks, open spaces, woodlands and grasslands throughout the county contribute to the food, shelter and survival of our pollinators.

Just one cut

There are many areas of low intensity grassland management such as wildflower meadows, areas under copse or groups of trees, banks and edges of hedgerows, closed burial grounds, river banks, large embankments and verges which are cut just once per year in autumn and this helps to create areas that are very valuable habitats for bees and other pollinators.

The Buzz at Fernhill

Other wildflower meadows have been created through grazing management, including Fernhill House and Gardens. These gardens have large wildflower meadows that have never been fertilised by chemicals and have been managed through winter grazing by cattle. DLR has continued this tradition to ensure that the wildflower meadows are maintained in their more natural state. This adds to the variety of wildflower species and to the diversity of sward structure through grazing.



Fernhill Wildflower Meadow,
under low intensity grassland by winter cattle grazing

A number of bees have been recorded at Fernhill, including the Moss (or Large) carder bee. This bee is classified as near-threatened in the Regional Red List of Irish Bees and

is a Priority Species in Northern Ireland. It requires flower-rich habitats and it is largely absent from lowland agricultural landscapes. Fernhill is providing very important habitat for this species in the context of the urban landscape. Most bees are generally able to travel several kilometres from their nest to forage and find food to survive. However, this species appears to only travel within approximately 100m of the nest and so this bee is highly reliant on habitat within a short distance of its nest. The consequences of losing that habitat become more detrimental to this lovely species.



Bombus muscorum, Moss Carder Bee

New seeds and bulbs

New areas of wildflowers have been planted by our staff in a number of locations within our parks in order to provide additional foraging areas for our pollinators, along with the existing meadows or where meadows are not possible. This is augmented by the many bulb-planted areas in parks, open spaces and verges which are invaluable in themselves but also provide for a different mowing regime when planted in grassland, which also benefits bees.

Bees in Trees

We also have a range of hedgerows; ornamental, native and a mix of both, and their management benefits bees. The recent planting of a mini collection of Native Apple Orchard in 2017 aims to enhance the biodiversity of Shanganagh Park, supporting bee populations and sup-



Wildflower planting at Killiney Park

porting the stock of native apple trees which are housed in the Clarke National Collection at UCD. The flowering trees in parkland, open space and along roads and streets are hugely beneficial also and the Parks Section have planted and continue to plant many pollinator-friendly species such as Snowy mespil, Hawthorn, 'Chanticleer' (ornamental pear), Rowan varieties, and 'Greenspire' (Lime). Woodland planting along roadsides and wooded areas of parks provide huge benefits. Fitzsimon's Wood, which is a mature native woodland with meadows, is a very important pollinator habitat which also benefits from being managed herbicide-free.



Planting of Native Apple Orchard at Shanganagh Park with dlr, Shankill Tidy Towns, Crann (Trees for Ireland) and UCD

Working with communities

Over the last year we've supported 18 pollinator-friendly planting programmes via the Council's Environment Grant. The Council organises a Tidy Districts competition which recognises the efforts of residents who manage their estates. Five years ago we introduced a biodiversity criterion to the programme and last year we increased its weighting so that nature-friendly initiatives account for 10% of the marks awarded. A total of 36 resident groups participated in the competition and all had some nature-friendly action. In order to ensure our residents had the skills to meet these challenges we organised a series of sustainable gardening workshops at the turn of the year.

Award-winning actions

In 2015/16 we developed a Biodiversity in Action programme which won a Chamber of Commerce Award. Four projects were undertaken, including the aforementioned Shanganagh Park Native Orchard, Bee-Friendly Kilcross, Blackrock College Nature-friendly Campus and Marley Grange Brimstone Butterfly Programme.

We also support schools with a host of workshops, the majority of which have nature-friendly themes, from Forest Schools to Sustainable Gardening.



Forest Schools

Reducing chemical use in weed control

Our Parks and Environment staff are currently running trials in parts of the county to examine the use of alternative non-chemical weed controls such as hot water and hot foam. The aim is to reduce the use of chemicals that can impact on us and nature, including pollinators. There are already a number of housing estates where the use of herbicides is restricted - in Marlay Grange, Ludford and Kilcross.



Hot foam trials

In other news...

Green Flag for Parks Pollinator Award



You may like to tell your local Park managers about the Green Flag for Parks Pollinator Award...

Another award scheme we linked with is the Green Flag for Parks Scheme managed by An Taisce. The Green Flag for Parks Awards sets the benchmark for well managed parks around the world, so we were delighted to establish a Pollinator Award to underline the value of creating space for nature in our parks and green spaces. The Victorian Walled Garden in the Phoenix Park won the overall

Pollinator Award this year in recognition of all their pollinator-friendly actions. This proved a great way again to raise awareness of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. Signage was produced for winning parks to highlight the awards among the public.

Both this award and the TidyTowns Pollinator Award go a long way towards normalising areas of long grass and wilder areas for the public, and are helping to create awareness of the importance of pollinating insects.



Congratulations to the OPW Phoenix Park Victorian Walled Gardens, who took home the top Green Flag for Parks Pollinator Award at a ceremony in Malahide Castle in July 2017.



Castletown House Demesne

Rory Finnegan, Head Gardener at Castletown House in Celbridge, discusses their 2017 Green Flag for Parks Pollinator Award win

Last year, Castletown House Demesne received a Green Flag for Parks Pollinator Award, recognised by the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020. For us, that was validation for 10 years of work managing the demesne in an ecologically sensitive way.

The OPW have been managing 80 acres of semi-natural grassland as a summer meadow. This is cut once a year and all vegetation is bailed and removed. This reduces the fertility which encourages our native wildflowers and grasses. No fertilisers or pesticides are used, as these would negatively impact the biodiversity of the grasslands. The OPW encourages the public to appreciate and experience these grasslands by cutting walkways through these meadows, allowing the public to appreciate the flora and fauna at close quarters. Mature trees that have died have been left in the meadows to decay naturally. We have bored holes of different diameters in these trees to provide nest sites for solitary bees. Also, on a south-facing bank, we have scrapped away vegetation to provide another opportunity for these little known but important pollinators.

We have a small population of Scabious on south-facing banks near the River Liffey. These plants are late-flowering, in September/October, and are brilliant sources of nectar for Red Admiral butterflies. We manage the grass banks for the benefit of the Scabious and collect and disperse seed to increase our population in these areas.

At Castletown house itself, two formal beds of *Sarcococca hookeriana* provide a nectar source for bumblebees

in the early months of the year. Other early supplies come from snowdrops, aconites, crocus, bluebell and primrose. New trees have been introduced, including rowan, crab apple, bird cherry, spindle, willow and lime, all important food plants. The grassland management plan has yielded excellent results over the last 10 years. Our plant communities have become more diverse and there is a very marked increase in our populations of yellow rattle, pyramidal orchid, lady's bedstraw and cuckoo flower. With no competition, dandelions carpet the ground in Spring, an important food for bees emerging from hibernation.

The erection of the 'Managed for Wildlife' signs, provided by the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, received a very positive reaction from the general public. Following on from that and from the feedback we received, we are currently in the process of developing interpretative panels to help educate our visitors on the importance of biodiversity and the preservation of our semi-natural grasslands. Castletown House will continue to engage with the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and would encourage everyone to take part in this important programme.

Managing the meadows for biodiversity has been a very rewarding experience. It's a slow process but inevitably the plant communities respond; the orchids, yellow rattles spread, the perennial ryegrass gets less and less. For us, the culmination came in the summer of 2017, when a hive of wild honeybees set up camp in the butt of an old beech tree which we had left as a monolith for wildlife 10 years ago - success!

Becoming a business supporter

As part of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, there is a framework within which businesses can sign up as a business supporter of the Pollinator Plan. Under this framework a business agrees to take one action within their first year and another two by 2020.

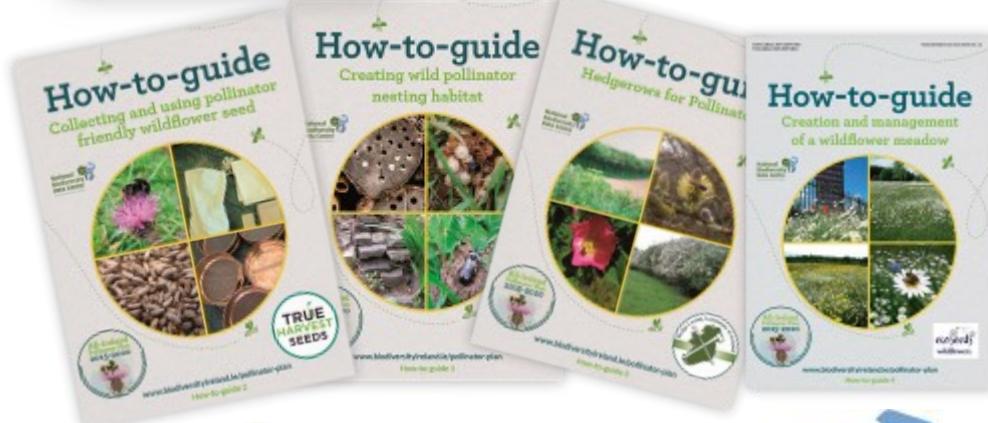


Action 19:

Promote the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan to local businesses and encourage them to make their outdoor spaces pollinator friendly or to sponsor local pollinator-friendly actions, such as a roundabout, or a print run of guidelines to clients, gardeners or local schools.

Why not share our guidelines with other sectors in your area?

Download all our materials at www.pollinators.ie



**National
Biodiversity
Data Centre**
Documenting Ireland's Wildlife



The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is coordinated by the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

Contact Us

See our new website
www.pollinators.ie for
more information

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