

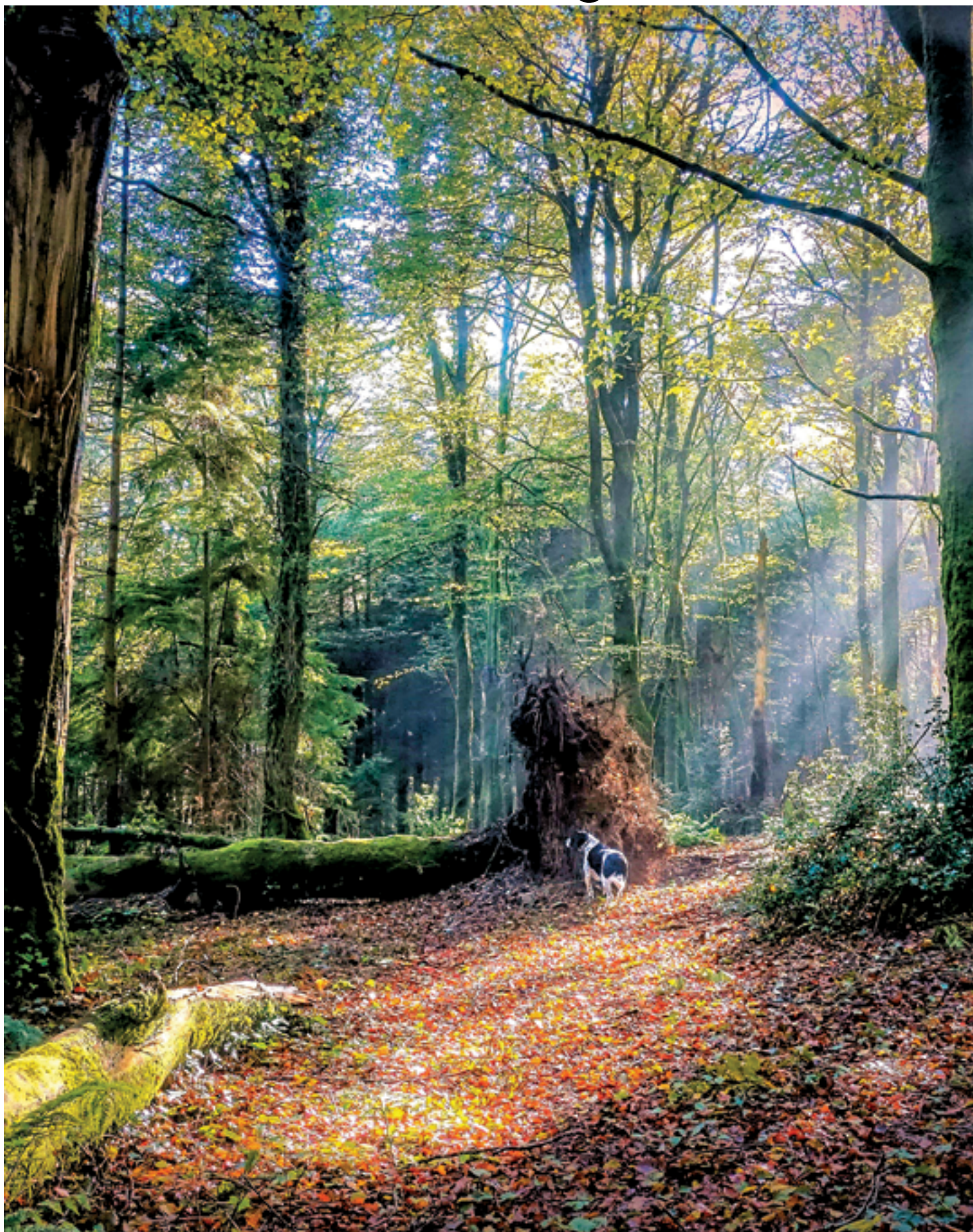


CRANN

SPRING/SUMMER
ISSUE 2020 | NO:111

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Comhairle Crann na hÉireann

Fostering a tree culture in Ireland through action & awareness

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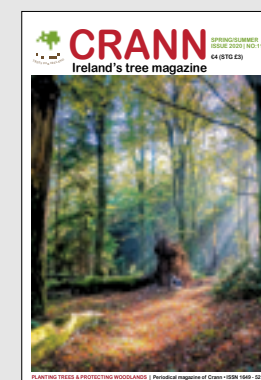
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COVER

A detail from Heavens Above, one of the prizewinning pictures in last year's Crann – Trees for Ireland/Coilte Photographic Competition. The photographer is George O'Keefe, Springfield, Fermoy, Co Cork, and the location is Glenabo Woods, Fermoy. Details of this year's photographic competition are on Pg 3 of this issue.

PICTURE CREDITS

Joe Barry, Orla Farrell, Sean McGinnis, George Cunningham, Peadar Collins, Fr Dennis Hopper, William Merivale, Sheenagh O'Doherty, Patrick Moran, Olive Wilkinson

I used to really, truly hate press photographers



NOT the most sensible attitude in my line of business. But, what can I say? I resented the easy life they had. Just turn up, take a few snaps, then head off onto the next job or back to the office, leaving us reporters to slave over a hot notebook and hope that we could read back our scribbled shorthand later.

As the years went by and reporters became journalists (at last, a proper and fitting term for us), I think I became even more insufferable. I was further maddened when photographers insisted that we refer to them as photo-journalists. Huh!

My attitude wasn't helped during the 1970s when I was in Northern Ireland covering The Troubles. On one occasion, we were waiting in a hotel lobby for politicians to finish a meeting (doorstepping, it's rather inelegantly called) and I was subjected to the ultimate ignominy – by a photographer, of course. When the meeting finished and the politicians suddenly appeared, there was a mad free-for-all to get to the far end of the lobby. This photographer tripped me up because I got ahead of him. And then, to add insult, he stepped on my back and scrambled over me. Or, as I like to describe it, he walked all over me. So, don't talk to me about photographers.

However, my attitude has changed, thanks in part to the circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic. One of my Friends on Facebook happens to be a press photographer (yeah, I know, don't ask) and I was astounded in April when he revealed that he never goes anywhere without a little paperback booklet in his pocket, *Wild Flowers, Ireland's Flora and Fauna*, by Ruth Isabel Ross (Shane Ross's mother), published by Appletree Press, Belfast. It shows the flowers in chronological order, starting with early spring, so they are very easily found.

Who knew that a press photographer, any press photographer, would stop to smell the flowers?

I got a belt of a hurley stick on the face in my teenage years and, as a consequence, I don't have much of a sense of smell. But I can see. And during cocooning I was sitting out in my Magic Kingdom (the garden) when I was struck by the sight of a lovely cloud, suspended all on its own against a totally blue background, with gorgeous fluffy billows of white and light grey. It's no exaggeration to say I was transfixed as I watched the process of a cloud being formed, inflating in slo-mo as if by a giant bicycle pump. I know so little about clouds. (resolve: start learning about them).

It struck me that since this pandemic arrived, I have grown to be more content, almost pleasant. Noticing things outside myself. I have always been a nice guy, but you know what – I think I just got even nicer!

Paddy Smith



@TreesForIreland



Crann – Trees for Ireland



cranntrees

OUR MISSION: To enhance the environment of Ireland through planting, promoting, protecting and increasing awareness about trees and woodlands.



Letters & Articles to Editor: To Crann Office as above. Crann Membership Unwaged/OAP €25, Individual €35, Family €45, Life €700, Corporate €100

The views expressed by contributors to the magazine are not necessarily those of the Editor, the Board of Crann or its committees. We welcome all articles on trees and related topics Crann ISSN 1649-5217 Registered Charity No: CHY13698 Crann Magazine is the periodical publication of People for Trees (Ireland) Ltd, trading as Crann. Crann is a voluntary, non-profit organisation dedicated to planting trees and protecting Ireland's woodlands.



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The Bar Council of Ireland hosted a charity art exhibition and sale in the Distillery Building, Dublin, in aid of Crann – Trees for Ireland. Pictured were, from left, Joseph O'Sullivan SC, Council of The Bar of Ireland; Crann Directors Ercus Stewart SC, Orla Farrell, Diarmuid McAree, Mark Wilkinson (chairman) and Crann Administrator Marguerite Arbuthnot-O'Brien. The artist was Tetyana Tsaryk and photographs were by Ercus Stewart and others. Many thanks to Bar Council Chairman Micheál O'Higgins SC and the Bar Council of Ireland and Harry McQuaid for hosting this event, which we look forward to repeating in December 2020.

Our competition now gives photographers even more scope

A SMALL but important change of emphasis has been introduced by Crann – Trees for Ireland for our prestigious Open Photographic Competition. The 2020 theme for the competition will include Forests, so that the theme now reads: Trees, Forests and Woodlands.

The competition is again being sponsored by Coillte, whose core forestry business is the management of about 7% of the country's land and whose forests and land now extends to over 440,000 hectares

Crann chairman Mark Wilkinson said Crann was anxious to promote the

largescale plantation of trees at a time when forestry planting had shrunk to a new low in modern times. "In its own little way, this competition will also help to open people's eyes to the beauty of forests when afforestation is coming under criticism," he said. "Too many people have this unacceptable attitude that forestry is a blight on our landscape, whereas it actually enhances rural life when carried out in a sensible and controlled manner.

"Our competition will also, as our theme suggests, feature trees in our communities and in our woodlands, in our continued drive to plant the right tree in the right place."

Photographers who enter our competition may see their pictures selected to appear in a wider range of platforms, thus promoting Crann – Trees for Ireland. "This, after all, was the original purpose of our competition," said Mark. "These platforms include related Third Party publications, tweets, websites and social media, and promotional literature such as calendars."

He points out that the production of a 2020 calendar, sponsored by the Forest Service and featuring a selection of the competition photos, was particularly useful in promoting the aims of our organisation.

Rules of the competition: Page 13

Culture Night with Easy Treesie/Crann

The Easy Treesie/Crann – Trees for Ireland Climate Action Project has planted 100,000 trees with Ireland's schoolchildren to carry out the UNIPED Plant-for-the-Planet challenge. On Culture Night, Friday 18 September 2020, our third Culture Night is hosted by sponsors Patagonia Store of Eschequer St in Dublin's Creative Quarter. This will be an online event. Tree-T yourself to watching the Culture Night premiere of our new short films made by Emmy award-nominated Kate Bradbury and Aileen O'Meara Media, with some original PoeTREE from Dublin poet and environmentalist, educator Anto Kerins, and music.

All welcome. More details from <https://culturenight.ie/>.

LETTERS

We welcome hearing from our Members and Supporters. Why not write to us to tell us about your tree planting escapades or perhaps your 'back to nature' experience during Covid-19. We welcome emails to info@crann.ie (with 'Letters to the Editor' in the subject line) or posted letters addressed to Letters to the Editor, PO Box 860, Celbridge, Co Kildare. See the letter from Andrew Clinch on page 37

FUNDRAISING DRAW

There is an interesting little story behind the Crann – Trees for Ireland annual fundraising draw, held in January. You can read it on Page 10, the same page which lists all the prizewinners and what they won. Thanks again to all who supported our draw. And a special thanks to our prize sponsors.

CRANN Membership applications

Ireland was once entirely covered with woodland. It is now the least wooded country in Europe. CRANN is Ireland's leading tree organisation, uniting people with a love of trees. CRANN's mission is to enhance the environment of Ireland through planting, promoting, protecting and increasing awareness about trees and woodlands. CRANN is pursuing this mission through contributions to urban & rural planting projects, through its schools programme and through this magazine.

Members receive:

- A copy of CRANN magazine.
- Invitations to join with other members on a variety of woodland walks and talks.
- Access to advice and information about trees in Ireland.
- Most important of all, by joining CRANN you will be helping secure a future for Ireland's rich heritage of trees and woods.

Annual Membership rates:	Unwaged/OAPs	€25
Individual	€35	
Family	€45	
Life	€700	
Corporate	€100	

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I enclose a chq/postal order for: € _____

Please send completed application form with payment to:
CRANN, P.O. Box 860, Celbridge, Co. Kildare.
Payment option: via PayPal www.crann.ie

CRANN is an Irish non-profit organisation promoting and planting broadleaf trees.

A unique board meeting of Crann – Trees for Ireland was held by Zoom during the Covid-19 lockdown. From left, top, Mark Wilkinson (chairman), Orla Farrell, Joan Whelan. Middle, George Cunningham, Marguerite Arbuthnot-O'Brien (Crann Administrator), Diarmuid McAree. Bottom, Peadar Collins and Ercus Stewart. The other board members were unavoidably absent.





THINGS NEED NOT STOP ALTOGETHER, YOU KNOW

By Paddy Smith

THE TIDY Towns may be cancelled for this year but that doesn't mean there is no work to be done.

That's the encouraging message from Crann Board member Diarmuid McAree who is closely involved in his own community activities in Shankill, Co Dublin, through the Tidy Towns Committee and, wearing his Crann hat, through his unceasing drive to plant more trees.

No working in groups: that's very important, he says. "The Tidy Towns is a wonderful example of what volunteers can achieve in our communities. But Tidy Towns committees have to consider the health and welfare of these volunteers – and their families."

Diarmuid, who spearheads the Crann Assist Programme for Tidy Towns Committees throughout the country, says there are plenty of TT jobs for individuals to be doing. For example, one person can do very valuable work by checking out how the bird boxes are doing. If they are not occupied at this time of year, are the boxes in the right place?

The very first item on the agenda in any Tidy Towns activity these days is how to comply with the Covid-19 guidelines, says Diarmuid McAree. "That means planning every move before we even think about stepping outside the door. I firmly believe that making one person responsible for this is the best way to approach it. And that should be their only job."

"Let's not fool around here. This is too important to be handled on the spur of the moment, or making it up as you go along. You have to make your plan and stick to it."

"An individual volunteer can move around a fair amount of territory on their bike, getting in some valuable exercise as well! They can check out the trees that have been planted in recent years. Take photographs too. This information can be presented in the form of a survey and is very useful for inclusion in the submissions prepared for the TT competition judges, not forgetting how useful such a record will be for future committees who will have an illustrated report on previous years' works.

"And going around on a bike is a great way to notice what other work can be or needs to be carried out."

Diarmuid reports that in his own area a survey revealed that the 1,500 trees planted

this year in their now-famous Trees For All project are doing exceptionally well, with a 95% strike rate. "Many of these were planted tubed at 1-2 years old, grown from seedlings. Others were 3-4 years old, and they're all jumping out of the ground at this stage. Put all that information, which can be gathered and presented systematically, into those reports and I'd be surprised if the Tidy Towns judges aren't very impressed!

"By the way, I'm convinced that the reason these trees are doing so well is that, to start with, they were the right trees in the right place, the approach consistently recommended by Crann – Trees for Ireland. They were all planted properly, heeled-in properly and checked up on regularly, just by one or two people whose specific responsibility this was. In our case, they came across some mild vandalism but this was nipped in the bud – if you'll forgive the pun – and it was never allowed to become a problem. At the present time when so little new activity is being undertaken, this is valuable work that will pay dividends for many years to come."

Asked what advice he would have for Tidy Towns Committees throughout the country in this difficult year, he says people have the time to embark on projects they



Right: Tristan Taz Stedham with some of the 40 birdboxes he made during the Covid-19 lockdown from recycled wood for Shankill Tidy Towns. Picture: Chris Daly

Left: Crann member Joe Larkin checks the apple trees planted by the DLR Parks Department and by the TT Committee. Picture: Diarmuid McAree

Below: Tie a red ribbon: Shankill community volunteers have drawn attention to trees that were to be felled under the controversial Bus Connects project. Picture: Diarmuid McAree



mightn't normally do, such as painting blank walls, putting up flower boxes and hanging baskets (though not too many, due to the potential problems with water conservation), picking litter and generally ensuring that the place doesn't begin to look unkempt during this pandemic. "This is all work that can be done individually, not in groups, because it's so important that everyone looks after their health in these dangerous times by maintaining their safe distance from others.

"Another thing that can be done is to share our knowledge of nature with the next generation – help them identify birds, trees, butterflies, animals. This can all be done on-line and on social media. There is a great wealth of material available everywhere, especially in our own country. Nature has been having a rest in recent months with so little traffic on our roads, lower levels of air pollution, equally low levels of noise pollution. Then, when guidelines are relaxed, children will notice this new sparkle in the countryside all around them, especially if they

have enthusiastic adults who are themselves waking up to smell the flowers, noticing sand martins arriving from Africa and observing the late arrival this year of swallows and swifts, not to mention taking photographs of the Super Moon! We're all being woken at half-past-five or six o'clock in the morning by the sound of birds and we have learned to appreciate that sitting out in the garden (if we are so lucky to have a garden) can be such a simple delight – Ecotherapy in action!"

Diarmuid also advises community groups such as Tidy Towns Committees to be vigilant about what is going on in their own areas. He uses the example of the Bus Connects project in Dublin where his own village of Shankill has set up a group to fight against the effort to fell more than 340 trees which are a significant landscape feature on the village's approach roads and exit roads.

"I like to quote the three United Nations sustainability criteria for major projects and we have worked it out that the Bus Connects project fails on all three. I'm confident that

the National Transport Authority and the other public bodies will adapt their plan on the basis of these failures, because they are: not socially acceptable, not ecologically or environmentally sound, not economically viable.

"Now is a good time to identify potential problems in your area and draw up plans to fight against potentially destructive and unnecessary schemes such as this."

Trees have become so important in all our lives that Diarmuid has proposed to the Board of Crann – Trees for Ireland the planting of a Corona Woodland in memory of all the people who have passed away after contracting the Covid-19 disease. This concept, under the aegis of Crann, is in the early stages of planning by the Board. What a great initiative!

The Crann Assist Programme details are available on our website www.crann.ie or from Marguerite Arbuthnot-O'Brien at Crann Head Office 01-6275075, info@crann.ie.



WE CAN'T RELY ON NATIVE TREES ALONE

JOE BARRY starts all over again at a time when no species can be assumed to be safe

ON 8 APRIL, we finished planting 10 acres on my farm in Meath with a variety of tree species. Much as I would have preferred to have completed this earlier, the weather conditions through winter and early spring left the ground too wet to carry the machinery needed to tidy brash and prepare the land for the next crop. However, old gardening lore suggests that when it comes to planting trees and sowing seeds, dates are less important than the temperature of the air and soil. The natural world is the best teacher and, when the wild cherry begins to bloom, we are told to just follow the signal and plant. There are other guides beloved by some such as the phases of the moon and, given that our planting date coincided with the arrival of the spectacular 'super moon' that is lighting the night sky as I write this, perhaps we got it right. I have no idea and prefer to work with the signs of growth around me. The hedgerows are beginning to green; hazel and chestnut are rapidly coming in to leaf and the cherry blossom is quite spectacular in places. Spring is racing towards summer and around the farm and garden there is no time to lose.

The arrival of *Chalara fraxinea* meant that much of the 70 acres of ash we had planted 25 years ago has to be replaced. Now that



we have to start all over again, at least we are doing so in the knowledge that no species can be assumed to be safe. Climate change has brought a host of new pests and diseases that we have little chance of avoiding.

If we were to rely on our native species alone, then we could eventually see a wipe-out of our woods. Ash, that wonderful tree of Irish farms and hedgerows, is already off the planting list. *Chalara*, along with the Emerald ash borer which has devastated ash in the USA, are waiting to consign ash to the margins, as has already happened to elm. *Phytophthora ramorum* and other strains of the same disease are killing alder and many



The spectacular cherry blossom

Left: Joe Barry in a section of his ash woodland. Picture: Steven Meyen, Teagasc

other widely-planted species.

The list continues to grow. Climate change is creating a whole new environment and we simply must plant a wide range of tree species, depending on the suitability of the differing sites. Interestingly, however, many species are flourishing here which were risky or impossible even 20 years ago. Bird species like the little egret are now common and many other birds and insects are moving here as our climate warms.

We must be sensible and work with the conditions we have and grow trees that not only benefit the landscape and environment but are sustainable and useful. By copying

nature, nothing is wasted and, to date, all our ash thinning's have been cut, dried and utilised for wood, with the brash returning to the soil. Timber, once properly dried, makes superb fuel and is of course carbon neutral.

I have read where some environmental commentators criticise the sale of firewood as being in some way wasteful. But what better use can one put small diameter thinnings to? We have tried many ways of adding value, from wood turning small bowls to even providing climbing frames for the monkeys in Dublin zoo but, happily, the vast bulk of our surplus material of ash, oak, beech and conifer currently provides heat and cheer to the stoves

and fires of Dublin, Meath and Kildare.

Far too much disinformation is being spread about what are the right trees to plant. Fake news is not confined to politics alone and there is also widespread ignorance regarding basic woodland management, spread in part by those individuals I sometimes refer to as the Green Loonies, many of whom have no physical experience of managing woodland in often challenging conditions.

It is so easy to browse the internet and write scathingly about the work of Irish foresters but not so easy to work in a wood on a cold wet January and learn by hands-on observance how trees really grow, what they require and

what grows in their shadows.

The real facts are simple and relatively easy to understand. Normally, when establishing woodland, we plant approximately 3,000 trees per hectare and, as they grow, they compete for space and draw each other up, straight and true. After perhaps a decade or so, thinning takes place and we remove perhaps a third of what is growing, favouring the better specimens. The trees themselves teach us what is best, and where, and there are no substitutes for experience. After three or more thinning interventions, assuming we are working on a suitable site, we should have a healthy wood where further regular thinning keeps the





Wild honeysuckle adding scent and colour to a forest glade

trees thriving. Eventually, with fresh light appearing, young trees will seed naturally on the woodland floor and fill the gaps that appear.

Ash required heavy and regular thinning and, once we repeatedly opened up the canopy and let in an abundance of light, it responded wonderfully. Fortunately, a few of the best areas here are still healthy and we will work with them in the hope that perhaps they have acquired some immunity. Only time will tell.

In the meantime, we are planting oak, sycamore, maple, walnut, cherry, beech, birch, hornbeam, Spanish chestnut (the tree best loved by John Seymour, author of the famous best seller, *The Complete Guide To Self-Sufficiency*), red oak and many more; with hazel, rowan, hawthorn and holly along the edges. We are, of course, also planting lots and lots of conifers because our woods have to produce an income and within my and my children's lifetime, apart from sales

Norway and sitka spruce are the basis for our construction industry and not only do they provide valuable and much needed timber, they substitute expensive imports.

of firewood. The broadleaves will not pay any bills. Norway and Sitka spruce are wonderful trees, as is western red cedar and it is worth repeating what they are good for. Sitka spruce in particular is frequently vilified, due largely to the poor lay-out of earlier plantations established decades ago that often sat uncomfortably on hillsides in stark, rectangular blocks. But that is an old practice

and nowadays we design our woods with far more thought for landscape, water and wildlife in addition to the essential need to make a living. Norway and sitka spruce are the basis for our construction industry and not only do they provide valuable and much needed timber, they substitute expensive imports. We do not have nearly enough conifers in Ireland and our sawmills have to import timber from Scotland to make up the shortfall.

Growing conifers is commercially viable. Growing broadleaves is NOT. I grow over 100 acres of broadleaves because I like them and I like the thought that someone will benefit from their presence in perhaps a century from now. I also like to walk under them, even to occasionally hug them and to watch as they change form and colour through the seasons and I like the wonderful contrasting landscape both they and the conifers provide.

I delight in having a mix of species and am fascinated by the astonishing growth rates of



Clockwise from left: Wood anemone, fungi and bluebells sharing the woodland floor

Quality timber for our construction industry

Oak seedlings regenerating naturally.

Wild rose, common in hedgerows and along woodland edges



eucalyptus and their exotic scent on sunny days. They too will provide excellent fuel but it is hard not to also marvel at the varied and valuable uses that our conifers provide. The rafters and framework for most of the houses currently being built are spruce, as is the tonewood for high quality violins and guitars. Sitka was widely used in early years in aircraft construction as it is light yet strong and flexible and perfect for the above applications. Best of all, it thrives in the Irish climate and does particularly well on land that is unsuited for mainstream agriculture.

So, what else is good about spruce? Ask the crossbill or the shy nightjar along with the host of farmland birds that feed and nest in conifer woods. The pine marten and red squirrel are once again increasing in numbers, thanks to conifers. Conifer woodland contains substantially more fungal species than broadleaves which makes a mushroom-hunt a joy in late autumn. Conifers also absorb far

more CO₂ than broadleaves, but these are things that our arboreal xenophobes fail to acknowledge.

The hen harrier nests in young sitka woodland where woodcock also love to shelter and feed. The goldcrest, our smallest bird, likes to nest in thick conifer woodland and tree creepers are found in both conifer and deciduous woods, as are siskins. Redpolls nest in young conifers and the long-eared owl favours areas of pine and/or spruce to hunt and nest in. The rare merlin also utilises conifer woods for the same purposes.

Then there are the myriad species of mosses, lichens and fungi which are found in abundance in conifers and, not least, the simple but very important healing benefits for us humans of walking through the cloistered calm of a mature sitka wood.

I love all my trees, for each and every one provides endless pleasure and invaluable habitat. Much of what I grow, including

the garden shrubs and plants, are what is sometimes scornfully termed 'non-native' but then the bumble bees that feed on the *mabonia* on sunny January days are clearly grateful for its presence. My woods, conifer, broadleaf, native and non-native, all teem with wildlife and echo with birdsong in spring and summer. The conifers provide green shelter in winter and a delightful contrast to the bare branches of the broadleaves. The broadleaves in turn are a further delight in spring and the autumn colour of the beech and maples especially is simply stunning. And in winter, the surplus of all species provides that therapeutic warm flickering flame from the fire on cold evenings.

We are fortunate indeed to have so many different trees to add such pleasure to our lives. We must keep planting and keep challenging those who spread disinformation about the merits or otherwise of our wonderfully diverse woods.

Generous gestures by winners of our annual draw

THE WINNER of the 2019 Crann – Trees for Ireland annual fundraising draw was Iseult O'Briain of Sandyford Village, Dublin, a life member of Crann since 1987. She knows Crann joint-founder Jan Alexander.

She won the coveted first prize of a wonderful variety box of books worth in excess of €250, sponsored and presented by Crann Director Dr George Cunningham, Roscrea, Co Tipperary. Following the prizewinning letter being sent to Ms O'Briain, George telephoned her to make arrangements for despatching the books and she informed him that she wished for the books to go to Crann for distribution in whatever way it felt best.

"After consideration," said Crann Administrator Marguerite Arbuthnot-O'Brien, "we decided to send them to Orla Farrell for the Easy Treesie/Crann – Trees for Ireland Project. This will result in numerous schools and communities throughout the country benefiting from the prize."

"We wish to pass on a huge thank you to Iseult for sharing her good luck with the wider Crann community," said Marguerite.

Orla Farrell was delighted with this gesture of support and some of the books have already been presented as gifts during various events.

We should also include another generous note: the winner of the 4th prize in the draw, Ms Lucy Mooney, North Circular Road, Dublin, a Life Member since 1992, requested that the value of her voucher be donated to Crann instead of her using her voucher. This is a €100 voucher for Wilkinson Jewellers, Kennedy Rd, Navan, Co Meath.



Sean and Grainne Cotter of Donaghmede, Dublin, who attended an Easy Treesie/Crann online tree academy, enjoying some of the environmental books presented by George Cunningham for the annual Crann draw.

Inset: Isobel Wilson, Ballsbridge, a volunteer on one of the corporate events organised by Crann – Trees for Ireland, was one of the beneficiaries of Iseult O'Briain's kind decision to donate her first prize to Crann.

Crann – Trees for Ireland Christmas Fundraising Draw 2019 RESULTS

DRAW TOOK PLACE ON 20 JANUARY 2020 (UNDER PERMIT).

1st Prize A wonderful variety box of books worth in excess of €50 couriered to any Irish address Sponsored by Crann Director Dr George Cunningham, Roscrea.

Iseult O'Briain, Scurlocks Leap, Sandyford Village, Dublin.

2nd Prize Family Annual Membership for Powerscourt Estate, Enniskerry, Co Wicklow. (Powerscourt Gardens & Waterfall, Powerscourt River Walk) www.powerscourt.com

Valerie Feehan, Silchester Cres, Glenageary, Co Dublin.

3rd Prize 2 Rounds of Golf at Carton House Golf course - valid until June 2020. Carton Demesne, Maynooth, Co Kildare www.cartonhouse.com.

Gerry Kelly, Ladestown, Mullingar, Co Westmeath.

4th Prize €100 Voucher for Wilkinson Jewellers, Kennedy Rd, Navan, Co Meath.

Lucy Mooney, North Circular Road, Dublin 7.

5th Prize Family (2+2) Pass for 4 Visits to Belvedere - Valid for use up to 31/12/2020. Belvedere House, Gardens & Park, Mullingar, Co Westmeath www.belvedere-house.ie.

Dermot Connolly, Leeson Park, Dublin 6.

6th Prize Family (2+2) Pass for 4 Visits to Belvedere - Valid for use up to 31/12/2020 Belvedere House, Gardens & Park, Mullingar, Co Westmeath www.belvedere-house.ie.

Christopher O'Brien-Lynch, Forest Edge, Drogheda, Co Louth.

7th Prize Family (2+2) Pass for 4 Visits to Belvedere - Valid for use up to 31/12/2020 Belvedere House, Gardens & Park, Mullingar, Co Westmeath www.belvedere-house.ie.

Claire Higgins, Curragh Gate House, Rathbride Road, Kildare Town.

8th Prize Choose any two of 10ltr trees from the tree collection at Windyridge Nurseries & GC, Rochestown Ave, Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin. www.windyridgegardencentre.ie

Diarmuid Tempany, Milltown Hall, Milltown Ave, Mt St Annes, Dublin 6

9th Prize A beautiful Toona sinensis 'Flamingo' 6' tree (delivery nationwide) from Johnstown Garden Centre, Naas, Co Kildare. www.johnstowngardencentre.ie

Conn Loughnane, Ardeevin, St Lukes, Cork.

10th Prize Family (2+4) One Day Pass to experience the wonders and excitement at Dublin Zoo, Phoenix Park, Dublin. Valid up to 31/10/2020 www.dublinzoo.ie

Sandra Byrne, Blessington, Co Wicklow.

11th Prize €50 Voucher for Cappagh Nurseries and Garden Centre. Tinnakilly Lower, Aughrim, Co Wicklow. www.vanderwel.ie

Thomas Gallagher, Kildangan Stud, Monasterevin, Co Kildare.

12th Prize €50 Voucher for O'Briens Wine Off-Licence 34 stores nationwide www.obrienswine.ie

David Fitzpatrick, Green Meadows, Mullingar, Co Westmeath.

13th Prize 1lt. bottle of Jameson Whiskey, delivery nationwide.

Declan Murphy, "Helios", Greenshill, Kilkenny.

14th Prize Family (2+4) Entry to the Enchanted Forest at Slieve Aughty Centre, Kylebrack West, Loughrea, Co Galway. Valid for use up to 31/12/2020. www.slieveaughtycentre.com

Brenda McLoughlin, Gortnagullion, Kilnagross, Co Leitrim.

Your efforts to support Crann's work are very much appreciated. THANK YOU!

'Thank You' to all our friends and sponsors for supporting and sponsoring this Fundraising Draw

Welcome back, Dale!

DALE TREADWELL explains why he hasn't been appearing in Crann magazine for a while

WRITER'S block, it's a funny thing. I never thought I would get it because I never considered myself a writer. The

children's books, scripts for TV shows and stage shows with puppet (psst, they are not real) dinosaurs: I always thought of them as just extensions to oral stories.

And I never considered I was writing. More trying, often in vain, to corral the thoughts spewing out, in order to format them in some logical sequence so that others might follow. I knew what I was on about but I was never sure anyone else could follow the frenetic pace.

Writer's block, though, is what I have had for many a year, despite the gentle requests from the guiding lights of this magazine such as Paddy Smith and Joe Barry. Other than some benign facts and figure about locations of schools I've visited and numbers and species of tree I've planted, I have been unable to conjure up anything much to write about.

Perhaps I have pondered if I have had anything worthwhile to write about. Wondering if anything I was up to was really of any interest to anyone other than myself. Much of the last half dozen years has felt like that. Perhaps the journey to middle age and the somewhat inconsequence of much of my more youthful endeavours and exuberance has lulled my spark to write a story or even to muse a little.

Yet, on an autumn day as I wander around the grounds of Gum Tree Cottage (not quite a cottage anymore but a sprawling bungalow extended now on four occasions by necessity of a growing family), I take comfort in the shelter afforded by the now 20-year-old larch and birch that cover the drive as they begin their annual shed and the oddities of the snow gums along the



Showing off in front of youngsters and running around in a dinosaur suit wasn't great for Dale

Inset: Dale with his trusty Matilda, the mattock

front of the house that will remain evergreen and provide the backdrop soon enough for Christmas lights. I take this comfort as, while everything else changes and revolves at a whirlwind pace, the trees remain and are my constant.

Autumn is often a time of slowing and melancholy. It is the natural cycle but for me this particular year I feel especially so. Perhaps because my own sense of mortality and strength has taken a beating this past year, I feel as such. About this time last year (I can only recall as I was somewhat out of action for Tree Day Activities last year) after a fall re-breaking an old knee injury and adding a new fractured wrist to the collection of life's war wounds. Slowed me enough to contemplate whether I should let my companion of many a year, Matilda the Mattocks (once featured on a front cover of this publication), go into retirement as my days of showing off in front of adolescent boys that I could power through more holes for tree planting than any number of them put together had kind of worn thin. So, for Christmas I bought myself a mechanical Matilda and conceded that I didn't have quite the 6-and-half-foot swing I once had. Also the jar on the wrist when metal hits the ground and having to bend at knees just hurt too much nowadays.

That wasn't it for me, though, Father Time decided he wanted to remind me that I'm very nearly 50 and a

lifetime of lifting digging, showing off in front of teenagers and running around in a dinosaur suit wasn't great for me. He did this by inflicting me with an endocrinal hernia (hard to say, even harder to function with). Anyway, thanks to a fantastic surgeon in Mullingar General and a long frustrating summer of not doing any of the aforementioned activities I'm back, raring to go. Maybe, just maybe, less inclined to do anything at the pace I have done in the past.

Autumn is also the time of collecting seeds for future tree-planting seasons and as I scoured underneath my own oaks for acorns I couldn't help but recall that the oaks in my garden have been grown from acorns collected by my daughter when she was a toddler. She is now living away at college and life rolls around. My trees are still constant.

I have a new collecting buddy, though. My son is now 11 and far better at reaching the ground than me after last year's tumble. He also enjoys planting trees with me. My daughter planted rowans and oak which are now 20-25ft tall. My son gets exciting stuff to plant with his grandfather, stuff such as redwoods and to play in the snow in eucalyptus forests.

Hopefully, a love of trees will continue in the lineage as the love of gardening and trees was passed to me.

Note: Since I wrote this article, everyone has been in that hiatus scenario that I found myself in. I can only hope that you all keep well and safe.

Happy 3rd birthday to our thriving Giants

By SEAN MCGINNIS

GIANTS GROVE is now three years old, having been launched in April 2017. And how the time has flown! Back then, while we were all looking so optimistically into the future, none of us could have foreseen the plight the world would be in now because of Covid-19. Wherever you are, and whatever you are doing in these trying times, we hope you and your loved ones are safe. Strange as it all is, nature carries on and the trees in Giants Grove are not even aware of our pandemic. All they know is that, as I am writing and the world is

in lockdown, it is just another start of another growing season. The giants in the Grove are doing well. Following a difficult winter, the site is fully stocked, although some trees are a little worse for wear because of deer damage or flooding. Last year's growth is obvious on the stems this time of year and the sequoias grew an average of 50cm. Some grew less, some grew a lot more, but it is generally an even crop.

We are looking forward to seeing how they perform in 2020. Some early starters already have leader growth of 25cm with a long growing season ahead of them.

After three years settling in to their new home and getting used to slightly poorer soil conditions than they had at the nursery, I plan to fertilise the Giants in the coming weeks. There is no evidence of any deficiency



Planting the very first giant redwood three years ago were Andris Kovalevskis, Sean McGinnis and Quentin Perrousset. Inset: Sean McGinnis this year with the same tree, now measuring 2.1m.

at present, and the trees have adapted well, but I want to give them a boost now to maintain their health. Phosphate (P), potassium (K) and nitrogen (N) are the most common nutrients missing from Irish soils; trace elements are generally not a problem. After this, the Giants should not need any further inputs as they will be able to draw on nutrients from the deeper layers of the soil horizon, thanks to their extensive roots. In a few years, when the Giants close canopy, nutrient cycling will begin as nutrients from falling needles and twigs return to the soil, and this will be enough to keep the trees healthy into the future.

Sean McGinnis, of Ecoplan Forestry, manages the Giants Grove site on behalf of Crann – Trees for Ireland and Giants Grove

THE PROJECT

Giants Grove www.giantsgrove.ie at Birr Castle, a voluntary partnership between Birr Castle and Crann – Trees for Ireland is planned as the largest grove of giant redwoods outside California, a mix of giant and coastal redwoods. These redwoods were native here before the Ice Age 3 million years ago.

Giants Grove is a symbol of Ireland's global concern for conservation, as climate change represents a threat to the long-term survival of redwoods in California.

The project includes an under-storey of Irish trees: oak, holly, rowan and spindle for biodiversity and extra visual interest.

The planting, maintenance and establishment of the 1,000 redwoods is being financed by you, the Giants Grove sponsors, dedicating trees to family and friends. Your tree will be associated with a GPS coordinate within the Grove, identified on your certificate.

More information: www.giantsgrove.ie or email info@giantsgrove.ie



Bill Connell in 2017 when he was presented with his Over-15ha RDS Forestry Award, with Minister of State for Food, Forestry and Horticulture Andrew Doyle, and the then-president of the RDS, Bernie Brennan.

The wonderful legacy of Bill Connell, forester and board member of Crann

On the day following Bill Connell's death, I received over a dozen phone calls from some of his many friends. I mention this because all those who rang me were people whom I would never have met or known had I not also enjoyed a few short years of Bill's wonderful friendship.

He was one of those marvellous characters whom, it felt, everyone knew, and just a mention of his name was enough to start a stream of reminiscences about trips abroad to rugby matches or exploits related to his other great passion, growing trees.

Bill was a renaissance man in the best sense of the term for he had a deep interest in virtually everything related to life, living and the workings of the world around us. He shared these interests with everyone around him and his infectious enthusiasm was impossible to resist. Above all, he loved his woods and over a relatively short period planted a large percentage of his land with a wide mix of species.

Living in Collinstown in Westmeath on a scenic property overlooking Lough Lene, Bill played a huge part in community life and nothing was too much trouble for, as the saying goes, if you want something done, ask a busy man. He was also part of a local syndicate who designed and funded a mid-sized forwarder for extracting timber from difficult terrain and it proved ideal for its purpose and was ground-breaking in its design. Around the same time, he won the prestigious RDS

farm forestry award for the excellence of his woodland and the quality of its management.

I was proud to have introduced him to Crann where he soon joined the board of directors and helped greatly in the running and development of the organisation through difficult times. The aims of promoting mixed woodland and ensuring that the right tree was chosen for the right location were close to his heart and we will all miss his invaluable input and his often witty and mischievous comments during debate.

Bill had suffered for some time from a heart condition but this did not restrain him from following his beloved Leinster rugby team and he faithfully attended almost all of their matches. He also loved humorous texts and WhatsApp videos and I still find myself thinking I must send some especially funny one to him, only to realise he is no longer with us.

We really miss Bill, for so many diverse reasons, and our sympathies go to his wife, Justine, and family and his large circle of friends.

It was snowing quite heavily on the day of Bill's funeral in early February and after the ceremony I drove to a section of his woodland, stopped and watched as the snowflakes settled on the branches. It was a lovely moment and one that Bill would have shared happily. Perhaps he was there.

What a wonderful legacy to leave for future generations.

Joe Barry

Photographic Competition 2020

Our annual photographic competition, sponsored by Coillte, attracted another record entry last year. Standards were very high and we look forward to receiving equally good images for this year's contest.

Theme: **Trees, Forests & Woodlands**

Sponsored By: **Coillte**

First Prize **€250**,

Second Prize **€100**,

Third Prize **€50**

ENTRY IS FREE!

Closing date: October 15

Digital entries should be emailed to

CrannCoillte2020@gmail.com

Prints should be posted to **Crann – Trees for Ireland, Photo Competition, Crann, PO Box 860, Celbridge, Co Kildare.**

RULES

- This competition is open to all amateur photographers.
- Entries can be digital (emailed) or prints (posted).
- Emailed images must be in jpg/jpeg format, minimum file size 2MB, maximum file size 8MB.
- NOTE: Emailed entries must be as attachments to the email (not embedded in email).
- Prints of photos should be minimum size 6x4 inches (15x10cm) up to maximum size A4.
- A certain amount of manipulation of digital images to enhance the subject matter is allowed but gimmicky special effects are not.
- Each photographer may submit up to 3 entries.
- Prints should have the following information on the back: Name, Address, Telephone Number, Title of Print, Location and Date Taken.
- Prints should NOT be mounted.
- Prints cannot be returned.
- Emails should have the following information: Name, Address, Telephone Number, Email Address, Title of Picture, Location and Date Taken.
- The copyright of the image remains the photographer's. However, Crann and Coillte retain the right to use any images in future publications and on related social media and websites e.g. Crann may use some of the competition pictures in related third party publications, tweets, website, social media and promotional literature like calendars. You may be requested to supply the images in high resolution eps/jpeg format for this purpose.
- Entering this competition implies full and whole acceptance of the competition rules.
- The judge's decision will be final and no correspondence or communications will be entered into in relation to the results

Phone cameras

We have a special section for phone camera photographs.

Entries should be emailed to CrannCoillte2020@gmail.com, with the words 'Phone camera' entered in the subject line.

The winner will receive a special prize of €50.

Waterford students chose Crann as their charity

Report from the Build a Bank Team at St Angela's Secondary School, Ursuline Convent, Waterford

A team of six Transition Year students from our school participated in this year's AIB Build A Bank Challenge. This competition offers students the opportunity to showcase their creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. Students also get the chance to give back to their community.

As part of our AIB Build a Bank challenge, we were required to choose a charity to raise money for, through a 'Colour Run' fund-raising event. For our charity we

selected Crann – Trees for Ireland, as we feel that the preservation and planting of trees is so important in modern society.

With regard to our tree planting programme, our local institute of technology, WIT, are interested in helping us out. Their forestry department is great and they love getting involved with local secondary schools.

Our Colour Run was held on 2 February in our local eco-park, the Waterford Regional Sports Centre (the RSC), which was originally a landfill.

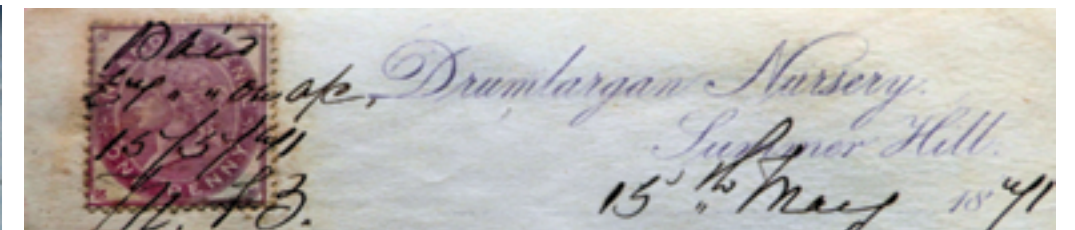
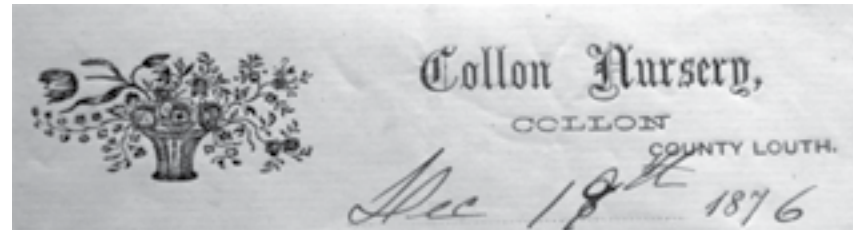


Crann Director Peadar Collins with St Angela's Ursuline Convent students, from left, Emma Burke, Rimsha Sajid, Lucy Guinan and Moya O'Shea.

Crann Director Peadar Collins attended our event and, throughout the day, we promoted the planting and preservation of trees as well as making everyone aware of Crann. The colour we used in the Run was safe for all who attended and we ensured that the colour was biodegradable for the environment. Our aim was that all who attended had a good time. Approximately 300 people

attended and we were so delighted to get the opportunity to show and promote the importance of trees. We will definitely keep encouraging people to learn more about this topic and this great cause.

Special thanks from Crann – Trees for Ireland to Leah Quinlan, Bank Manager, and Aoibheann Meagher and the whole Build a Bank Team.



Above: Some of the clients and customers of Hodgins Nurseries

Nineteenth-century Irish nurseries

By GEORGE CUNNINGHAM

To my knowledge, little research has been made available to date on the nurseries operating in nineteenth-century Ireland. One of the most successful and long-lasting was in Co Tipperary, in the village of Cloughjordan (ironically very apt as today it is one of Ireland's eco villages). There, John Hodgins & Son operated a very successful plant and seed nursery in the latter half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.

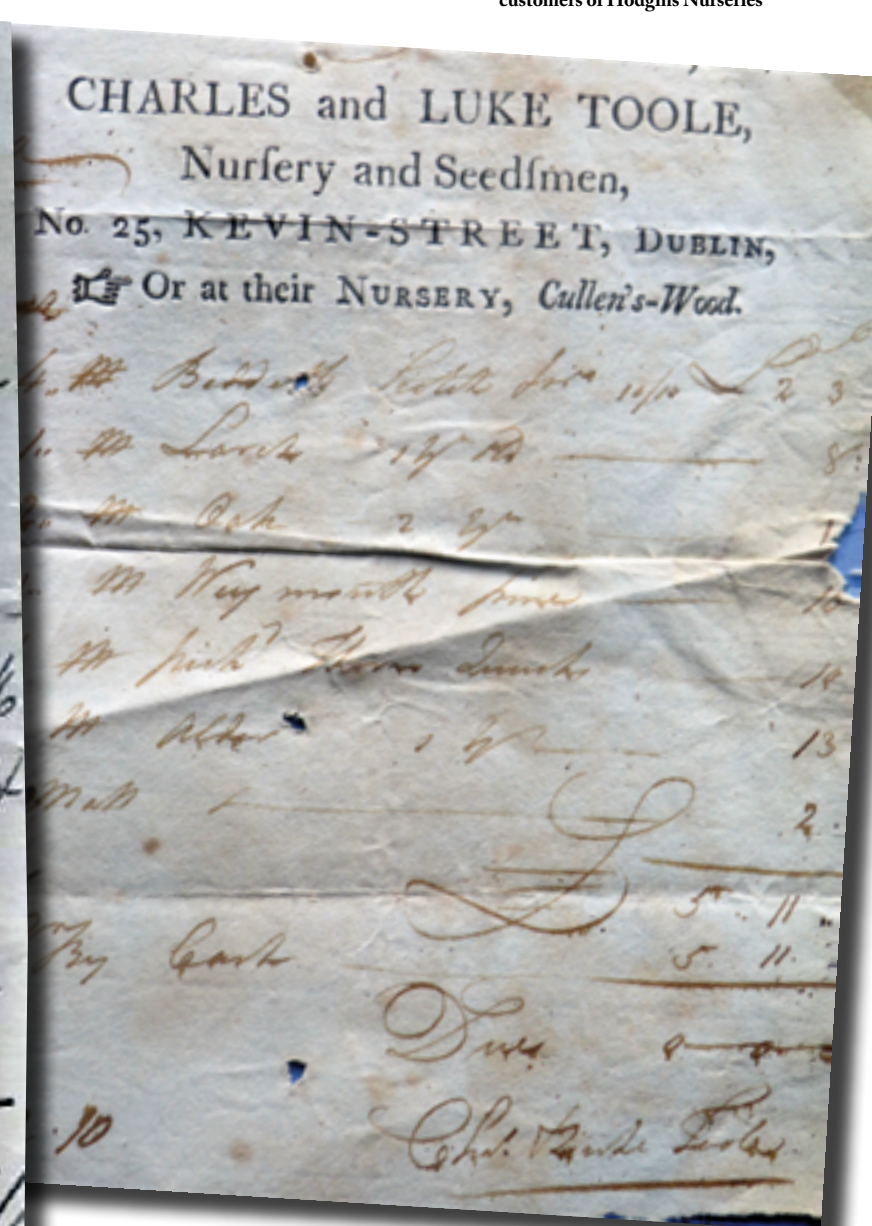
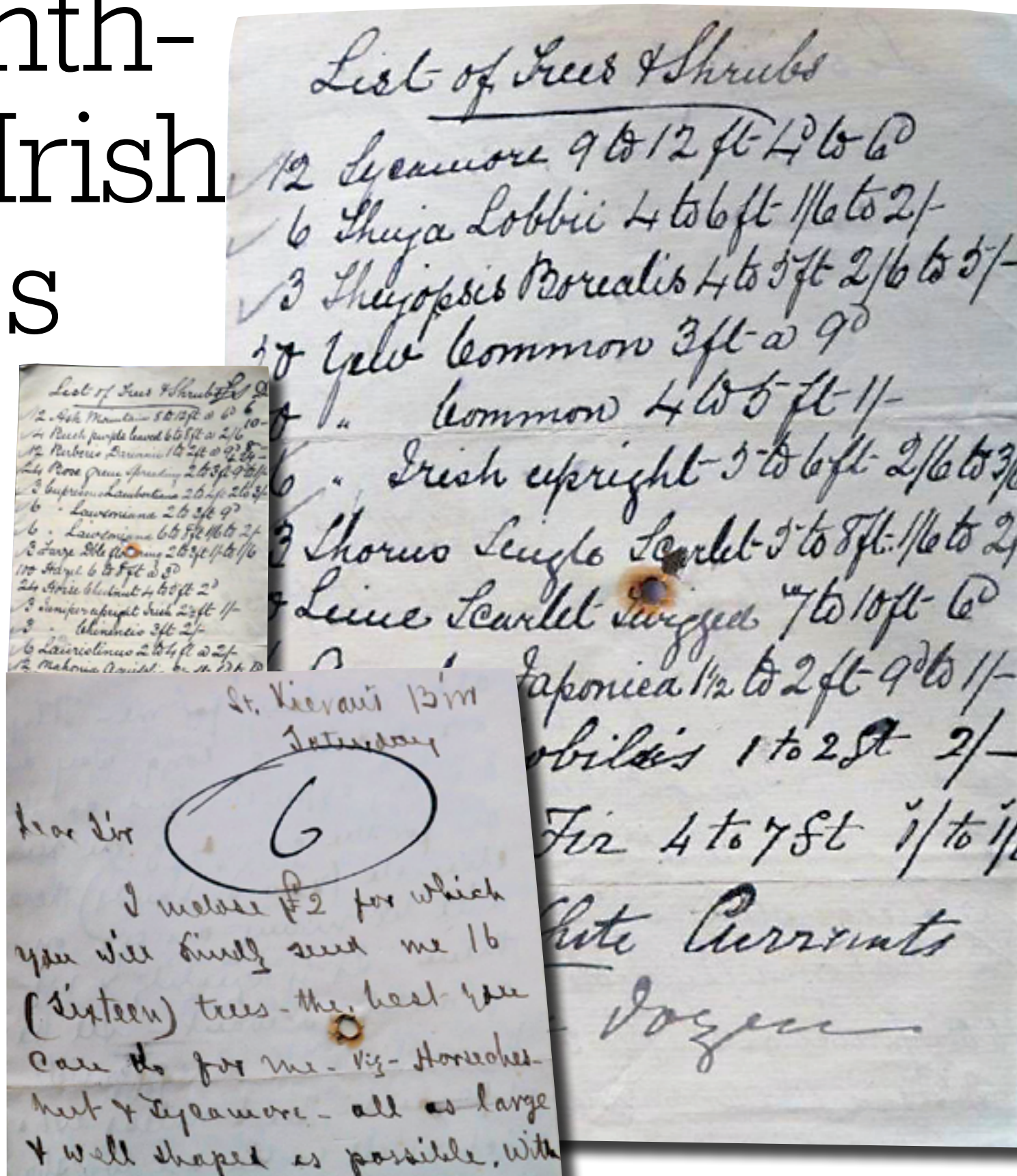
Recently this writer donated a large collection, mainly of Tipperary interest, to the Tipperary Public Library Local Studies Centre, the Source, Thurles. This collection has been digitised and is available on their website. It comprises seed catalogues, postal requests and letters from clients from all parts of Tipperary and indeed further afield, the detail from the letters showing that the Hodgins family attended to all requests promptly. The collection as presented digitally has not been sorted into any order but has been scanned in the format as donated.

The range of plants and seeds which John Hodgins and Son provided to his clients, the price lists and the nature of the whole business give a fascinating insight into the social and rural life of not only Cloughjordan but much of Ireland at that time. The company advertised in not only the national press but across the sea too. Hodgins holly was one of the most distinctive cultivars to emerge from Hodgins. The illustrated letterheads of some of the nurseries of the 1870s displayed here were all clients or customers of Hodgins.

Almost all midland and regional businesses, institutions and 'Big Houses' were clients of Hodgins. Many requested delivery by rail. For example, some Birr customers asked that their orders be sent by rail from Cloughjordan to Roscrea and then by the branch line to Birr.

The company seems to have slowly gone out of business from the 1920s. Within a few decades afterwards it was not even a memory in the village of Cloughjordan. The house, Cloughjordan House, is now a boutique guesthouse, specialising in weddings and associated functions.

Just look at the price! £2 for 16 trees. These trees were ordered by the PP of Seir Kieran (Clareen) for his proposed new RC church. He had his priorities right: get the trees started even before the building.



Difficult to know if these listings with prices were a fulfilled order or the plant and tree species held by Hodgins & Son. Of note, of course, are the wide variety of species and their cost.



The Charles and Luke Toole invoice from Dublin can be dated to 1801. These nursery and seedsmen had a nursery at Cullenswood, an area near Ranelagh, Dublin, and a shop at 25 Kevin Street, Dublin. The invoice or receipt includes payment for scotch fir, larch, oak, weymouth pine, (thick) thorn quicks and alder.



Glenstal's *Embothrium coccineum*, one of its many unique plants from the plant kingdoms of Chile and Argentina
Opposite: Glenstal flora

THE GIFT OF GLENSTAL

PEADAR COLLINS casts an admiring eye over a gem in East Limerick, a treasure chest of botanical history



Pictures: Peadar Collins, unless otherwise stated

LIMERICK is a great county, praised in prose and song. From its bustling city of industrialists and entrepreneurs who lead the way in civil engineering, educational and cultural activities, global technology development, advanced techniques of recycling, sporting and food manufacturing and distribution to its quieter and fertile plains and hills where milk and honey flow, Limerick has much that is impressive, enviable and desirable.

Every county has its north, east, south and west. For some reason I have always been fascinated by East Limerick. Maybe it began when, as a child, I used to go on holidays to my uncle in Bruff where we would spend every chance swimming in Lough Gur or walking the banks of the Morning Star River.

There seems to be something deeply

historical about the land there. Perhaps this is because the strong outcrops of rock in the fields stretching from Kiltelly to Lough Gur that have resisted the roll-out of homogenised modern monoculture farming that seems to level the natural character of the landscape in other areas. I wonder why it was the choice of our ancient ancestors to make this area around Lough Gur home.

As ever, my tree antenna are always up and by chance about 20 years ago, driving to find a place called the Clare Glens, I happened across a beautiful place that I had heard of but had not seen: Glenstal Abbey. I wasn't sure if I was allowed to drive in but I couldn't resist the temptation. It is fair to say that I was hugely impressed.

I drove slowly up the kilometre-long driveway through natural parkland with grazing wild geese and lively ponds full of duck and swans. Hemmed in with denser



natural oak forest in the background and with individual towering ancient *Quercus petraea* standing sentry for hundreds of years to my right and left, I was reminded by their sheer presence that this was a place of natural splendour and I was to proceed with a sense of reverence. As the driveway led into the enclosed wooded drive, more and more the extent of this place's botanical treasure chest became obvious. For the next number of twists along the way, I was to see some of Ireland's finest magnolia, redwoods, rhododendrons, stewartia, cornus, parrotia and a particularly beautiful arrangement of nyssa, eucryphia and cercidophyllum.

Once you reach the end of the drive, you are greeted and surprised by the towering presence of Glenstal Abbey itself, with its sturdy walls, commanding towers and central stone archway proclaiming PAX. As you pause to admire it you find yourself in an island green. To the south-east is a magnificent pinetum, while to the south, framed by the forest, is the bold sweep of the Golden Vale, ending in the Galtees. Yet this is only the start. For here you will find yourself in a place of great tranquillity. The numerous pathways lead out from the centre of the abbey and school, weaving through ancient woodland that dates back thousands of years.

From the centre of the monastery and school, one can stroll out through a canopy of mature oaks to a sunken garden with mature yew trees. You can't help but take your time, as the immensity of this beautiful garden created by nature and cared for by man opens up before you. As you look back on the school's cleverly-designed open glass classrooms, through the mature oak woodland, you can only imagine what an inspiring environment this must be for the young men who are so privileged to be able to study here. This is more than just a school; it is an environment to



Clockwise from top left: Ancient *Quercus petraea* stand as sentries to the left and right of the Glenstal driveway

Ancient stone circle near Lough Gur, with very mature *Fraxinus excelsior* (handsome guy Peadar Collins is a native species too)

Glenstal Abbey. Picture: RSmith, geograph
Glenstal's exceptional *Magnolia campbellii*
Cerris autumnal colour

learn, study and develop lifelong appreciation and values, gently, reverently and fervently guided by the community of Benedictine monks.

As the pathway leading out from the school takes you through the mature woodland you arrive on a high stone bridge spanning a glen

fed by a mountain stream flowing out from an ancient oak forest on the higher ground. It widens out before you into a sunken lake. Here you are in the presence of mature coastal redwoods, dawn redwoods, evergreen oaks, holly, hazel and yew. Close by are the large terraced walled gardens of Glenstal. They date back to the 1600s, the time of the earlier Carbury family.

It is so easy to get lost here in your thoughts. This is never more conscious or unconscious until you hear the sounds of multiple bells sanctifying the time, chiming through the trees from the abbey church.

The story of this hugely significant place is one that has been evolving through the hands



of people with a deep appreciation of the beauty of nature. Every generation seems to have appreciated the place, from its ancient early years where natural oak forests enveloped the glens and rolling rich countryside. The abbey is situated in the foothills of Slieve Felim, Sliabh Eibhlinne, the abode of the Goddess Eibhle, manifestation of wisdom, beauty and shimmering light. In the ownership of the Carbury family, in 1673 the Deer Park was licenced by King Charles II. And things were taken to a new level with the intervention of far-seeing Sir Matthew Barrington as the great botanical wonders of the world burst in upon the scene from Asia and America.

From what can be understood from the many records available, the Barringtons were mindful to build around the legacy of what was there and secure the future with it. The major drive to establish what we can now admire today as a mature parkland estate was to happen in the years 1822–1826 when Matthew Barrington agreed a supply primarily from a Mr Arthur Baylor of Fermoy, Co Cork. During those years, a total of 304,750 accountable trees were purchased to be planted. These were oak, ash, elm, beech, sycamore, birch, Scots pine, larch and spruce. These, I believe, formed the skeleton of the plan. Subsequent years, from 1829, saw the introduction of a wide variety of rare and unusual ornamental trees and plants as well as the establishment of a pinetum with *Cedrus deodara* from India, *Auricularia* from South America and Douglas fir and redwoods from California. The strong persistent dark green of the pinetum is relieved by cherry and tulip trees with spreads of rhododendrons and azaleas.



Just as nothing in life remains static, the time of the Barringtons came in the early 1920s. They very kindly offered the demesne to the State at the time and it was seriously considered. However, our country was on its financial knees, so to speak, and it would have been a bridge too far. Fortunately, it was purchased by Monsignor James Ryan in 1926 and the following year on 13 May saw the first four Benedictine monks arrive to establish what has become one of the finest Benedictine schools in Europe, that continues to offer a future as the Gift of Glenstal.

Clockwise from top left: Glenstal natural parkland
Unique *eucriphia* collection, which flower in late summer

A wild goose takes flight from the water at Glenstal. Picture: Fr Dennis Hopper

The presence of trees and the devotion of these fine men to the Word of God can be translated through some of Christ's teaching where he asks us to believe and to be patient. The leaves will come.

In his book, Brian P Murphy OSB fittingly speaks of the importance of the sense of garden at Glenstal, reminding us of some of Christ's last words on the Cross where he uses the term 'Paradise', the ancient Persian word for garden.

I write this in the late spring of 2020 in a time of global virus and global fear. It is a time too when the gift of Glenstal needs to be felt. In the garden, anxiety will be absorbed. We all need to make time, not merely by chance to find time to be in the presence of nature.

A PLANTING SEASON LIKE NO OTHER



At a workshop on carbon capture, organised by Professor Yvonne Buckley and Dr John Devaney, Trinity College Dublin, Dr Devaney has the measure of things, watched by Orla Farrell of Easy Treesie/Crann – Trees for Ireland with the Plant-for-the-Planet Tree Academy team on a field trip to St Stephen's Green, Dublin. The Academy was also hosted by Future Earth Ireland.

ORLA FARRELL reports on a record season, including progress on the mission to plant a tree for every school child in the country – and the world's first virtual Plant-for-the-Planet Tree Academy, on Zoom!

I BEGIN my article on this, the 50th Earth Day. All of us are doing what we can under the Covid-19 restrictions. The Positivi-TREE so foremost in our global trillion-tree project team is all-important now. Our project motto, 'Safety, Fun and Learning,' starts with safety, for good reason. As an Irish Mammy and registered teacher leading our project, health and safety is a core project value.

A pandemic was widely predicted as one of the likely consequences of the climate and biodiversity crisis. Our hope is that the rediscovered popular respect for science

will lead to a renewed focus on and trust in our global community of experts. Trees play such an important part in the battle to bring down the planetary fever. Our trillion-tree goal can buy one degree of global temperature mitigation while other solutions are sought (that is 150 trees for everybody on the planet; have you planted yours yet?). People can really appreciate nature on their doorstep now that we are

Why not support our work with a donation to www.crann.ie, where €10 will sponsor a tree planted by school children on public lands. Learn more on www.easytreesie.com.

confined to base and there is a new value placed on the importance of clean air and a clean environment. Our very-washed hands attest to this!

We launched Tree Day in October, excited about our upcoming Science Week joint initiative with Science Foundation Ireland and Coillte, with support from the Tree Council of Ireland. In a way, every day is Tree Day and every week is Tree Week working on the Easy Treesie/Crann Project. Science Week last autumn became a second Tree Week; it started in Montrose Studios with my electric Leaf car full of Coillte silver birch saplings, having crossed town



Bank of America Merrill Lynch held a skills exchange workshop at their Leopardstown HQ with a team from Easy Treesie/Crann in collaboration with Global Giving at their Sandyford Headquarters. Pictured: Orla Farrell, Easy Treesie/Crann with Niall Brady, Director, Bank of America Merrill Lynch.

Below: The Fingal County Council Augur Team come out to assist at the Easy Treesie/Crann Swords Manor Science Week Planting Party



The Easy Treesie/Crann Crown, made in Kilkenny, goes to Athenry Community, Co Galway, this year. They planted 11,000 trees!



at dawn to arrange an RTÉ tree planting ceremony on the news! It ended on another frosty morning, this time before the dawn and even before the school breakfast club opened, in front of a TV3 reporting crew. We were filmed in the dark, unloading trees for a planting party, with the Lord Mayor of Dublin and his City Council team making inroads to the 4,500 trees we have helped plant this season in Tolka River Valley Park. On the same day we were joined by the Minister for Climate Action, Richard Bruton, at Baldoyle Racecourse Community Gardens, with children from neighbouring St Mary's Hospital school and St Laurence's National School joining us for some further tree planting and celebration.

National Climate Action Week is now another new highlight in our Tree Calendar in October. As an An Taisce Climate Ambassador Mentor, the network that this programme and its initiatives provide has

been invaluable in raising awareness about the vital role that trees play in mitigating the effects of climate change and in encouraging action. One of the very enjoyable events during that week was joining one of my fellow Climate Ambassadors with a sixth class in rural Wicklow where we planted trees raised from local seed in the school grounds. It was so rural I managed to get lost for the first time this season in getting there; Sally (my satnav) is put through her paces with our project and not only are we recalculating our tree count with dizzying regularity, Sally also does her share of recalculating as I wend my way around the country. Science Week had been preceded with a long 'sales' push, finding good homes for this tree consignment. Repeat business is always a good sign; not only had we lots of interest from towns who had already taken part in our planting parties, word is out and so nearby towns were also keen to join.

Directly after Science Week I had the pleasure of representing Ireland at the Plant-for-the-Planet Global summit in Bonn. This gave me the useful opportunity to meet tree-planting organisers from all over the world. I was so proud to add our 30,000 science-week trees to the UNESCO tree counter. Our Spanish colleagues were impressed with us; though they have an office staffed with five people and have run many tree academies, Ireland's project tree count has inched ahead of Spain. We have a natural advantage when it comes to watering, of course. We all know about the Rain in Spain! Easy Treesie sponsored a tree-planting at our conference location, the Bonn Youth Hostel, a local apple variety to honour Plant-for-the-Planet Project founder Felix Finkbeiner's first apple tree planted a decade earlier at his school. This extends the Irish initiative at the last Global Summit in Vallecrosia, Italy, of planting a ceremonial tree – in that case of

the lemon variety.

Lining up the Tree Academies was our next task. We have now held four such events for children, one for each year since the project began. This year we expanded into Dublin City for the first such Academy we have held on a school day. It was a great honour indeed to be invited as this was the first children's event to be held at the Royal Irish Academy (RIA), Ireland's leading body of experts in the sciences and humanities, since its foundation in 1785. Its staff must have felt a certain nervousness about so many very young children spending the day in this hallowed place, eating lunch and hot chocolate in the august rooms with their very good carpets! We arrived at the Academy from our field trip to nearby St Stephen's Green, where we were studying the carbon content of the trees in the park led by Professor Yvonne Buckley and Dr John Devaney of TCD, and Dr Diarmuid Tormey



Leaving Certificate students from St Finian's Community College, Swords, Co Dublin, working on their forestry module. They joined us in Swords River Valley with their teachers.



Dr Declan Bogan, CEO of Innovate2Zero, Harry Bogan and Sinead Brown, Director, Innovate2Zero, present a cheque for €5,000 to Mark Wilkinson, Crann Chairman, and Orla Farrell for the Easy Treesie/Crann Project, at a function in Dunboyne, Co Meath

of Future Earth Ireland and their team

Our event, sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), also encompassed music and art, capturing the essence of our activities. The handsome building is adjacent to the Mansion House, where Dublin Lord Mayors have welcomed us along to three events recently, including the superb Climate Day. The event included Diarmuid McAree, Secretary of Crann, supervising the ceremonial planting of a tree on the stage and concluded with a presentation to an audience which included eminent members of the RIA. Professor Michael Kennedy of NUI Cork, President of the RIA, expressed his delight watching our young new Climate Justice Ambassadors navigate their Powerpoint presentation and presented each with a certificate and a book. You can watch and share Aileen O Meara Media group's film record of the event on our new YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXZ5t-bcIAH2yIKwKXI-ATw>.

com/channel/UCXZ5t-bcIAH2yIKwKXI-ATw.

Schools have done some epic planting with us this season: St Mary's NS, Donnybrook, for example, planted 1,000 trees in their grounds at Muckross Park. Their Adopt-a-Tree programme was picked up by Gonzaga College who took on 500 saplings. The annual meeting of the Jesuit Schools in Ireland promoted our project and each of their schools commenced tree-planting projects. The High School, Dublin, marked special events with trees, sponsoring trees to mark the 150th anniversary of their foundation, Ashbourne Community College similarly planted 25 trees for their 25 years of existence and Ashfield Estate in Listowel added 25 more trees to those planted in their town park last year. In Co Kerry, where we started with one lone tree at the Education Centre in 2018, Listowel picked up the baton in 2019, joined by Tralee and many other



Distinguished visitors join our young Plant-for-the-Planet Climate Justice Ambassadors and Crann Board members Diarmuid McAree and Orla Farrell at the first children's event to be held at the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin

Kerry towns.

This season saw a growing number of corporate volunteers joining us to assist the schoolchildren and their communities in planting parties and we have been delighted to continue to receive business sponsorship. Ongoing support from international brand Patagonia and support from Innovate2zero in Meath has allowed us expand into a greater range of schools and some new counties. The support of local authorities including Galway, Cork and Fingal have been vital and the Dublin City Council team is most supportive.

Our Patagonia Power Planting event in the Shankill community attracted an exciting film crew following an approach by Emmy Award-nominated Kate Bradbury and her partner Emre who have made several films for National Geographic. The children of St Anne's in Shankill were delighted to

oblige and not only cheerfully smiled for the cameras on a freezing cold and wet day, they invented a tree-planting dance to keep warm in a performance for a filming drone. You can see our resulting film on www.easytreesie.com where we are building up a useful archive of films covering why we plant and how to plant as well as suggestions for what to plant (including our 28 native trees series). A special thanks is also due to Mason Hayes Curran who carried out planting at Santry Park Demesne and Docusign who helped local school Coláiste Choilm at Swords Town Park.

In January, I was invited to a meeting with Coillte's Pat Neville and Mark Carlin to plan how best to build on the success of Science Week and, to our great delight, they announced a doubling of the usual 15,000 saplings distributed by Coillte in advance of

National Tree Week this year. This figure was then matched by the superb charity, Trees On The Land which brought the trees distributed to a record 60,000 nationally this year so far to groups from northernmost Donegal to the tip of the Dingle Peninsula.

Student engagement has also grown, with participation from many of our Third Level bodies. Science Fairs were held in Galway, Cork and Limerick where saplings were distributed to local schools and communities. Dublin City University's Enactus group not only provided tech support and incorporated our project with their Green Week but came out planting with us between lectures. We supported DCU's 'Barkollage' tree workshop and exhibition in Marino College and supplied trees for their organic garden. Tidy Towns and Residents groups carried out heroic planting this year, with Kilkenny

first out of the traps, in the city itself and at Goresbridge. Athenry took the 'Crann Crown' with 1,000 planted during Science Week and a further 10,000 planted by their Children's Project in February.

Most fortunately, all 60,000 trees for National Tree Week donated by Coillte and Trees On The Land were distributed early enough before Covid-19 restrictions were initiated and were all either planted as planned or heeled-in to await next season. At Our Lady's School in Templeogue, their heroic gardener planted 1,000 saplings, one for each child at the school on their behalf after the girls began their home schooling. Our Swords Tree Academy took place on Zoom with children planting oak, rowan and hazel trees at their own homes in Donegal, Malahide, Swords, Donaghmede and Dunshaughlin – as well as a lemon tree in Johannesburg. Yes, it

became an international event!

I admit there were a lot of advantages to holding a virtual event. Not only did I not have to do the usual designation of a large space for muddy boots but in attendance were several dogs, two white rats who came out from their Rat Palace at break time and two giant African Snails. The event was the showcase in four weeks of tree-themed Hedge School activities organised by Easy Treesie/Crann remotely to support children working from home, running right up to Easter weekend.

At national level, RTE requested permission to post our film series, 'The Irish Tree Trail' on their Home School hub. Our podcast with our Education Officer, Dale Treadwell, and National Botanic Gardens head Matthew Jebb is currently posted on this Home School hub as a resource for the home schoolers <https://>

CORPORATE ACTIVITIES

More and more corporate enquiries are coming our way in Crann – Trees for Ireland as companies need to fulfil their green agenda objectives.

Some of the companies mentioned in this article have participated in such partnerships with Crann – Trees for Ireland in various ways.

We urge our members to be on the alert in identifying likely companies to participate in this form of corporate activity.

The Crann – Trees for Ireland partnership with corporate clients works in various ways. For example, we have organised for company staff to visit a local school and plant trees as part of National Tree Week. In another case, company staff worked with after-school/homework clubs who planted trees as a community group. In yet another, we arranged for a company's staff to work with us as volunteers planting trees on designated county council sites. Community-spirit initiatives similar to the above have a widespread appeal to companies and also serve to promote Crann aims.

We always welcome enquiries, ideas and suggestions: Tel 01 6275075, info@crann.ie

Marguerite Arbutnot-O'Brien
Administrator, Crann – Trees for Ireland



At Fingal County Hall planning the season's planting programme, Therese Casey, Fingal Parks Manager; Orla Farrell, Easy Treesie/Crann; Cllr Joe Newman; Colm Rigney, Operations Dept; Edward Stevenson, Swords Woodland Association.

Below: Asfand Bakht Yar (known to one-and-all as A B), Environmental Intern with our Easy Treesie/Crann project, shows us how things are done in fine style and in short order on his native Pakistan's billion tree tsunami project.



podcasts.apple.com/ie/podcast/id1505305020.

A new departure for us this season was when we were approached by a young engineer from Dublin's Technological University Masters in Sustainability programme with a request to intern on our project. Mr Asfand Bakht Yar, known as A B, came with the best experience imaginable: he had worked on President Imram Khan's trillion-tree campaign in his native Pakistan, an initiative which was completed on time and on budget. A B swiftly brought his project management expertise to our planting parties and in no time we were doing things in fine style.

Thanks to all our tree-mendous supporters. And thanks to Fingal, Cork and Galway County Councils for their generous support. We have proven our ability to adapt in our determination to achieve our million-tree target by 2023.

FROM DESERT SANDS TO MOUNTAIN SNOW, ALL IN AN AFTERNOON

GEORGE CUNNINGHAM and his wife, Carmel, on a never-to-be-forgotten journey to Joshua Tree National Park

“YOU DRIVE.” Fr Mick, RC pastor emeritus of Seal Beach in Orange County, southern California, threw me the keys of the mini-van a few days after St Patrick's Day, now almost 20 years ago. Knowing Carmel's and my own interest in trees, he had a treat in store for us. With himself and the parish catechist, Sister Sam, we were going to see the Joshua trees, a two-and-a-half hour's journey east of Los Angeles, staying overnight in the Little San Bernardino mountains.

Nothing prepares you for the Joshua Tree National Park and its 1,236 sq miles of all types of desert terrain, plant species and diverse biodiversity abounding in sand dunes, canyons and pinyon-covered and juniper-clad mountains, truly a unique environment. This National Park is where two deserts meet, the high desert of the Mojave and the low-lying Colorado one, and where the Joshua tree is the dominant element in this in-between desert.

We had only a few hours to explore the landscape alternating between rugged rock formations and stark desert but it was enough to imbibe a taste and a desire to know more about this wondrous place and its famous high profile resident, the iconic Joshua tree, known to many from the U2 album. Some three



A majestic desert bighorn sheep in the Joshua Tree National Park. Picture: Wikimedia, Magnus Kjaergaard

million people visit every year, hiking, camping and exploring the 8,000 routes for climbing the massive toy-like granite boulders, split horizontally and vertically, with such names as Skull Rock, Bread-loaf Rock and the Pope's Hat. To add to the diversity, five oases adorn the park and are home to the fan palm, the only native palm to California, *Washingtonia filifera*, or the Desert fan palm which is now common in artificial landscaping.

As its scientific name, *Yucca brevifolia* implies, this Joshua is a member of the yucca

genus of the lily family, storing water as a succulent plant. Arborescent yucca is a good compromise as it is tree-like in habit! Odd-looking, it is sometimes referred to as a vicious plant because of its bayonet-shaped serrated evergreen leaves. Difficult to know the age of the tree as the fibrous trunks do not form annual rings. Growing at a rate of two to three centimetres a year, they reach between eight and thirteen metres in height, with a spread of up to five metres, and are thought to live for anything between 200 and, some argue, a



The Joshua tree is sometimes known as a vicious plant because of its bayonet-shaped serrated evergreen leaves. Picture: Wikimedia, Bernard Gagnon



thousand years. Branching allows them to do this following pollination by the yucca moth. Indeed, as evidenced by fragments of Joshua tree petrified wood, this process has been ongoing for a mere two million years. It can grow from seed or from the rhizome of another Joshua. Intriguing and awkward, it is home and host to many and diverse creatures, not least 25 different species of birds, including various owls, cactus woodpeckers and wrens.

The name is thought to be Mormon in origin. Mid-nineteenth century settlers crossing the desert here perceived the suppliant branches as similar to biblical Joshua raising his arms in prayer to the heavens. To the native Americans it was an important source: leaf fibre to make rope, sandals, mats and baskets; the nutritious seeds, flowers and buds were eaten raw or boiled; the fleshy fruits were dried for winter use or fermented as a drink. Later settlers confined its use to fencing (in the desert the dry fibrous wood became resistant to decay), firewood and for some basic furniture; sometimes even setting the trees alight to show a trail. It had many other uses, from the production of newsprint to the making of soap from its roots and stems! But some desert lovers were not enamoured by it and



Joshua tree fruit.
Picture: Wikipedia,
Takwishi

its efficacies. How about this from Smeaton Close's *Californian Desert Trails* (1919):

It is a weird, menacing object, more like some conception of Poe's or Dore's than any work of wholesome mother nature. One can scarcely find a term of ugliness that is not apt for this plant. A misshapen pirate with belt, boots, hands and teeth stuck full of daggers is as near as I can come to a human analogy. The wood is a harsh, rasping fibre; knife-blades, long, hard, and keen, fill the place of leaves; the flower is greenish white and ill-smelling; and the fruit a cluster of nubby pods, bitter and



Typical view of
Joshua Tree National
Park with impressive
rocks and Joshua
trees. Picture:
Wikimedia, Tuxyso

useless. A landscape filled with Joshua trees has a nightmare effect even in broad daylight; at the witching hour it can be almost infernal.

But as Robert Cates says in his Joshua guide, 'the misshapen pirate' had friends as well: William Manly, struggling out of Death Valley to seek help for a marooned party of (18)49ers, called the Joshua, 'a brave little tree to live in such barren country.' In the late 1800s, building entrepreneurs from the fast-developing city of Los Angeles brought truck and coach loads of prospective buyers to the desert area. As the would-be purchasers

of land viewed the desert landscape from the vehicles, some 'developers' stuck oranges on each cactus spine of the Joshua, saying that this was the orange grove of California. Rumours abounded, too, that banana trees could be grafted on to them. Many blocks of land were sold but none was ever built on!

As with many places of special interest that we all now enjoy, this 794,000 acre National Park owes its existence to one woman, to the pioneering efforts of community activist Minerva Hayt, known as The Apostle of the Cacti, who, after years of persistent endeavour, persuaded President Franklin

D Roosevelt to proclaim it a national monument in 1936. Hers is a great legacy. It was renamed, enlarged and reclassified as a National Park in 1994.

It was a privilege to visit and to savour at first hand a truly unique landscape. What we said of the redwoods could also be quoted here: Sink down yon traveller on your knees, God stands before you in those trees.

Just as we were leaving Joshua to climb into the Little San Bernadino mountains on the south-west edge of the park, Fr Mick said to Sr Sam, "You drive." As we climbed up to over 1,800 metres on mountainous

unprotected snow-clad highways amid dense pine forests – ponderosa pine, Jeffrey pine, sugar pine, Coulter pine, lodgepole pine, single-leaf pinyon, and knobcone pine to name but a few – to reach our holiday motel retreat (a gift from a grateful parishioner of Fr Mick's) for the night, never could I have imagined that freeway driving in Los Angeles was a doddle compared to what Sr Sam, with great aplomb, had to do to reach our deep snow-carpeted destination. Much relief to be just a passenger, coming at the ending of a day, from sand to snow, never to be forgotten.

Simple idea to increase afforestation in Ireland



There is no downside with trees. Picture: William Merivale

ANY DISCUSSION about tree planting in Ireland will almost inevitably include mention of two facts that sit oddly together, i.e. we have among the best conditions in the world for growing trees and we are among the lowest level of afforestation in Europe.

The present level of 11% as against a European average of 38% would be even lower were it not for the aggressive planting of sitka spruce by the State and by private landowners encouraged by planting grants and annual premiums. Except in Co Leitrim, most of this planting has taken place on non-arable land, bogland and hilly ground, land never ploughed and formerly grazed by sheep.

Sitka spruce is the only commercially viable tree grown on any scale in Ireland. It is grown because of the value of its timber, its ability to grow on marginal land and the relatively short timespan from planting to maturity. Sitka spruce forests as they mature are making a valuable contribution to the economy in terms of employment in rural areas, import substitution and exports, but they cannot compare with broadleaf trees in the quality of timber and the variety of its end uses, nor can they compare with broadleaf trees capacity to sustain biodiversity or to enhance the landscape due to their attractive visual impact.

Despite being eligible for higher grants and premiums, broadleaf planting has never matched the area planted by sitka spruce and it is to address the reasons for this imbalance and to suggest steps that might be taken to reduce it that this article is being written.

Towards the end of the 18th century, possibly

By SEAMUS DOHERTY

to atone for the destruction wrought in earlier times on what remained of the native forests which had once covered the whole country, an effort was made by the then authorities to encourage tree planting. Money was voted for this purpose by the College Green Parliament before the Act of Union and a scheme was administered by the RDS offering financial inducements to landowners to plant trees. Around the same time, a man named Samuel Hayes was actively involved in promoting tree planting. He was himself a member of the College Green Parliament, was involved with the RDS and wrote a book on the subject which would have been read in many of the big houses of Ireland and would have done much to spread the knowledge of trees among the landowning classes at the time. The scheme was a modest success, resulting in many fine plantations but availed of mostly by landlords and people of means. Some of these trees survive to the present day, magnificent specimens of beech, ash, oak, lime and sycamore. Few of their tenants would have taken part in this scheme, lacking the necessary resources and probably precluded from participation by the terms of their lease. This association of the hated landlord class with trees didn't induce a positive attitude to the subject on the part of the ordinary tenants. Generations later, when many of the big estates were broken up and the land divided among local farmers, any woodland that passed to the new owners was not infrequently an early casualty of the change of ownership.

Current attitudes to tree planting among a large percentage of the owners of arable land can range from mild interest to total disinterest

or active hostility. While some planting has been undertaken under the present scheme, not always for solely financial reasons, it is unlikely that any significant number of landowners can be persuaded to commit any substantial part of their holdings to a project that, while being grant aided initially and drawing a premium for 15 years may, after that, yield no income for several generations. To grow a decent beech or oak tree needs good arable land and will take from 100 to 150 years to fully mature. It is in the light of this reality that the proposal which is the purpose of this article is made.

The proposal is to incentivise all landowners to plant one hectare or 1% of their land, whichever is the larger, in broadleaf trees, to raise awareness of the value of trees and to spread knowledge of good silviculture practice. The best way of doing this is by extending the annual payment for broadleaf planting, currently 15 years, to 50 years for the designated area. While the greatest number eligible to avail of this incentive would belong to the farming community, other individuals or bodies with



Seamus Doherty. Picture: Sheenagh O'Doherty

surplus land suitable for planting should not be excluded, e.g. local authorities, sports clubs, schools and colleges, business firms, private houses and even government departments such as the Department of Defence. A requirement for participating in this scheme should be a commitment by the landowner to manage their plantation well in accordance with best silviculture practice. Continuing eligibility for the annual premium should be dependent on complying with this requirement.

We have seen above the positive impact in the 18th century made by the combination of financial support from the RDS with the advocacy of Samuel Hayes. Should the scheme outlined be adopted it is unlikely to reach its full potential without a sustained effort to raise awareness of the value of broadleaf trees. There is no downside with trees. They are an ornament to the landscape, they provide shelter for man and beast, a habitat for wildlife as well as providing timber for a wide variety of uses ranging from fencing to firewood, hurleys to cricket bats, building material and furniture. Their lower carbon footprint compared to concrete may see in future a greater number of houses being constructed entirely of timber. Trees are the lungs of the earth and, with the advent of global warming, their capacity to sequester CO₂ may prove to be their most important role.

Any awareness effort should be directed at the general public as well as at landowners. The forestry premium which is paid for by the general taxpayer is paid to compensate landowners for the loss of any other use of the land they have planted. Except for some firewood or fencing material, they will derive little or no monetary benefit from their plantation for years to come.

However, the non-monetary benefits such as carbon sequestration and environmental and aesthetic improvements will be enjoyed by the entire community.

While the growth to maturity of a plantation of beech or oak is essentially a long-term project, the inclusion of a percentage of a fast-growing variety such as alder could leave the owner with a supply of firewood within a relatively short time, say 7-10 years. Modern wood boilers are extraordinarily efficient albeit expensive. Anyone with their own timber installing such a boiler would have their home heated free for the lifetime of the boiler, possibly for their own lifetime as well.

A well-managed stand of oak or beech will enhance the value of any property. It is a particularly attractive adjunct to a country house, more suitable than an over-manicured suburban-type garden. Underplanted with woodland plants and flowers, it might in time become something of a family heirloom, being visited for generations by the descendants of the original people who planted it.

As well as raising awareness of the value of trees, knowledge of good silviculture practice and their planting care and management also need to be spread. The lore of trees is almost nonexistent among many people. Some can hardly tell oak from ash. Advice from Teagasc, short courses run by them and possibly a series of TV programmes could be the answer here and adequate resources should be provided for this purpose. The use of discussion groups which have been so successful among beef and dairy farmers might also be useful.

The proposal in this article was first suggested as a way to mark the turn of the millennium. It was later put forward for inclusion as an

aspiration in a document produced by Donegal County Council. Later still it was unsuccessfully put forward as a submission to the government. The hope would be that greater awareness of the value of broadleaf trees and of knowledge of their care and maintenance together with the extended duration of the premium would induce many thousands of landowners to plant at least one hectare, bringing the myriad of benefits of broadleaf trees widely throughout the State, into every townland, if possible, and enhancing the welfare and enriching the lives not just of the owners but also members of the wider community in which they live. It was never the intention of this proposal to compete with but rather to complement conifer forestry which is making a valuable contribution to the economy, keeping many thousands in employment.

As knowledge of the consequences of global warming and with it the possibility of vast areas of the world becoming uninhabitable, the role of forestry, both conifers and broadleaf, in sequestering CO₂ has assumed an immensely greater importance. As part of a suite of measures to deal with this danger, countries all over the world have embraced reafforestation on a scale unprecedented in history. It would be a shame if an island so blessed by nature, as ours is, were to be found wanting in this regard.

All factors inhibiting the planting of trees, whether they be inadequate incentives, unnecessary red tape or conflicting regulations, should be urgently reviewed and dealt with. What is at stake could be not just the welfare of individual countries but the very future of the planet.

Seamus Doherty is the owner of a small stud farm near Buncrana, Co Donegal



A coy pine marten kitten caught in the camera trap



These cats will eat nuts such as these walnut (above) and hazel (below)



This picture was taken at Mountaintown bog, Co Meath, with a camera trap baited with jam.

The return of the *cat crainn*

By EMMA REEVES

WHEN I was little, my brother had a subscription to 'Country Companion' and he would sit down and read them to my twin sister and me on rainy days when his arm couldn't be twisted to bring us up Slievenaman. Ah, the 1980s! They were awesome. Otherwise I'd be sneaking into his room to leaf through them, just looking at pictures mind (a late bloomer).

I was fascinated by the pine marten, the elusive *cat crainn*. They seemed to me as if they were totally made up by men like Gerrit van Gelderen and Éamon de Buitléar. They seemed almost too fantastical to exist on our island. A glossy cat-like creature leaping from tree to tree, think Cheshire Cat from Alice in Wonderland, only faster. Catching squirrels in

mid-air as they danced through the canopy.

But they did exist, of course. Just. The Irish landscape was not respected then the way she is today. Before the mid-1970s, atrocious decisions were made and poor advice was given. As regards wildlife, Ireland was lawless. If it could be exploited, it was. Pine marten populations fell to near extinction. They remained in small isolated pockets of coniferous forest/plantation and notably in The Burren in Co Clare. Their typical habitats were dwindling and they were persecuted beyond belief.

The passing into law of the Wildlife Act in 1976 made a huge difference. Suddenly you weren't able to collect eggs of any bird species you liked for your marvellous collection. There was no more harvesting of goldfinch and bullfinch from gluey branches, you couldn't just start a quarry in your uncle's field, the one down by the river. I'm not saying that wildlife

crime is not a problem now but the pine marten has some legal protection these days.

I saw my first pine marten on a perfect dry stone wall in the Burren National Park when I was 22. You couldn't have made it up! I was totally gobsmacked and utterly delighted, I really did believe that these striking creatures were a complete myth, something akin to the Salmon of Knowledge or some ephemeral construct from JK Rollings' brain. If I close my eyes I can still see her, there and gone. It was the middle of the day so she must have had young. They usually have two kits. They are very slow breeders; a female won't reproduce before she is two and the male not before he is three.

Since then, I have seen a lot of pine marten, in places you may not expect them, near people. Hazelhatch, barely a mile from Adamstown in Co Dublin, foraging along the canal. Travelling from Edgeworthstown to Longford town I observed three dead at the roadside. Rather grim, I know, but

it does indicate a really strong and healthy population.

There has been a notable expansion of the red squirrel in Ireland congruent with the martens' comeback which has been correlated with the decline in the nasty grey squirrel population. How cool is that? Those correlations and interactions will be taught to every new batch of ecologists for years to come, the ultimate case study.

Although you and I may think this is fantastic, wonderful, and praise our great nation for the comeback of a nationally rare, native species with international protection, there are those who could not conceive the idea of such an 'unwanted' animal.

Ok, let's face it, they can be a little on the naughty side, killing chickens and ripping up polystyrene hives here and there. This is not a case of a 'Dingo ate your baby'. They're not going to change, they're just animals, fantastical or not. They don't intentionally go out to annoy people, they are not like Ricky Gervais.

It's up to us to change management practices to avoid altercations. We are the conscious beings. Pine marten are quite often squatters, attics being the perfect site to rear kits! This is the unintentional consequence of that annoying human habit of wrestling with nature to keep things tidy, which

is synonymous with habitat destruction. Pine marten live in attics because we have tidied up their natural environment. They wouldn't be there if they didn't need to be. For those people who do put up with scrambling kits and shredded rock wool, the NPWS and the Vincent Wildlife Trust have produced a terrific advisory document called 'The Pine Marten in Ireland, a Guide for Householders'.

The NPWS or the Vincent Wildlife Trust are the people to call in case of a pine marten-related emergency, not THAT GUY with the wobbly eye down the pub who caught the 2ft pike and calls his .2mm rifle Rosie.

I have attended meetings and conferences where people get really agitated by the presence and resurgence of this species in Ireland. It's heartbreaking and confusing; there is so much misinformation out there. It is very difficult not to laugh, however, when you encounter such nonsense, with notions

like you wouldn't believe, as if someone dropped a load of MDMA in the Burka boiler at the end of the room for the teas. I was once told that martens are much like your common-or-garden variety vampire, they suck the prey dry of blood. Which is worse? Believing in vampires or having an irrational fear of small, furry mammals? Additionally, this lad had an entourage of emphatic believers of the venomous, blood-sucking, hell cat, shouting him on. I was kinda thinking, ah they're only pulling my leg! Yer wan down from Dublin telling us what to do with our hell cats.

As an apex predator, the population will only increase while there is enough prey to allow this, and habitat to support them. Exclamations of 'They're wiping out all our wild birds'. I'm all for citizen science but without facts and figures we're just left looking like mouthy fools. It almost burns

my ears when I hear people say they actively hunt them. Be it known that the most beautiful, clever and elusive of Ireland's mammals is protected under the Wildlife Act 1976 and can be neither killed nor trapped.

At some point in the future, no doubt, some clever little man will declare open season on them. He'll deem them pests. He'll shout in the Oireachteas until he gets his way. All for the protection of the Disney view of rural Irish life, a few manky hens, and a queen-less beehive.



A nice bit of mixed broadleaved woodland, like this one at Dowth, Co Meath, is a good habitat for pine marten

GOOD TREES – OR BAD TREES?

ORLA FARRELL wants help to meet hostile questions with a simple message

“So you’re planting trees?” (A frown, a pause, then a deep breath). “What kind of trees?” (This said always in a dark tone with a guarded and suspicious look).

Everyone wants to know if the Easy Treesie/Crann – Trees for Ireland project is planting “good” trees, or “bad, forest or foreign” trees.

Most of the people I meet who plant trees seem to be under suspicion of being a Friend of Bad Trees. Our fellow Plantees in the global project find the question puzzling; it appears peculiar to Ireland. Within a few short weeks of joining us, our environmental intern, A B from Pakistan, was already rather exasperated from people asking him the same thing, the perennial hostile question as quoted above. We wondered could a united response from tree-lovers be developed, one that could be distilled and presented on a t-shirt?

When we say we plant mostly native trees there is usually this sigh of relief. “Oh, well, I was so afraid you would be planting some of those non-native trees like those evergreens, those commercial trees that are so awful.” Of the 100,000-plus trees we have planted with children all over the country, we have in fact planted evergreens, predominantly native Irish holly, Scots pine and yew, though only one was a spruce, a permanent Christmas tree planted at Grange in Cooley, Co Louth. It is not on the Irish native list but it is a lovely tree for the purpose.

David Attenborough, who supported our Science Week planting initiative, has commented that both recreational and commercial planting are needed to capture carbon. Since Easy Treesie/Crann is planting on public lands, our saplings are educating children, storing carbon, beautifying parks, streets and hospitals and are not a commercial venture. We just don’t like feeling

under attack for liking trees that are not on the current native list. We have planted fig, plum and heritage apple trees at Dublin City Farm, none of which is native – and we empathise with other tree planters, whether they are public, commercial or private. Irish people are not native to this land. Most of our agricultural produce (including potatoes) isn’t native. An apple tree is not native (though a crab-apple is). Nor is a beech, a maple, a horse chestnut. Nor is lime or sycamore, beloved by bees. As everywhere, nature abhors a vacuum; in geological timeframes what is native today was not yesterday and will not be tomorrow.

So our challenge is in what way can we get across to people that a non-native tree is still, unless it is invasive, a grand tree. I asked my daughter Aoife, our family engineer who runs a business service “We Make Everything Simple.com” how she might respond to this question. Aoife suggested a response like this:

“So, for a while there was a strong ‘native good, non-native bad’ mantra in vogue. People realised that not all trees work in all



No questions asked: Orla Farrell has plenty of support in planting a tree on International Women’s Day



Birds need a variety of tree species to thrive. Picture: Susulyka, wikimedia

environments, and they wanted an easy way to understand the problem. Somehow, native vs non-native became the single answer. This over-simplification needs refinement to capture the complexity of evolution.

That easy-to-follow motto was something I latched onto too. We even made a series of videos to teach people about native Irish trees specifically! When we first started planting trees with kids, we knew it was very important that our trees would thrive. For this reason we always plant under the supervision of a forester, arborist or horticulturalist. To find the best tree, experts understand a whole range of criteria, and how they interact. Things like: what other species are in the area? What is the topography like? What about the soil? Is the area likely to flood? Is it near a river? Is it hit by a sea breeze? How much space is available? These kinds of questions determine whether or not a particular species will survive, whether it will be resilient against disease, whether it will be compatible with

other vegetation and wildlife in the area, what its long term impact will be, and (importantly for us) whether it will do a great job at sequestering carbon. We have learned from the experts that oftentimes, when you weigh all those factors up, the trees that will contribute most may not always be native ones.

As our understanding developed we moved away from the old ‘native good, others bad’ mantra and replaced it with one the scientists and experts could get behind. ‘Right Tree, Right Place’. This is the Hot Goss!

It’s so important to get advice from a professional, someone who can interpret the complex interplay of environmental factors in an area and calculate the best option. Most times that’s a native species, sometimes it’s not.

Another factor that has influenced our shift from ‘native good, non-native bad’ is an increased understanding of the importance of diversity. We’ve learned from experience that if we limit ourselves to native trees only, we

run a high risk of wipe-out as their genetic variation can be very narrow.

So where are we now on the good trees vs bad trees challenge? It makes sense to consider certain additional trees attuned to our changing Irish wildlife and climate.

Since focus is now on carbon sequestration and avoiding outbreaks of disease in woodlands, the best solution for climate resilience is to include variety, as long as the species are non-invasive. Furthermore, climate changes mean that homes for species of bird and other wildlife are no longer suitable for them due to disease, droughts, heatwaves and other weather events. These

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species can find refuge in more varied habitats.

As a final thought, I have always loved the comment by Sir Ranulph Fiennes, so much in fact that we put it in a school song once: “No such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothes.” Perhaps we could boil our answer down to: ‘No such thing as bad trees, only inappropriate planting.’ Though that is a double negative. We need it a little simpler. I ran it by Joe Barry, one of our Crann tree experts. “We like all trees and all have their place,” he comments. “Thousands of native broadleaves have been planted by well-meaning individuals on sites that were totally unsuitable, and the results can be seen all over Ireland in stunted and diseased woods.

So, how do YOU, dear reader, think we can respond best with the inside scoop to this daily question? Please send us a tree-mail at orla@easytreesie.com. Stay well!

See also: Joe Barry on Pages 6-9

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark



Picture: Olive Wilkinson

I have never been to Denmark but I'm sure that it is anything but rotten. Like all of Scandinavia, it has excellent environmental credentials, unlike our own Emerald Isle which hasn't, so maybe we are the rotten state.

For example, many of our people babble on incessantly about trees. Their knowledge or the lack of it doesn't seem to bother them at all with their strident views on the subject.

Ask them which species of tree sequesters the most carbon in the shortest possible time and they usually get the answer wrong, having named their favourite species. I heard a senior politician on the radio recently informing us as to what trees we should plant; the answers were rather predictable. The TD then went on to encourage us to try wilding, which we were told would quickly introduce native tree species to that area. I have quite a lot of experience of seeing fields go wild and I have two points to make: A, Trees that are already common in the locality will have their seeds spread by birds and herbivores. Where I live

this means sycamores mainly, a tree much loved by pollinators but not native. B, It takes a lot of time and is an awful waste of land (to use the farming language of our forefathers); it is plain bad husbandry.

The problem is that many of the opinionated aforementioned citizens are in positions of influence. Is it any wonder that tree planting currently is at an all-time low? By way of encouraging more tree planting we should firstly encourage existing farmers to plant trees in corners, poorer soil types and shelterbelts. Agri forestry should be promoted, grazing with sheep can help prevent spring fires and does absolutely no harm to the forestry. Maybe the premium period should go back to 20 years, the extra 5 years accounts for a great deal of extra maturity. After the premium period is finished, further incentives like carbon credits should go to the grower; why shouldn't they benefit from the sins of the data centres? Tree growing is supposed to be tax free – USC?

Finally, one of the big bugbears of growers is the sheer volume of bureaucracy and

unnecessary red tape. For instance, why should one need an environmental survey to plant trees, for goodness sake! Forestry inspectors should apply the gist of the law, not the letter.

Back to my opening sentence, many people love to holiday in countries like Sweden and Canada where vast swathes of evergreen conifers sweep down to their lakes and rivers. I'm sure the tourists make the appropriate ooh-ah noises at the wonderful scenery, but we are frowned upon for creating similar scenery here in Ireland. I have never been to either country but my favourite drive is in Connemara up the Inagh Valley where the above photo was taken in October 2015. My little bit of Scandinavia!

MARK WILKINSON

THE SPEAKING TREE

The concept of The Speaking Tree dates back to the 5th century BC in India when the founder of Buddhism meditated for 49 days under a Pipal tree, or *Ficus religiosa*, and became enlightened. This column in Crann is a platform for thoughtful comment that may stimulate debate or just reflect on the way of the world.

Council 'butchers' mature trees on biodiverse roundabouts

By PADDY SMITH

STRONG criticism has been levelled at Tipperary County Council over its decision to "butcher" several dozen mature silver birches on three major roundabouts in the Roscrea area.

Local environmentalists are up in arms over the very severe pruning of the trees, which are almost 30 years old. Crann Director George Cunningham said the three roundabouts on a ring road were opened in 1993 and, at that time, members of the community planted 15-20 silver birches on each, along with other trees and shrubs. Last year, the Council announced that they were upgrading the roundabouts and placing sponsorship hoarding on each of them. "This was discussed with the Council," said George, "and a public announcement was made that the birches would be saved. Then in March of this year, this happened.

They were butchered," he said, pointing to



Above left: Pre-cutting: The roundabouts had bountiful biodiversity and also hid some commercial ugliness
Above right: Post-cutting: No explanation necessary

pictures of the roundabouts.

In March just before the Covid-19 lockdown, George said: "Of all trees that could be 'cut' like this (leaving aside the awfulness of not allowing a tree to be itself), birches, I feel, will not survive well into the future. They will become straggly and their demise hastened." Unfortunately, his words have come true and many of the birches didn't come into foliage. They now make for a sorry sight.

"Most dispiriting, especially as so much

effort has been made with extensive community planting in the town and the growing awareness of the value of trees. In the heart of this heritage town, 150 metres from the centre, a vacant Co Co field surrounded by concrete fencing must be one of the ugliest local authority urban sites in the country. The money spent on these roundabouts, which really looked well with plenty of biodiversity and hiding some commercial ugliness, would have transformed this site."

Oh dear, Marguerite!

Dear Marguerite,

Our house is so tidy! I simply can't understand that Crann Autumn/Winter 2019 managed to lose itself right through January. So I missed the date for the Christmas Draw – but not the need for funds. Please put the enclosed donation in the pot.

I haven't read all the articles/features yet but have read Orla Farrell's remarkable diary of her typical week. Far from me to advise another to take things easy but we all might do well to take a leaf (pardon the pun) out of the life of a tree and just 'be' occasionally, preferably sitting in a comfortable folding chair looking at a favourite view. Failing that, and when wind and rain make that uncomfortable, gazing at a painting in a gallery. You could do far worse than sitting in an armchair with Crann magazine on an easel, open at one of the pages of the stunning photographs entered for the Crann/Coillte competition.

One thing that struck me in what I have read so far is how many events in 2019 I didn't know about and missed, none more so than the Woodland Festival. Only yesterday I posted a letter to a friend and asked how her house came to be called 'Kilbracken'.

Is there a diary of events for 2020 that could be group emailed to members and possibly, probably, definitely that I could get to, and even help with, in one or two this year?

Kind regards

Andrew Clinch

Glenageary, Co Dublin

Corporate news

THE Graduate Recruitment Team at Matheson contacted the Crann – Trees for Ireland office when they were making preparations for their annual university careers fair, to recruit for their summer internship. The team would usually distribute branded merchandise such as credit card holders/water bottles but, in an effort to be more sustainable, they decided on a different tack this year. Instead, they gave each student a token which is worth a monetary amount. The

students could then choose a list of selected charities to donate to. One of the charities chosen was Crann – Trees for Ireland.

At the recruitment event, students chose to donate almost 500 chips to Crann, with each chip being worth €1. Matheson then decided to match the total amount of chips donated, and donated a total of €1,000 to Crann – Trees for Ireland. This funding was gratefully accepted by Crann Directors Diarmuid McAree and Orla Farrell at a function in early March.

Matheson was established in 1825 in Dublin and has offices in Cork, London, New York, Palo Alto and San Francisco, with more than 740 people working across its six offices, including 96 partners and tax principals and over 515 legal, tax and digital services professionals. Matheson services the legal needs of internationally focused companies and financial institutions doing business in and from Ireland.



Crann was one of the chosen charities on the Matheson stand at this year's university careers fair



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