



# CRANN

Ireland's tree magazine

AUTUMN/WINTER  
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Since 1988, the RDS Foundation recognise and reward farmers and woodland owners that have adopted Climate-Smart Agricultural practices on their properties. The twin goals of promoting the economic and environmental benefits of good forestry and farming are fundamental to what the RDS hopes to achieve through its agriculture and rural affairs programme.

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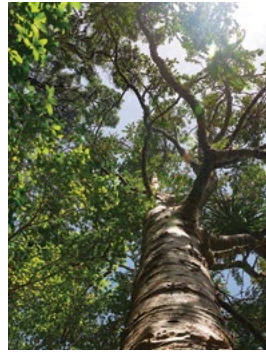
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Cover photo was taken  
by Eamonn O'Dea at  
Killarney National Park

# Keeping warm: us or the planet?



**A**S WE head into winter, heading home conjures up images of warmth and comfort. However, how we heat our homes has changed significantly over the past 50 years – from a dependence on radiators run from the kitchen range to heat pumps. The ban on smoky coal dates back to the Air Pollution Act 1987; the objective was to address the human health impacts of 'smog' in urban areas.

Bioenergy (using plants and other organic material to generate energy) was lauded as the way forward. Woodfuel – in the form of logs, pellets, chips, or composite briquettes – is deemed a low-carbon and renewable source of energy. The timber used is small-dimension, low-value material and provides an alternative source of income for forest owners. Some, rather overzealous entities have gone as far as to claim woodfuel is a 'carbon neutral' source of energy – but let's stick with common sense and acknowledge that our actions have consequences, and that lower carbon and renewable is a step in the right direction.

The EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive of 2014 put an end to the inclusion of open fireplaces in new-build houses. The objectives were to reduce the carbon emissions associated with burning fossil fuels, to increase energy efficiency in home heating, and, as a positive byproduct, to improve health by removing particulate matter from the air.

In more recent times, questions have again been raised about the efficiency and carbon status of burning wood, as well as the potential impacts on human health. According to the EPA, air quality in Ireland for 2023 met EU legal requirements – but did not meet the more stringent health-based targets of the WHO. While the ban on burning 'wet' wood had a positive impact, burning 'dry' wood still releases smoke, and some would favour a ban on the burning of 'all carbon-based solid fuels'. This is unrealistic currently, as there are still a high number of households, largely in lower-income brackets and/or of an older demographic, that have no other source of heating. In the face of the cost-of-living crisis, the current range

of energy grants is not sufficient to bridge this gap.

Since the 2022 amendment to the Air Pollution Act of 1987, woodfuel must have a maximum moisture content of 25%; after September 2025, this figure reduces to 20%. A higher moisture content means that the wood burns more slowly, releases more particulate matter, and is less efficient in providing heat. Producers of solid fuel, including wood-based options, must be registered with the EPA, and it is incumbent on retailers to ensure that they are only sourcing material from registered producers.

In Ireland, the Woodfuel Quality Assurance (WFQA) scheme has been in existence since 2009, and members were already certified to the 25% rule (in accordance with ISO 17225). In addition, members must only process sustainably grown timber. The Irish Bioenergy Association (IrBEA) and WFQA held a series of workshops in the summer of 2024, demonstrating best practice in timber drying techniques (air, polytunnel, and kiln) and discussing the challenges of accessing raw material. It's also worth noting that these enterprises provide rural employment and contribute to domestic energy security.

For 2023, CSO figures report woodfuel and biomass removals in Ireland at 265,000m<sup>3</sup> – not an insignificant volume of timber. But import levels of woodfuel increased from 497m<sup>3</sup> in 2002 to 44,469m<sup>3</sup> in 2022; where has this timber come from? Can we be guaranteed that it originated from sustainable sources?

We know that Ireland won't meet the emissions reduction target for 2030; we've only managed a 1.2% decrease in the period 1990-2023. In the same period, the contribution of the residential sector has reduced from 13.6% to 9.7%; in the face of significant population growth, at least the direction of change is positive.

In time, we can envisage an Ireland where all homes are well-insulated and heated by truly renewable resources. En route to that, we can all do our bit by ensuring that the woodfuel we use is regulated, licensed, and, ideally, homegrown.

*Marie Doyle*

*Marie Doyle is a lecturer on the Forestry Degree Programme in UCD and a board member of Crann*



cranntrees



Crann – Trees for Ireland



@TreesForIreland

**OUR MISSION:** To enhance the environment of Ireland through planting and protecting the right trees in the right places and promoting and increasing awareness about the benefits of our trees and woodlands.

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 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. Crann ISSN 1649-5217 Registered Charity No: CHY13698





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





# Crann is committed to the environment and communities

Summary of reports from the Chairman and Secretary that were presented at the AGM

## Chairman's report

**C**RANN has had another successful and challenging year, marked by growth in both membership and public awareness. The charity's efforts to promote the value of trees, both native and those suitable for Ireland's climate, are gaining traction. The organisation has expanded its membership base, attracting both private citizens and corporate members, which reflects the balance between economic and environmental concerns in modern Ireland. Crann's board is pleased with the influx of new, enthusiastic members, which helps keep the charity fresh and vital.

Financially, Crann remains cautious and prudent, ensuring a stable position despite past difficulties. The charity is focused on growing its school education programmes and is well-positioned to invest in people who can help deliver this vision. Government support has been positive, particularly from the European Commission's Office in Dublin, which chose Crann to host a tree initiative with European Commissioner Mairead McGuinness. Crann also participated in a Green Forest Jobs expert group meeting in Istanbul, and had a representative at the COP29 Summit in Baku, the charity's regional meetings in Ireland have



The Crann clann at Bloom 2024

generated significant local interest. These events bring together local governments, stakeholders, and schools to support Crann's core values of planting the right tree in the right place.

Crann's reach and visibility have improved, especially through digital platforms, thanks to the efforts of Dr. Joan Whelan and Marguerite. Going forward, Crann plans to increase its presence on social media and mainstream media. The charity's involvement in the annual Bloom festival in Dublin has also been a highlight, with a significant increase in the number of schools signing up for Crann's educational programmes. This growing engagement with schools is vital

for nurturing the next generation of tree enthusiasts.

Over the past four decades, the charity has planted trees through tangible projects like Oak Glen, Giants Grove, and Ballymun, and it plans to continue with even more ambitious goals. A ten-year programme with BrownThomasArnotts aims to plant 100,000 trees, and Crann is already on track to meet this season's target.

In conclusion, Crann's combination of public engagement, educational initiatives, and tree planting projects positions it well for the future. The charity is committed to making a lasting impact on both the environment and the communities it serves.

## Activities throughout the past year in which Crann has been involved

**S**INCE the last AGM in October 2023, Crann has been actively involved in numerous environmental and educational initiatives. In November, they participated in the IEN Annual Gathering in Cloughjordan, where they networked with other groups and planted an Oak tree in memory of Andrew St. Ledger. They also worked with the Dutch group Meer Groen to plant trees through Crann's Easy Treesie project.

In December, Crann's Schools Programme saw James Lowry replacing Dale Treadwell as

the Programme Host. James, an experienced primary school teacher and PhD researcher, enhanced the programme by incorporating sustainable bioeconomy concepts and expanding outreach to inclusive and special needs schools. Crann continued to support schools in creating gardens and mini-woodlands, providing valuable hands-on educational resources.

In early 2024, Crann engaged with Transition Year (TY) students through environmental and health courses. During National Tree Week in March, Crann organised multiple tree

planting events with schools and local communities, including one with Commissioner Mairead McGuinness. Crann also contributed to the distribution of 150,000 saplings through the Crann Easy Treesie project.

Other activities included hosting workshops and biodiversity walks for National Biodiversity Week, participating in the Bloom show, and presenting at the Belvedere House Plant Fair. Crann continues to support Tidy Towns initiatives, helping local communities with environmental projects and promoting

biodiversity. In September, they held a regional meeting to discuss tree growing with like-minded organisations.

Crann's advocacy work includes representing Ireland at UN, EU, and Forest Europe meetings on climate action and forest health. With the support of sponsors, Crann is expanding its educational programme, making environmental education more accessible.

The organisation remains committed to raising awareness, planting trees, and fostering a deeper connection to the natural environment.





# When we all work together for trees

Crann board member, PJ FITZPATRICK, reports from the Crann Regional Meeting that was held at Belvedere House and Gardens in Mullingar

**C**RANN Trees for Ireland held a regional meeting in the grounds of Belvedere House and Gardens. The theme of the day was 'How can Crann and other like-minded organisations work together to promote tree growing?' A number of local organisations attended.

## Morning Schedule

The Crann Chairperson, Peadar Collins, welcomed all the groups present and explained the different projects Crann is involved with. This was followed by Diarmuid McAree's presentation on the benefits of trees.

The first group to present was Mullingar Tidy Towns, represented by Chairperson Cllr. Bill Collentine, who acknowledged the contribution that Crann and Coillte have made in enhancing the beauty of Mullingar by providing Mullingar Tidy Towns with expert advice and the donation of hundreds of native trees over the last few years.

One of the visions for Mullingar Tidy Towns is to plant 3,000 trees over the next three years, in conjunction with Crann, Coillte, and Westmeath County Council. The additional trees will enhance the streetscape and parklands around the town, improving air



PJ Fitzpatrick, Diarmuid McAree and Peadar Collins of Crann at the meeting



Attendees at the meeting gathered for a group shot

quality while absorbing our carbon footprint.

A very good presentation was made by Dominika Waduge and Emilie Kiely, students from Loreto College Green School, who highlighted the value they derive from the trees around their school during examination and study times. They also plan to regain the Green Flag for the school and look forward to working with Crann.

John Connolly and Barry Roche discussed Coillte's role in national tree planting and environmental protection, as well as how they help local communities through the sponsorship of trees for Tree Week each year. They stressed how important trees are within urban areas.

## Afternoon Schedule

The afternoon event was a walk-and-talk session through the beautiful grounds of Belvedere House and Gardens, where the vast range of trees of different ages and species provided rich material for discussion. The walk covered all aspects of a tree, from the leaf, through the branches and trunk, down to the roots, highlighting the important role each part plays in the health and wellbeing of the tree. Crann members, Diarmuid McAree (Secretary), James Lowry (Education Coordinator), and Gerard Deegan (Private Forest Owner) shared their expert advice and

explained in depth the significance of trees to an engaged and interested group.

## Overall Outcome

Overall, a great day was had by all at the lovely Belvedere House and Gardens. The day highlighted the important roles that each organisation plays in improving the environment. Crann can provide support and education to Tidy Towns and schools, while Coillte can sponsor trees. Together, we can play an important role in addressing climate change and greening our surroundings. Crann looks forward to working with all these groups in the future.

## Bob Wilson RIP

The Crann Board heard with regret and sadness of Bob's passing. He was founder and coordinator of CELT.

Bob (of Flagmount Co. Clare and Drumshangore Co. Leitrim) died suddenly on Monday 14th October 2024.

He was a supporter of Crann and a committed advocator for the environment. Crann wishes to extend our deepest sympathy to Bob's family and friends. Suaimhneas síoraí dá anam uasal.







ATU students on their annual trip to Beltra



# Students from ATU visit Longford Demesne Wood

**L**AST October, third-year Ecology and Ecosystems students from ATU St. Angela's visited Longford Demesne Wood in Beltra for their annual field trip, kindly hosted by Yvonne and Declan Foley, the owners of this beautiful woodland. This year marks the 11th time that students from St. Angela's have visited Longford Demesne and the second year we have been fortunate enough to have Diarmuid McAree of Crann join us. Diarmuid brings with him a wealth of knowledge

and experience, leaving the students with a deep understanding of the importance of our woodlands.

Longford Demesne Wood covers a total of 31 acres, 25 acres of woodland and 6 acres of wild bird cover, reflecting the great efforts of Yvonne and Declan to maintain the cultural and historical integrity of the site, while also promoting its biodiversity and increasing forest cover.

This trip is the highlight of the semester for third-year students, and it is one that past students still remember fondly.

## 'Tree Quiz' winner



Competition winner Maire Byrne and her two daughters Éala and Eleanor in front of the trees they've planted.

## CRANN and FOREST EUROPE



**T**HE 9th FOREST EUROPE Ministerial Conference brought together over 160 delegates from across Europe to discuss the future of Sustainable Forest Management. Key outcomes included the signing of the Bonn Ministerial Documents, the establishment of the FoRISK facility to enhance forest resilience, and a focus on involving youth in future forest initiatives. Delegates also reaffirmed their support for Ukraine's forests, welcomed Sweden as the new chair, and explored a variety of publications and communication products. Ireland is represented, as an NGO, by Diarmuid McAree (pictured) of Crann at Forest Europe.

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

### EMILY LAVERTY

is an Environmental Science student at Trinity College Dublin. Her main goal is to promote biodiversity, especially in urban settings. Emily plans to use her knowledge of biological sciences to positively impact our planet, and to communicate to others how they can do the same.

Emily recently completed an internship in the Biogeochemistry research group in TCD where she put her lab experience and extensive fieldwork to practical use.



### KORINA DUFFY

is a fitness enthusiast and environmental advocate dedicated to uniting communities for a sustainable future. She organises tree planting days and contributes to tree projects across Ireland. Korina promotes the crucial role of trees in environmental sustainability and personal well-being, emphasising their positive impact on mental health. Her goal is to foster community togetherness and shared responsibility through tree planting and education.



### BILLY ALEXANDER

is a seasoned horticulturist and Ireland's master gardener. He is the owner of Kells Bay Gardens in Kerry. The centrepiece of Kells Bay Gardens is the extensive tree fern collection, many of which date back to the mid-19th century after being brought over from Australia. Billy was invited to exhibit at RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2021 and 2023 and he was awarded a gold medal for his ferns display at both Chelsea and at Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival in 2021.





# In a bit of a bind

**Emma Reeves** faces up to the challenges presented by the prescence of Bindweed and embraces its beauty and usefulness

**S**pring, six years ago, I was knocking about my polytunnel, trying to figure out where to put seedlings amidst the chaos of beekeeping equipment, bikes, cat-castles (constructed by my son from cardboard boxes and a range of other messy materials he can get his hands on), and assorted bric-a-brac. I attacked a large basket of glass bottles and jam jars, fuming that they hadn't made their way to the bottle bank. Amongst the massive spiders, I noticed some pink and white, almost fleshy stems. My brain tried desperately to recall the plant, and then the realisation hit me like a cold, wet fish. This was bindweed. Specifically, hedge bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*). I was now in the midst of a two-fronted battle for the polytunnel—not only dealing with illicit storage and construction, but also with every gardener's greatest fear: bindweed.

I knew this beast-weed well; it was present in the garden's wilder areas, and I didn't mind that because, after all, it is a real beauty. It's a typical woodland-edge species, most abundantly found in our hedgerows. The attractive trumpet-shaped flowers are reminiscent of the ubiquitous petunia, but they occur on upwardly straggling stems. They curl around neighboring plants in an anticlockwise direction. Handling the plant results in an odd, sour odour, which lingers unless you wash it off! While not toxic, most sources advise against nibbling on it. One

Dr Emma Reeves, who lives near Navan, has a PhD in botany from UCD



source, however, suggested that the young shoots of field bindweed could be eaten. The shoots of these plants are an important food source for beetles and the caterpillars of various moths, including the aptly named Convolvulus hawk moth (*Agrius convolvuli*) and the stunning elephant hawk moth (*Deilephila elpenor*).

Hedge bindweed is called many things: 'bell-bind,' 'granny pop-out-of-bed,' and 'wild morning glory.' Its resemblance to morning glory (*Ipomoea purpurea*) is striking, in both flowers and growth habit. It entwines itself around its neighbours to catch the light. Morning glory is also a member of the Convolvulaceae family and is native to Mexico and Central America. Members of the Ipomoea genus are incredibly invasive in some temperate and subtropical regions. In Ireland, we have three native members of the Convolvulaceae family: hedge bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*), sea bindweed (*Calystegia soldanella*), and field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*). Field bindweed is more elusive than hedge bindweed, often found in grassy areas that are easy to overlook. Sea bindweed is a dune specialist, only found by the sea. It has oddly succulent leaves and funnel-shaped pink-tinged flowers. Like field bindweed,



it's a prostrate plant, growing along the dune surface. We also have a naturalised species, large bindweed, which has embedded itself into our flora from the south of France. Large bindweed is very common and occurs throughout the country.

Gardeners (myself included) often call the bindweed in our gardens "invasive," but this isn't the right term in an ecological sense. It's better described as a nuisance weed. In North America, our benign hedge bindweed is considered a noxious weed that is detrimental to agriculture. Other bindweeds have entered the Irish flora as garden escapes, such as hairy bindweed (*Calystegia pulchra*), but they are by no means invasive. Many gardeners would probably welcome the pink form of hedge bindweed (*Calystegia sepium subsp. roseata*) into their gardens, given its striking appearance.





Left: The sometimes invasive Morning glory  
 Above: Field bindweed pictured outside the Magazine fort at the Phoenix park.  
 Below: Pink hedge bindweed  
 Bottom: A Christmas decoration, a tiny bindweed balloon basket made from this years productive crop



Bindweed is often confused with the truly invasive Japanese knotweed. This confusion likely stems from the general use of the term “invasive.” I was asked to survey a site last year that had been abandoned for decades. Both knotweed and bindweed have a penchant for land that was once used for some purpose but has since become abandoned. There were fears that the site would require years of strict invasive species management and control mechanisms before permissions could be granted—a costly and time-consuming process, but one required by national and European law. When I visited the site, I was taken aback by the quantity of large bindweed. It was phenomenal, much to the relief of the developer!

The only other species that comes to mind, bearing some similarity to hedge bindweed, is black bindweed (*Fallopia convolvulus*). If

you’re walking through an arable field and your boot gets caught in what seems to be 5mm wire, it’s probably black bindweed. This twining plant, the cause of many a fall, has leaves similar to hedge bindweed but with



tiny, inconspicuous flowers. Its close relative is buckwheat, and if you’ve got time for tedious endeavours, you can collect and eat its pseudo-grain seeds. Incidentally, the Latin name *Fallopia convolvulus* indicates a familial tie to Japanese knotweed, as well as a nod to bindweed.

I’m stuck with bindweed in the tunnel. I’ve stopped digging anywhere near the beast-weed because breaking the delicate roots into small pieces just compounds the problem. I mulch over it with vast quantities of cardboard and leaf mulch and hope for the best. Whatever I grow in that section of the tunnel invariably becomes overwhelmed by the end of September. I’ve come to expect this, but I’ve developed a cunning strategy. Bindweed is an exceptional plant for use in basket making. I’m no expert, but I’ll try my hand at anything!



# The world of hard knocks

**Raymond Keogh** looks at some of the purists, planters and pilferers of teak that shaped its history

**H**ALF a century ago and less than a month after arriving in the Central American country of El Salvador to begin work with the UN, I wrote the following: “8th November 1974: I saw teak for the first time.” Teak (*Tectona grandis* Linn. f.) was named by Carl Linnaeus the Younger; the ‘f’ indicates *filius* or son. The species, which is still known widely as ‘Burma’ teak, evolved in India and spread naturally into Myanmar, Thailand and Laos.

I had no idea that my life would become strongly entwined with teak. One year into my assignment, I was asked to carry out an investigation into the behaviour of this tree in El Salvador. Other planted species had either suffered badly from fire, had been devastated by leaf-cutting *Atta* ants or were confined to relatively small upland areas, meaning that studies on them would have limited value.

Teak was different. It is rustic in nature. A young plantation can regrow after fire, even though the overground parts are destroyed. Mature teak has a fire-resistant bark. Besides, it tolerated poor soils, ant attacks and endured careless management. Fortunately, not all plantations were badly kept. Furthermore, every stand – even badly managed ones – provided an indication of relative growth on a particular site type. A meaningful study could, therefore, be carried

**Raymond M. Keogh** is currently a Technical Advisor of Scellec Teca, an Irish company that plants and manages teak in Colombia, South America. He is acknowledged as a leading teak specialist with 50 years’ experience in 15 tropical countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia.



out because sufficient areas, spread across a spectrum of 25 years, existed throughout El Salvador. Our team became actively engaged for about two years in completing the investigation.

However, besides the field study, something else began to attract my attention. Our team centre was in the grounds of a forest nursery close to the oldest teak plantation in the country. It was badly maintained and stood alongside a dusty road, unfenced and beside a stream: a place to cast rubbish.

Somehow, the stand kept drawing me back. Each time more questions arose. When was it planted; what was the source of its seed? Answers were not easily forthcoming. One day, a serendipitous breakthrough happened. While paging through annual reports in an agricultural library I came across an early report of the stand. It had been planted from seed imported in 1950 from Honduras or Puerto



Rico. Unfortunately, seed procured in the 1950s from these countries had come from offspring imported from Trinidad or Panama, so I could not be certain of its pedigree.

## Wood Characteristics

The neglected copse became a sort of umbilical cord joining the work I was doing in El Salvador to the wider teak world. In addition to learning about the flow of teak seed throughout the Caribbean and Latin America, I soon discovered why the special characteristics of the species make it one of the world’s most coveted hardwoods by mariners. It is a light wood with strength; has natural resilience against attacks from termites, fungi and marine borers; its oily nature safeguards metals against corrosion when in contact with each other; its







**The Connolly Plot, Nilambur, India.**  
The oldest teak plantation of the world,  
planted at the time of Ireland's Great  
Famine in 1846. Photo R. M. Keogh

limited expansion and contraction ensures stability even under the harsh circumstances of maritime environments; it is the ace of decking timbers and ensures grip under wet unstable conditions.

It is understandable, then, why it was used in sailing vessels for thousands of years and why boatbuilders of the Persian Gulf imported it from India to construct their dhows. Western powers like the British, Dutch, Portuguese, Germans and Americans incorporated it into the construction of their naval ships. Famous WWII battleships with teak decks included the Bismark and USS North Carolina. The Titanic also had a teak deck.

Its long-term resilience explains why it is found in traditional buildings like the 300-year-old Wat Yai temple in Thailand. The

Dusit Palace in Bangkok was built entirely of this wood in 1900 and became the largest teak structure in the world. The timber is fine enough to be carved. A rare 700-year-old Burmese teak log was turned into a sculpture of Vishnu in Hyderabad over a three-year period.

Unfortunately, a valuable species like teak, especially old-growth material coming from natural ecosystems is highly coveted and its forests have been degraded over the centuries to the point that logging prohibitions had to be applied in Thailand, India and Laos in the 1980s. In 2014, Myanmar banned the export of unprocessed logs. However, pilfering of Burma-teak continues and, like a stream of leaf-cutting ants, illegal timber flows endlessly across Myanmar's porous borders into China and India before entering third countries

where it is 'laundered' and shipped on to the EU and US markets as a legitimate product.

As far back as the 1840s, H. V. Connolly, an official of the East India Company in the Madras Presidency, who served as a magistrate and the Collector of Malabar, foresaw the likely shortage of teak through the depletion of the natural forests, and urged the formation of teak plantations in the Nilambur valley, South Malabar. Although Connolly had an Irish name, his family history is not clear.

The notion of developing plantations received mixed reactions. Purists made the case that artificial cultivation would never reach the quality or dimensions of natural forest timber. Connolly's legacy is found in the oldest teak plantation in the world, which bears his name. It was established in 1846 - at the time of Ireland's Great Famine - and still



stands today in Nilambur.

Reflecting on the day I visited this plantation, the majestic towering trees dispelled notions that plantation teak is inferior to that of the natural forest. Timber quality is not dissimilar. Unfortunately, Connolly's fears have been realised in the demise of the species across its natural range. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) concludes that there has been a severe loss of tall, straight trees and concern has risen that locally adapted genotypes may be lost. For these reasons, natural forest teak has been classified as 'endangered' under IUCN's red list of species.

## The Wider Context

Throughout the last five decades, deforestation has been running at historically high rates, reaching on average, 16 million ha/annum in the 1990s mostly in the tropics. Even today, figures as high as 10 million ha are reported. It became patently obvious to international institutions and aid agencies that traditional forestry was inadequate to deal with this problem. A more comprehensive approach had to be adopted and an agreed solution was found in the concept of 'social forestry' in the 1980s. The method aims to balance the integration of community needs with the preservation of forest ecosystems. The main priority is to guarantee the roles of these forests as retainers of carbon, sanctuaries of biodiversity and producers of a wide range of outputs for indigenous and local communities.

But, because of the growing consciousness and acceptance of societal values among policy makers, timber production of large volume forest trees was downplayed to the point that forestry services began to change their management strategies. I clearly remember the disconsolate demeanour of older Asian foresters, who were used to trekking through treescapes with measuring tapes, trying to grapple with the idea of foregoing timber logging in favour of harvesting rattan for wickerwork chairs and baskets.

So, how will timber demand for tropical hardwoods, estimated at about 145 million m<sup>3</sup> in 2050, be satisfied in view of the competing roles of these ecosystems? No one knows. The International Tropical Timber Organisation acknowledges that there is 'high uncertainty' about the contribution of natural tropical forest timber to global production over the next 25 years. But they also recognise that plantation-grown wood can substitute for this material in numerous market segments.

However, the catastrophic Sino-Indian-Burmese illegal teak trade provides an



**Dusit Palace, Bangkok, became the largest teak building in the world in 1900. Wikimedia Commons**

unambiguous lesson. If Myanmar teak could be substituted by timbers of lesser qualities, then why is this not happening? The answer is simple. These timbers don't substitute for the dimensions, quality and value of old-growth teak. Period.

In the final decades of last century, an unhealthy attitude filtered into environmental, developmental and aid organisations and, to some extent, remains today. Plantations are getting a bad rap, particularly monocultures and exotics that are cultivated by the private sector covering 'large' areas. This attitude resembles an ideology and has a detrimental effect on the establishment of the type of hardwoods that could take pressure off natural forests. To expect that natural timber, and the forests containing it, will not become victims to illegal logging if alternative supply sources are unavailable, is highly risky and borders on naivety and negligence. It contravenes a basic tenant of good forestry practice which indicates that true sustainability will only be achieved if a balanced output of all forest goods and services are maintained in perpetuity.

Log removals from global teak plantations is in the order of 1.5 to 2 million m<sup>3</sup> from 4.3 million ha. Because the timber is mostly small dimension, and because the total demand for tropical high-grade hardwoods is over 50 times greater, current teak plantations are poor substitutes for the bigger volume trees of natural forests. A major problem in producing the dimensions, quality and value of forest timber in hardwood plantations is that over the span of several decades, owners tend to lose sight of their initial aspirations and, during the intervals between thinnings often neglect, through a lack of knowledge, change of policy or impatience because of delayed returns on investments, to manage their trees adequately. This is particularly prevalent in the case of owners with small areas. As a

result, many plantations don't reach their initial objectives or full potential, are exploited prematurely, or are abandoned.

## Search for a Solution

A possible solution is what might be called 'collective management', or cooperation between heterogeneous groups of growers in a district, region or country. How might this work? I confine my comments to Latin America and the Caribbean with which I am most familiar. If plantations of the region were to offset the total production of high-grade hardwoods that are forecast to emanate from its natural forests in 2025, it would require about two to three million ha of plantations producing a mean annual increment of 10 m<sup>3</sup>/ha/year. These figures provide a sense of scale of the problem and its solution for one continent.

For those who are repelled by the notion of creating an area under plantations of this size, consider the following. Two to three million hectares is dwarfed by the extent of the bovine sector that covers 570 million ha of pastureland in the Neotropics. Monocultures of soyabean amount to an additional 57 million ha. Both these land uses have been responsible for most deforestation in tropical America.

Of course, the argument may be made that plantations should be established with native species rather than exotics and that they should be planted in ways that mimic natural forest environments. The problem is that many high-grade tropical hardwoods are difficult to grow in plantations. Most have evolved in highly competitive surrounds in forests composed of multiple species and ages of trees. Many of these are shade tolerant and will only grow in small gaps in mature forests. Such species are unsuited to growing in pure blocks or in open environments when young. Pests and diseases prevent many





**Above left: Bamboo, a natural companion of teak would provide a sustained income, particularly where rotations are extended to 40 or 50 years.**

**Above: Large well-formed planted teak Indonesia.**

**Left: This teak in Trinidad originated from Tenasserim in Burma (Myanmar) in 1913.**

**Photos by R. M. Keogh**

from growing consistently well, especially in humid areas. Depending on the species, other issues include relative slowness of growth, or limitations because of a lack of technical and silvicultural knowledge. Besides, species that are largely unknown or unfavoured by the market present further challenges.

It should come as no surprise, then, that the number of high-grade tropical hardwood trees that can be managed successfully in plantations is severely limited. Three species hold the distinction of readably manageable and marketable: teak, mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) and rosewood (*Dalbergia sissoo*). Teak is the most favoured and constitutes about 74% of the area planted under these species throughout the tropics. As such, planted teak is an immensely valuable hardwood and a unique forest resource.

At the same time teak is a highly versatile

tree and lends itself to novel forms of management. Therefore, an imaginative application of silviculture is required under 'collective management'. Innovation could include the cultivation of bamboo, a natural companion of teak, that would provide an annual income. Moreover, allocating a portion of the plantation area to an extended rotation period of approximately 40 or 50 years would ensure a continuous supply of large dimension trees, effectively substituting for forest hardwoods. Besides, bamboo would be an ideal companion crop in the landscape of heavily thinned out top-quality trees during the latter half of longer rotations.

Looking back over half a century since encountering teak for the first time, I have learnt of the need for a balanced and nuanced, rather than simplistic or ideological perspective of forestry. Present-

day counterparts of those who frowned on teak cultivation in the 19th century – especially those who object to so-called “large-scale” monocultural blocks—are taking, I believe, a perilously restricted view, as this may work to the detriment of nature. Few are aware that the negative influences of tropical deforestation arising from the disruption of their biophysical attributes are not adequately captured in current carbon-centric models of climate influences. It is irresponsible, therefore, for policy makers, funders, climatologists and environmentalists to assume that the reduction of carbon alone is the answer to the environmental crisis. A much wider understanding of the holistic role of tropical forests is overdue. Without doubt, teak has an indirect, but extremely significant role to play in protecting this precious tropical biome.



# Like trees, tree stories are the great connectors

Artist **Niamh Cunningham** explains how Tree Stories can change the way we see ourselves and the natural world

**I**N 2019 I began this journey of gathering Tree Stories because I believe people have so much to say about trees. Some have particularly deep feelings and many people have more than a story or two to share.

It was half way into 2020 when Dr Cathy Fitzgearld of Haumea Ecovercity articulated what I was doing and gave me the term ... Sociological Ecological Art Practice! I have since taken courses on Ecoliteracy for Artists, Planetary Boundaries and The Earth Charter which are useful and inform my art practice. I currently gather stories on one minute Tree Stories on video for a space I call the 'Memory Palace of Tree Stories' which currently reside on a website but I have a dream of creating a large immersive space for Tree Stories gathered not just from Ireland and China but worldwide.

Most of the Tree Story contributors are creatives and educators and this also seems to be the case in collecting stories here in China. Up to recently people shot their own video on their phone and then sent it to me. However in summer 2023 I received support and funding from the Carlow County Council Local Government - Creative Ireland Programme for events at the Carlow Garden Festival. This enabled me to fund a videographer, Patrick Bramley, and work with Eileen O'Rourke at the Carlow tourist office who liaised with all the participating venues. This support almost doubled the Tree Stories on video from 43 to 81 and subsequently the Garden Festival Tree Story videos were screened alongside Chengdu Tree Stories at the CPI October festival in Chengdu.

Each story has an English and Chinese

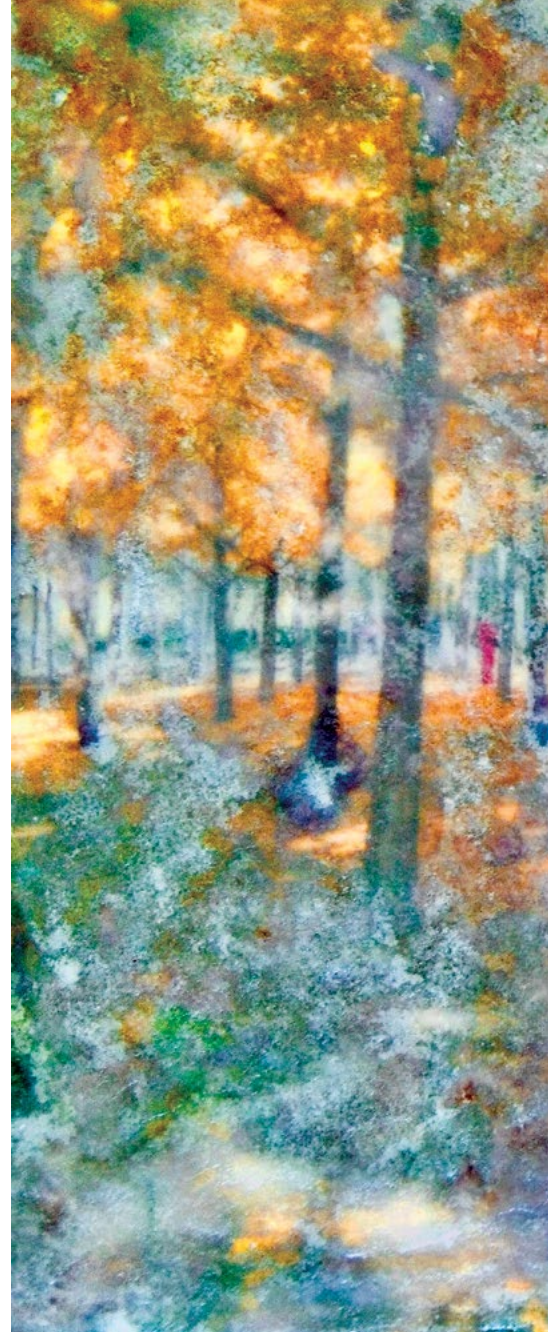
version with subtitles in both languages. This year I am slowly building the number of Stories from local Chinese people by working with different cultural groups and international artist residencies. I currently have over 110 one minute Tree Stories on video.

Branching out to people is a huge part of this practice and often the stories that don't make it to video are the ones that keep following me around. There is one about the lady who came to a workshop/screening and she shared with the group an incident when a tree on her road was knocked down in a storm. That morning she was compelled to put on a couple of coats and sit with the tree as it was dying. I am constantly surprised to learn about how people feel these connections.

A few years ago I was following up on a story I heard many decades ago, about how the woods around Carlow were felled for the ships of Queen Elizabeth I. I got in touch with historian Turtle Bunbury who

graciously shared a snippet of information from *Woodlands of Ireland Circa 1600* by Eileen McCracken

*'On the borders of Wicklow and Wexford were the famous oaks of Shillelagh that had supplied the roofing for Westminster Hall and St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin.<sup>89</sup> It was estimated in 1608 that they would furnish the crown with timber*







*Above: Ginkgo Palace sucrose series process digital print on paper. 100 x 72 cm*  
*Left: Ice Willow Sucrose series print on Aluminium 120 x 160cm*

*for shipping and other uses for twenty years to come and Cottingham was ordered to send fifty-six tons of it to London for inspection'*

Much of this random tapping into isolated stories brings me into contact with people who are incredibly curious and seek clarity about all kinds of things. There are many other historical Tree Stories I would like to explore, such as how the hazelnut enabled early human migrations from the Mediterranean region to Western Europe, providing both shells for kindling and nuts as a portable food source.

Recently, I found myself in a boardroom at a botanical research institute in Beijing, sharing one of the historical stories that emerged from the Garden Festival 2023, which resonated with many of the scientists there. It was about an old sycamore known on the farm as Anthony's Tree. The tree had been planted by the storyteller's grandmother's cousin

as a teenager. His name was Anthony, and shortly after planting the tree, he emigrated to Australia, where he was recruited into the army and died in the Gallipoli campaign. The storyteller spoke of how her childhood was spent playing with other children around Anthony's Tree.

So many memories, associations, and connections between personal and global histories are part of this practice. There is a great sense of gratitude from many of the storytellers, with an acknowledgment that these arboreal friends have contributed to people's lives in countless ways, beyond just physically cleaning and balancing water, soil, and natural animal and plant biodiversity, rainfall, and climate systems.

I believe all creative processes are patterns that connect, and our wellbeing depends on identifying them.

*Niamh Cunningham would like to thank Creative Ireland and Carlow County Council for their funding and support*

## SUCROSE SERIES

Using sugar crystallisation with photographic processes began as an experimental technique with freshly printed images on cotton. The digital images are nature-based and often feature my favorite subjects, particularly trees. I sometimes add colour (Chinese water colour) to this mixture. Adding hot mixture lifts some of the colour off the surface and picks up residual colour into the sugar and other mixed media. As the process slowly dries crystallisation shifts those ink particles. Photographing the changes and shifts in crystallisation is very interesting, at one point I was puzzled if the colour was shifting the sugar or the crystallisation was pushing the colour. The most interesting part visually for me is the first three weeks on the first layer closest to the surface, even though the process can continue depending on the number of layers.

I often consider these layers of crystallisation as a metaphor for our biosphere, with so many interventions happening it is difficult to keep track on what is causing what.

*Niamh Cunningham*







Ivy berries.  
Opposite page left: Buff-tailed Bumble  
queen feeding on ivy before hibernation.  
Opposite page right: Ivy flower  
All images Ruth Wilson



# 'The Holly and the Ivy', from pollinators to heritage value

**H**OLLY is a welcome sight at this time of year, associated with Christmas along with Ivy and these two native species are the inspiration for one of the oldest Christmas carols, 'The Holly and the Ivy'.

Holly, with rich dark green foliage and the bright red berries, is designed to attract birds to come and feed and help to disperse the seeds. Thrushes and blackbirds are especially fond of the berries, including the migrant thrush species Fieldfare and Redwing.

In a hard winter the berries get eaten up, in a mild winter they can stay on the tree until the following year. Some trees will not have berries, they are the male trees. Holly depends on insects to pollinate their flowers in the

**RUTH WILSON** shows the how the traditional images of Christmas are valued by many other species and their links with places around Ireland

spring, attracted by the nectar that the Holly produces.

Pollinators known to visit the Holly flowers and transfer pollen, include the Chocolate mining bee (*Andrena scotica*), the Buffish mining bee (*Andrena nigroaenea*) and bumblebees such as the Early bumblebee (*Bombus pratorum*).

Holly is one of Ireland's few native evergreen trees and a 'Noble' of our woods. In medieval Ireland, a law called the Brehon

Law, categorised trees into four divisions, the highest valued were known as the 'Nobles of the Wood'. Another 6 trees were given this status – oak, hazel, yew, ash, pine and apple.

Holly was a valuable tree with its tough, heavy wood that does not shatter and was good for making spears and cart shafts, deer traps and cooking spits. The leaves were fed to livestock in winter, when there was no grain or grass. The law-imposed fines for anyone illegally felling a Holly tree.

The Irish name for Holly is 'Cuileann' and some place names are associated with Holly. In Co. Galway, you'll find Moycullen, meaning the 'Plain of the Holly' and in Co. Mayo you'll find Glencullen, meaning the 'Glen of the Holly'.

A butterfly species further connects 'Holly and Ivy' as the Holly Blue butterfly







(*Celastrina argiolus*), will lay their eggs at the base of the unopened flower bud of Holly from May to June. They have a second brood in late summer that prefer to feed on the flower buds and berries of ivy.

Ivy is the last of our common wildflowers to bloom and provides an abundant source of pollen and nectar in the autumn, when most others have stopped. They have a pretty globe-shaped flower that is strongly scented to attract insects to feed and help to pollinate the flowers. Around 70 species of insects have been recorded feeding on ivy. They provide a critical source of nectar for Queen bumblebees to feed on before going into hibernation in the autumn. The Ivy flower is also a valuable food source to many late flying hoverfly, social wasps, moths and late flying butterfly species such as the Red Admiral and the Comma butterfly.

A late flying solitary bee species, known as the Ivy bee (*Colletes hederae*) recently arrived in Ireland, it was first spotted in Raven nature Reserve, Co. Wexford. They feed mainly on ivy and emerge later in the season, from early September until early November, to time their lifecycle around the ivy flower.

The black berries ripen in late winter and provide a nutritious high fat food source for birds like robins, blackbirds, mistle thrush, song thrush and small mammals. Ivy is also important for nesting birds and provides good shelter.

Hopefully you'll get an opportunity over the Christmas period to spot the Holly and Ivy berries. Don't forget to keep an eye out for the flowers next year and on a sunny day keep your eyes peeled to spot them being pollinated.

To find out more go to [www.pollinators.ie](http://www.pollinators.ie)

*Ruth Wilson, Farmland Pollinator Officer, All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, implemented by the National Biodiversity Data Centre. The post is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.*



Holly Blue butterfly in Down.  
Top left: Holly flowers in bloom.  
Top right: Red Admiral feeding on Ivy flowers  
All images Ruth Wilson



# Crann and Brown Thomas Arnotts plant first trees of new initiative in Ardee

**O**N Wednesday, November 20, we planted 1,000 native Irish trees in Anne's Nature Reserve which is located beside Ardee Coach Trim in Louth. This planting was made possible thanks to the support of Crann and the Brown Thomas Arnotts Tree Afforestation Initiative, who donated the trees for this meaningful enterprise.

On the day of planting, representatives from Crann and Brown Thomas Arnotts joined us on-site to launch this exciting project.

The creation of this 1.5-acre Nature Reserve has two core goals:

- **Enhancing Biodiversity:** By establishing optimum conditions for a diverse ecosystem to thrive.

- **Supporting Employee Well-being:** Providing a natural space for ACT employees to rejuvenate and connect with nature.

At Ardee Coach Trim (ACT), we prioritise the health and well-being of our employees. A walk in nature has proven benefits for the mind, body, and spirit. Through this project, we aim to demonstrate our commitment to our workforce's well-being while respecting and nurturing the natural world around us.

As a family business, we hold a deep appreciation for nature, understanding its vital role in sustaining our planet. This initiative comes at a crucial time as we face a biodiversity crisis, with a staggering 73% loss of wildlife species since 1970, alongside a pressing climate crisis. We believe that every effort counts in restoring nature's balance, and this Reserve represents our contribution.

Thanks to Crann and Brown Thomas Arnotts, we are excited to cultivate a young Native Irish Forest, enhancing existing habitats and fostering biodiversity. In just a few years, we envision a lively space where vibrant colours, the fragrance of blossoms, and the sounds of chirping birds and buzzing bees will revive the senses. This calm retreat will offer ACT employees a delightful escape to enjoy fresh air during lunch breaks and moments of tranquillity amidst their busy workdays.

*Anne Lennon, former director ACT*



Anne Lennon (Anne Lennon's Nature Reserve), Ciara Crilly (Brown Thomas Arnotts), Peadar Collins (Crann) get the project underway in Ardee

On Wednesday, November 20, a historic tree planting event took place, marking a significant partnership between the Crann charity and one of Ireland's leading businesses, Brown Thomas Arnotts. Together, our goal is to plant 100,000 trees over the next decade. At Crann, we have raised the standards for this project to ensure its utmost success. All trees used will be pre-rooted to maximise survival rates, and each planting site will be assessed for its environmental, biodiversity, and social impact.

The first successful site of our collaboration was in Ardee, at Ardee Coach Trim. This family-owned business has long been a

proponent of environmental stewardship, not just by talking about it, but by actively implementing a conservation park. This initiative aims to benefit both nature and the company's 140 staff, providing them with accessible green space.

Crann and BTA will be expanding our support to other deserving sites across the country. At the end of our first year of projects, we will recognise the best initiative with the Crann-BTA Tree Award. This award will be presented in early autumn 2025. Stay tuned for further developments.

*Peadar Collins  
Chairman, Crann*



Anne Lennon and the team from Brown Thomas Arnotts celebrate after the planting



# STOP TALKING, START PLANTING

**I**T'S THE first week of winter as I sit down and enjoy the peace of the school Mid-Term Break. That phrase brings the poetry of Seamus Heaney to mind and a golden day last summer at the Wishing Tree at his Home Place in Magherafelt, not far from our projects in that county. I had the honour of updating the large group from the Retired Teachers Association on the Poetry Bus trip to that calm oasis on progress on the goal of our million tree Easy Treesie - Crann project. I asked my captive audience over the coach microphone for their continued support for Ireland's million school children now that we are at the half-way mark with over 500,000 saplings planted!

To mark the occasion, I composed and recited my own poem, inspired by being immersed in all the sights and sounds of the works of Seamus Heaney and by, of all things, my eldest daughter's choice of wedding cocktail. Aoife got married just after the Covid lockdown and being a great lover of nature, chose our garden as the venue. The flowers for the bouquets were home grown and she asked me to come up with an exciting complementary cocktail.

Now elderflower cordial I've found is an easy crowd-pleaser, golden in colour, refreshing and easily made. Elderflowers, lemons and honey, no ultra-processing required, there is the recipe for you! It turned out so well her younger sister, an accomplished baker, purloined some to flavour the wedding cake. The garden theme was complete. Incidentally, I've tried making elder berry juice this year too; highly

recommended. Steaming them is all that is required. First, of course, you will need an elder tree. More about that later. Next year perhaps we will progress to wine!

## 6 Reasons for Planting the Elder Tree (Inspired by Seamus Heaney's *Planting the Alder*)

*For wedding veils of lacy cream  
Infused for cordial for a Spring Bride's dream.*

*For dancing bubbles, our thirst to slake.  
Do make enough to flavour the cake!*

*The merriment over, its chance to shine.  
At summer's end with berries of wine.*

*For the elder poet who loved all nature's signs  
Sleeping under the autumn ash plant tree  
At bonfire-flag time.*

*At winter wand time, harvest sticks.  
To whistle up trees like fairy tricks.*

*But mostly  
Plant it, Plant it.  
For Youth*

Orla Farrell

I hope you found my poem cheering. On the radio is the news of loss of life in the Valencia flooding and of widespread simultaneous "disbelief" in America in Climate Science. We are all so connected no matter where we live. I am happy we have linked our Easy Treesie Crann project to the global Plant-for-the-Planet climate



Pupils from Our Lady of Consolation School, Donnellycarney, celebrate the Magic of Trees on Spar National Tree Day



Planting a rare *Torreya Taxifolia* with the Tree Council of Ireland team on the 50th Anniversary of the JFK Arboretum with their Endangered Conifers Project

action project, which now has over 100,000 climate justice ambassadors, children and young people working in 70 countries on tree planting restoration projects. We are so very grateful for their support.

To share the big picture of the latest state





Darren Kiely with some young helpers from the Kilmeedy community coming together to plant for the future at Seanie's Farm.

### Kilmeedy community coming together to plant for the future at Seanie's Farm.

Tree planting is fun whether you are young or old!

We had a wonderful morning planting the trees. Young and old came out to help to plant along the boundary of our seven-acre community farm that the village of Kilmeedy purchased a few years ago. Many events have been held there over the last two years to raise funds to pay for the site we all call "Seanie's Farm". The farm was purchased by the community to be used as an amenity by everyone. Festival, events, fundraisers and GAA homecomings are now all being held there. Events include an annual music festival called Full Moon Rising, an ice bath challenge and many family fun days in between.

The trees have come on great and to see the small leaves out during the summer can make one dream what our community farm will look like in the years to come.

**Martin Cremin**



of ecosystem restoration down here on Planet Earth, I will share with you an update of News from Space!

The National Tree Day theme this year was "The Magic of Trees" and the tree selected was the Hawthorn; 2,000 specimens were

posted out by the Tree Council of Ireland to be planted in schools all over the country. A highlight of the day was when Globe Ireland teamed up with Green Schools Biodiversity to host NASA scientist Brian Campbell. Brian explained how they study trees from space and invited us to join in their citizen science project measuring trees on Earth. GLOBE (<https://www.globe.gov/>) is an international science and education programme sponsored by NASA and Brian is the Science Lead for the GLOBE Observer Trees Program and its Student Research Campaign.

Brian's presentation covered a huge range of topics; do you want to learn about Trees from Space? What is the "Leaf Area Index"? See the "Breath of the Planet?" Enjoy his "super-rare image" of a cloud-free day in Ireland? How do lasers fire pulses at 10,000 times per second to measure tree heights? How many trees we have in Ireland? (The answer is at the end of the article.) Dear Reader; would you enjoy contributing to a tree-based citizen science project - they are nearly at 1 trillion trees measured so far with 2 trillion left to measure? Brian and GLOBE are the place to go! Brian mentioned he

had been reading some articles about the Irish Government planning to plant several hundred million trees by 2040 to help capture greenhouse gas emissions and his reaction was that that is absolutely amazing. So, let's go, Ireland and impress the NASA scientists! Green Schools are asking for collaborators in several such exciting scientific initiatives with school children this year. Do consider downloading the free Globe Observer App and making some tree-height measurements - ideally involving the children in your family - which will help us to understand better the gains and losses in the biomass of trees and forests in Ireland and across the planet.

When we started our million-tree project, most of our outings seemed to be on dark icy mornings, setting out before dawn with carloads of spades and bare-root saplings to schools around the country to get there and back before it got dark again! This year there seem to have been very many outings with long days. The longest of them being the Tree Council Tree Planting Ceremony trip, celebrating 50 years of the John F. Kennedy Arboretum on Midsummer's Day. What a wonderful Ark it is for endangered conifers -



and on the day we also got the great privilege of planting one. The arboretum provides a sanctuary to threatened tree species. As part of their 2022 initiative, they are dedicating over 10 acres to new planting with the aim of establishing some of the world's most endangered conifers at the arboretum. This space, consisting of 1300 trees representing 24 endangered conifer species, will be the single largest planted collection of the International Conifer Conservation Programme. I did observe that our newly-planted little tree didn't need to be watered during an epic deluge; I do recommend a cape and full rain attire for Away-Days exploring trees, you will be glad of it!

There were many golden days for our teams this year where we basked in the sun (We had a first; a day declared "too hot" for working outside by one of our volunteers!) The Bloom Festival is always a tree-t, it was such fun to meet the many people working on greening the land in the biodiversity zone. The UCC Tree Explorers' stand had some great tree ID posters for us, and we had equally good posters for our Beekeepers neighbours. The Crann stand was much admired, unmissable with its magnificent tree provided by our Chairman Peadar Collins. Meeting the Mayor of Fingal, Cllr. Brian Mc Donagh at the Award to one of our GAA Tree Planting champions, Castleknock GAA, was another great summer celebration. This club not only did extensive planting with us this year but carried out the important work of fencing out their rabbits under the supervision of our own indefatigable Community Liaison Facilitator, Steven Doody! Steven incidentally has been spreading the love of trees as far as Lodz, Poland as part of the Erasmus Plus programme, exploring aspects of "Soil, Soul & Society" and leading public land use discussions again at the annual artists' & creatives' "Earth Rising" community event.

Walks are always fun, to learn from and to lead; Niall MacCoitir's "Love Clontarf" Tree Trail was an excellent and instructive family occasion. The most interesting Powerscourt "Wonder of Trees" walks were a sellout - no surprise in the third best garden in the world. Our own walks in the grounds of Terenure College and at Our Lady's Templeogue surveying the recently planted saplings with the school Green Team were a joy. "Stop Talking Start Planting" is the motto of our global project. So, while it is a delight to be invited to talk, it is frankly just not our thing. In the case of Our Lady's School in Templeogue, we toured the trees that had been planted during the Covid lockdown era and scouted out some elder and willow which can be used to fill any gaps by planting



"wands" - metre-long cuttings - during the dormant season ahead. We relaxed afterwards with an art project and made a most useful calendar of rolling Tree Events. Invitations to hear the latest news at the EPA's Climate Change Conference "Ireland Living in a Changed Climate" are welcome; to visit the Glas exhibition and see who is growing what is fun; to sit in the magnificent Powerscourt House and hear from world-class tree planting and restoration experts is illuminating. Is there



however anything quite like the antidote to hearing of the grave challenges we face than to go outside and carry out the simple act of tree planting? For that reason, we're starting the planting season in a new Science Week initiative with the Dublin Book Festival inviting children all over Ireland and indeed the UK to join us in planting an elder wand... or perhaps two or three, in case the first doesn't take. Do us this little favour; will you do so too, in the ground, in a pot or even in a



Orla Farrell with Dr. Eoin Lettice of Tree Explorers, University College Cork

Below: Crann's Aidan French leads the Easy Treesie - Crann Tree Identification Walk with the Crumlin - UCD - Interval Project

Below left: A Crann Magazine for 'Irish Trees' author, Niall MacCoitir



big jam jar? Share your success with us! We'll report back on how well the magic works for us in Dublin Castle this month!

It has been a great pleasure for Easy Treesie - Crann to support the INTERVAL project this year, described by Minister Malcolm Noonan as "a shining example of how community engagement and advanced technology can come together to create a positive environmental impact. This initiative will help us understand our current tree canopy

A Note from Orla; Easy Treesie – Crann has participated in the More Trees Now campaign since their visit to us for Tree Week in 2023 when we caught their zeal to grow things the easy way – magic wand propagation. They have some other magic tricks we've tried; tree rescue! Why not join in the fun? Instructions below from Irish volunteer Aideen O'Rourke living in the Netherlands. Thanks for the update, Aideen!

### More Trees Now: Join the European Winter Campaign! Trees for Free from Mother Nature's Own Nursery

This winter, join the movement that's been gathering momentum in the Netherlands for the past four years! It is now operating in Germany, and beginning in France, The UK and Ireland. To date the More Trees Now campaign has successfully rescued and replanted two million trees using a simple yet powerful method that brings communities together.

**How It Works:** Volunteers play a crucial role by rescuing sapling trees that are slated for removal in areas like development sites or hiking paths. These young trees are then offered, free of charge, to those eager to plant them in new locations.

In the Netherlands, Urgenda has developed a user-friendly tool that streamlines every step of this process—from connecting enthusiastic volunteers with those who have seedlings to coordinating give-away days and planting events. This tool, now available in English, is free for non-profits, organizations and individuals passionate about expanding the More Trees method.

As an Irish person living in the Netherlands, I've have had the hands-on

experience volunteering for the past three winters, and I'm eager to see this incredible campaign take root in Ireland. It's an easy, impactful way for everyone to contribute to the fight against climate change.

#### The Method:

More Trees Now focuses on harvesting saplings that are either in surplus or growing in unwanted places. These young trees are carefully uprooted with their roots intact and transported to a temporary Tree Hub, where they're nurtured until they can be distributed to eager planters.

#### The Tree Planner tool - your digital assistant!

This innovative tool makes mass participation a breeze! By registering as a volunteer, harvesting site, hub, or planting location, you can define a catchment area in your profile. You will then receive weekly email notifications about activities in your area, which you can sign up for.

Every Wednesday, the system sends out updates about upcoming events, reducing the administrative burden and allowing for smooth coordination among large groups. Whether you have seedlings to harvest or a planting site ready to go, this tool connects everyone involved.

#### Why Get Involved?

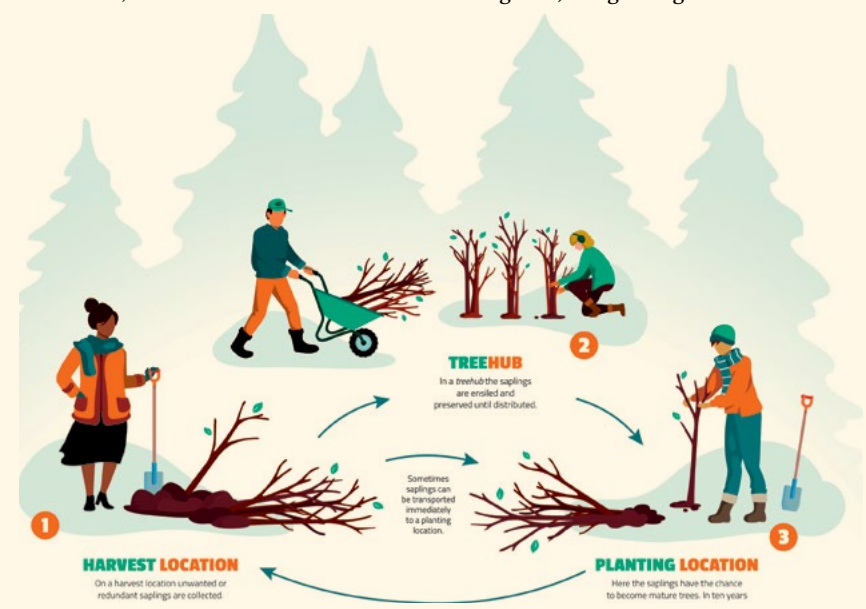
Not only will you be helping to rescue and plant trees, but you'll also be part of a European wide community dedicated to restoring our planet. Plus, you'll have the chance to pick up free rescued trees and give them the chance to thrive!

Ready to make a difference? Visit our website for more information, tips, tools and manuals;

[www.moretreesnow.eco](http://www.moretreesnow.eco)

Contact us: [info@moretreesnow](mailto:info@moretreesnow)

Together, let's grow a greener future!







Wells Fargo Volunteers carry out Tree Maintenance at Award winning Seagrang Park with Fingal Co. Co.



We are proud to support tree planting - and parades - to mark the Marino Centenary, greatly enjoyed by the local schools.

and identify opportunities to increase it, enhancing the overall health and resilience of our urban environment and supporting the implementation of the Nature Restoration Law.”

We got together with Science Foundation Ireland, UCD and volunteers from the local community with the aim of mapping Crumlin's trees, not only to provide valuable data but also to inspire local residents to actively participate in greening their neighbourhood. Well done to 'Bloomin Crumlin' and the very many communities carrying out new and growing projects alongside us this year.

Many of our golden days were spent in tree maintenance. With grass now growing so late into the year we have been carrying out such work even in recent weeks. Many thanks to all of our wonderful volunteers who came out with us to support the children's planting projects. We've had TREE-mendous support again from Google and from Dun Laoghaire - Rathdown Council in Shankill this season - with a sponsorship drive coming up next week at their HQ. Wells Fargo joined us on their third such outing in Kiltarnan and Baldoyle with the Fingal County Council team. The Teeling Group joined the Tree Council and ourselves in Wicklow for "Tree & Toast".

We have made a little video on the Dublin-Wicklow border with Brendan Fitzsimons, CEO of the Tree Council of Ireland about "Grass Cleaning around Your Newly Planted Saplings". You can find it on our YouTube channel.

In all these activities as we scouts say - Be Prepared! Protect yourself against nettles, briars, insects and uneven ground. Do make sure you tuck in long trouser legs into your boots and go with long sleeves and gloves; showering afterwards is a good precaution too. (You can learn more at [ticktalkireland.org](http://ticktalkireland.org)). Sun and rain protection is also advised - a great time to trample on the grass is when it is wet. The rain makes it heavier, and the trampled grass is more likely to stay down!

We don't use chemicals! First find your young trees in the grass! Watch your step as they are easy to break if they are hiding! Holding onto the stem can be a good idea while you walk around your small tree. If it has died and needs replacing, mark it with a red tag to make it easy to spot next season! If it's healthy then trample on the grass in a ring around its base, stamping down firmly. As easy as 1, 2, TREE!



Google are out in force in 2024 as part of their support for our tree planting projects in Shankill with the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Co. Co. Team

## THANK YOU - GO RAIBH MÍLE MAITH AGAIBH

We extend a huge thank-you to our many supporters and volunteers including the teams at the Dept. of Agriculture, Forestry and the Marine, Kelsius, Maxol Greenprint, Coillte Nurseries and our other Tree Growers and all our friends. A special thanks to Raheny Rotary, Dublin who are sponsoring their second project this year of trees in this leafy Dublin suburb.

We have a full list of our supporters on our website. You can donate to our project at <https://shorturl.at/dA1SW> and you can get in touch at [orla@easytreesie.com](mailto:orla@easytreesie.com) and through [www.easytreesie.com](http://www.easytreesie.com) and [www.Crann.ie](http://www.Crann.ie)

And the number of trees in Ireland - 79,000,000! We have room for a billion so join us and #stoptalkingstartplanting with #generationrestoration!



# Now is the time to try something new

Join us for an immersive day learning traditional woodland skills at our hazel coppicing course, led by master woodwright **Eoin Donnelly**

**T**HE course will take place on St. Brigid's Day, Saturday, February 1, 2025 in Tomcoyle Woods, an ancient oak and hazel woodland in Wicklow.

There is a recorded history of coppicing activity in Tomcoyle woods since the 1720s and it offers the perfect setting to reconnect with this important woodland practice and Ireland's rich forestry heritage.

Hazel coppicing is a sustainable woodland management technique that has been practiced in Ireland for centuries. It helps preserve the health of the woodland while providing a renewable source of materials for fencing, garden products, traditional crafts, charcoal and firewood.

Throughout the day, participants will learn about the history and cultural significance of coppicing in Ireland, the sustainable use of coppice materials, woodland ecology and the benefits of coppice management to the woodland habitat and its flora and fauna. They will gain hands-on experience in the art of coppicing and will be coppicing hazel with hand-saws and gleaning usable material with bill hooks. Eoin will teach the proper use of traditional tools as well as tips for tool maintenance.

Eoin has spent most of his life working native broadleaved woodlands, managing and utilising their timbers. His skills include coppicing and coppice management, hedge-laying, pole-lathe turning, charcoal production, hurdle making, garden products such as brooms, rakes, forks, thatching products and many more. He constructed the Hiberno/Norse Viking House at the Botanic Gardens in Glasnevin and was instrumental in the refurbishment of the Irish National Heritage Park. Go to [www.eoindonnelly.ie](http://www.eoindonnelly.ie) to see more.

This course is offered to anyone interested in learning about the understory management



of native broadleaf woodlands and anyone who just wants to spend a day working with like-minded people in a beautiful ancient Irish woodland.

Tools will be provided, but participants must wear suitable outdoor and protective clothing. This includes warm clothing, wet weather gear, work gloves, a warm hat, and leather work boots or hiking boots (no wellingtons!). As much as we love dogs this

course is not suitable for them. Minimum age for participation is 16 years. A hot lunch will be provided – please specify dietary requirements to the email address specified below.

The course is limited to 12 participants but an extra date later in February may be scheduled in the event of oversubscription.

This event is part of Crann's ongoing focus on promoting woodland culture and heritage, offering an opportunity to deepen your understanding of Ireland's native woodlands and traditional craft skills. This course is a unique chance to engage with nature and Ireland's woodland traditions.

It is the first in a series of courses that will be held in Tomcoyle Woods in 2025. The next course will be a three day immersive charcoal making course with Eoin over the May Bank holiday using the hazel that has already been coppiced in Tomcoyle. If you are interested in this course or hearing more about the series then please send an email to [info@crann.ie](mailto:info@crann.ie)

For booking details about this event go to <https://Crann-Coppicing-Course.eventbrite.ie>  
Course fee is €180.



# A JEWEL IN THE LOIRE VALLEY

PEADAR COLLINS stepped into the living history of a beautiful château and was surrounded by a multitude of ancient trees

**E**VERY once in a while you stumble across a place that from the moment of arrival you know you will want to return. This was my first impression of the beautiful château de Rochecotte, situated in the heart of the Loire valley.

This historic fortified site was advanced in the 15th century based on its hilly location. The château developed from 1825, is situated with a commanding view looking out across the fertile Loire valley. Its surrounding backdrops blanketed with Noble French oak forests.

The château, now a four star hotel is superbly furnished and set in 400 hectares of well developed Italian and French style gardens. There are historic tree specimens and a vast diversity of the species, planted over the past 200 years,

The château entrance has ornate wrought iron hand crafted gates. A large lodge house greets you on the right hand side of the entrance. Along the long weaving driveway ascending to the château you become aware of the linear arboretum with its wide variety of trees.

Including:-

- American sweet gum trees (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) with vibrant autumn colours
- Californian giant and coastal redwoods (*Gigantium* and *Sempervirens Sequoia sempervirens*)

- American swamp cypress (*Taxodium distichum*)
- Spreading Iranian Persian ironwoods (*Parrotia persica*)
- Collections of large Spruce and Fir (*Picea* and *Abies*)
- Chinese maiden hair tree (*Ginkgo biloba*)
- Mediterranean Evergreen oaks (*Quercus Ilex*)
- Sweet chestnut (*Castania sativa*)
- Green and red Beech (*Fagus sylvatica* and *Fagus syl. Atropurpurea*)
- Tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*)
- Robinians (*Robinia*)

As you leave this linear arboretum the long climbing avenue up to the château is lined with Horse Chestnuts (*Asculus hippocastanum*), Lime (*Tilia*) and then a full line of Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) In the grand stable court yard there are beautiful American Tulip trees. (*Liriodendrons tulipifera*)

It is at this point that the château's *pièce de résistance* appears and stops you in your tracks. It is the magnificent 200-year-old Cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*) - a solid standing sentinel! That was planted after Napoleon's Egyptian campaigns. It has guarded, and witnessed two centuries of French history at the steps of the main entrance to the château.

The historic legacy gifted to this fine château from its original founder developer Duchess Dorothee de Dino saw her develop a



The château is steeped in history and surrounded by magnificent trees like this Lebanese Cedar







fully functioning and extensive plumbing and irrigation system harnessed from a reservoir located high about the château. Dorothée's daughter Pauline later in life shows a profound adoration to the Catholic Church honouring her faith and the spirit of her late father who resigned from a very high standing ministry in the Catholic Church to marry Pauline's mother.

There has been much intrigue associated with the château de Rochecotte. The original signed copy of the Treaty of Versailles was secretly stored here during WWII until Hitler demanded it be hand over to him during the German occupation of France in WWII.

The château was selected to be the preferred château of the late Queen Elizabeth Queen Mother on her visits to this French region.

In recent history, the development of the château and preserving its high standing on a global stage rests with the current generation headed by the formidable mother and daughter team Chistelle and Carla Brosset, who very kindly took time to share their story and history so I would get an accurate understanding of this fine place .

In recent years, the adjacent French and Italian gardens have been developed and brought up to a high standard as well as a luxury pool sitting in the shade of the 100 strong lime walk avenue . The French Garden has seen a number of changes but now stands proud with a fine collection of very valuable Yew (*Taxus baccata*) topiaries radiating from a very healthy specimen Upright Mediterranean cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens pyramidalis*). The vigour and by default health of the plants and trees here only suggests one thing to me. No effort was spared in the soil construction of these terraces gardens . Nothing was overlooked at château Rochecotte except the Loire valley.

Beginning with the early morning views from the bedrooms through the cedar canopies, accompanied by the dawn chorus, to the welcome shade at midday, ideal for afternoon tea, and the peaceful evening ambiance with the dining rooms lit up, the Château de Rochecotte offers a unique experience. The focus is on local, fresh produce and high-quality wines. The *Cedrus libanii* holds court and sets the tone for the property.

High standards, elegant and spectacular.





# CRANN AT COP29

## PUSHING FOR CONTINUED LOCAL ACTION

New Crann Director, Emily Laverty, reflects on her experience in Azerbaijan

**C**RANN is dedicated to fostering a greener future through education and sustainable tree planting and management. Attending COP29 allowed us to amplify this mission on the global stage and bring back ideas to strengthen local action in Ireland.

### What is COP29 and why was it important for Crann to attend?

The Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP) is an annual event organised by the United Nations, bringing countries together to agree on what needs to be done to limit climate change. This year's 29th COP was held in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. While government representatives make up a large portion of the attendees, non-governmental organisations like charities and youth groups also play an important role, representing their individual values and priorities. For me, attending COP29 was a chance to promote Crann's values, establish new partnerships, and explore fresh ideas for improving my future work with Crann.

For Crann, we believe that education about nature is essential. I attended an inspiring talk by Rajendra Shende, an advocate for



Emily representing Crann at COP29

'disruptive education'. A quote that stuck with me was: "youth are not tomorrow's leaders; youth are today's changemakers." This reflects the way Crann's educational programmes across Ireland empower young people to create meaningful environmental impacts. After hearing his ideas, I'm excited to bring what I learned back to Crann's schools programme to share how to make environmental education even more engaging and impactful.

### First impressions of Baku

One of the first things that struck me when I arrived in Baku was the abundance of trees in the

city! The front of my accommodation was lined with beautiful pomegranate trees, which was particularly special as pomegranates are the national fruit of Azerbaijan. On my first day, I attended a panel discussion that really stuck with me. Jana Rashed, a Climate Sirens Advocate, shared a heartbreaking story about a village in Lebanon deeply affected by conflict. Olive trees, which hold immense cultural significance there, have been devastated by the environmental fallout of bombings. The soil and water have become so contaminated that the villagers can no longer pick the fruit from these beloved trees. This is a powerful reminder of how

environmental damage doesn't just harm ecosystems—it impacts people's lives and traditions in profound ways.

### Youth representation at COP

While at COP, I had the chance to connect with other Irish youth representatives. Beth Doherty, the Irish youth coordinator, was fantastic at arranging meetings to help us promote the organisations we each represented. Eamon Ryan, Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, invited us to meet with him. It was a great opportunity to share our thoughts on the COP decision-making process. Seeing someone in his position take the time to listen to young voices really showed the importance of including diverse perspectives in decision-making. An unforgettable moment for me was meeting my role model, Mary Robinson. Despite her packed schedule, she took the time to meet with the Irish youth representatives to encourage us to keep fighting the good fight! Mary's incredible work in advocating for climate justice has always inspired me, and it is amazing to have her support!

### Carbon Markets – A False Solution?

Carbon markets emerged as a





Mary Robinson pictured with members of Irish youth delegation

controversial topic at COP29. Carbon markets allow carbon emitters to purchase “carbon credits” from initiatives like tree planting to offset their emissions.

However, they have drawn significant criticism for displacing indigenous communities, exploiting forest workers with poor labour conditions, and causing biodiversity loss through monoculture plantations. Moreover, carbon trading can act as a loophole, allowing companies to maintain business as usual rather than addressing the root cause of the climate crisis—reducing their emissions.

Crann’s approach to sustainable forestry emphasises planting native trees in locations that support biodiversity and community well-being. This principle guided my input on carbon markets, where I advocated for stronger regulations to prevent the displacement of communities and ecological harm.

## Private finance – Global and Local Perspectives

COP29 has been deemed the ‘finance COP’, with a goal of determining who will fund climate action. Finance from the private sector has been highly debated in Baku, as some see it as an excuse for governments to contribute less money to clean development. However, here in Ireland, major retailer Brown Thomas has partnered with Crann to demonstrate how private finance can play a helpful role. In partnering with Crann, Brown Thomas has committed to fund the planting of 100,000 trees over the next decade. This initiative is supported by a small levy on their iconic striped paper bags, which will both help raise funds and promote reusable alternatives. Partnerships like these showcase the transformative role private entities can play in driving environmental change and set an inspiring precedent for

other organisations to follow.

## Potential Partnerships from COP29

I was kindly invited to meet with two Zambian representatives: Pauline from Environment Africa and Goodbye from Save the Children. They shared how they use tree planting as a way of fostering a sense of community among children in disadvantaged

regions and teaching them how to care for nature. They are keen to meet online with Crann over the coming months to exchange ideas about how our organisations can collaborate to improve the quality of our nature education.

In addition to the international connections, I established relationships between Crann and other Irish organisations, such as Friends of the Earth and Zero Waste Alliance Ireland. These are groups that share the goal of a greener environment, so I’m really excited about the possibility of teaming up for future projects. Collaborating with them could be a great way to share our work with a larger audience and help drive real change, both locally and beyond.

## Key Takeaways from COP29

COP29 provided invaluable insights and connections that will help Crann continue to lead Ireland’s movement for sustainable forestry and environmental education. Together, we can transform global ideas into local action, ensuring a better future for our planet.



Climate and Conflict talk led by Nick Nuttall, host of ‘We Don’t Have Time’



## Belvedere House, Gardens & Park *A Fascinating Estate to Visit*

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**ADMISSION RATES**  
Adult €8. Student/Senior €6.  
Child €4. Family Ticket  
(2 adults + 2 children) €23.  
Each additional child €3.

**LAKESIDE CAFÉ**  
The Lakeside Café is a contemporary, bright and spacious café located in the Visitor Centre at Belvedere. Here you will enjoy a variety of creative food offerings crafted through the seasons by our dedicated culinary team from locally sourced, fresh ingredients. Open daily from 9.30am.

**CONTACT**  
Belvedere House, Gardens & Park  
Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, N91 EF80  
P: 044-9338960  
E: info@belvedere-house.ie  
W: www.belvedere-house.ie

**OPENING TIMES**  
7 days a week all year  
round from 9.30am  
*Seasonal closing  
times apply*

**LOCATION**  
5km south of Mullingar  
on N52 from Dublin,  
M4/N4 Exit 15  
Sat Nav: Latitude/Longitude  
53.4756, - 7.36733





# Superb book on Irish trees and shrubs

By JOHN MCLOUGHLIN

**S**A leabhar nua seo tá sár-obair déanta ag Máirín Uí Chonchubhair, scríobhann sí faoi crainn agus toir ach clúdaíonn sí an ithir, athrú aeráide, geolaíocht, gach rud a tharla ón oighearaois.

Ní raibh a leithéid de bhéim riamh ar an dúlra, tuigeanann daoine go bhfuil iarmhairtí ag cur isteach ar an domhan nádúrtha. Chuir Covid-19 iallach ar dhaoine athmhachnamh a dhéanamh ar a n-idirghníomhú leis an dúlra. Tá an t-ádh linn go bhfuil Máirín Uí Chonchubhair, as Dún Chaoin i Chorca Dhuibhne, againn a chuir cuntas le chéile ar bhailiúchán ollmhór crainn agus toir atá ag fás anseo. Is saothar ar feadh an tsaoil é do Máirín, agus táimid faoi chomaoín aici as an éacht iontach seo. I 1995 scríobh Máirín faoi phlandaí a ceantair dhúchais i 'Flóra Chorca Dhuibhne' agus is saothar ollmhór é.

Tá bailiúchán teoranta crainn agus toir ag Éirinn, toisc gur oileán í atá taobh thiar d'oileán eile in iarthar na hEorpa. Tharla sé seo toisc nár thug na taoidí ag ardú, taréis na hoighearaoise is déanaí thart ar deich míle bliain ó shin, am do na flóra iomlána Eorpacha teacht anseo. Ní mór dúinn a bheith cúramach faoi phlandaí a thabhairt isteach, bíonn lotnaidí agus galair ceangailte le plandaí agus d'fhéadfaí pataiginí contúirteacha a thabhairt isteach ar na plandaí atá againn cheana féin. Chuir an fharraige maolán ar fáil dúinn ó Mhór-Roinn na hEorpa ach mar a d'fhoghlaim muid ó leathadh pataiginí Covid, bogann pataiginí crainn agus plandaí go han-tapa. Níl aon tír níos feasaí ná Éire faoi na hiarmhairtí a bhaineann le pataigin a thabhairt isteach nuair a fheicimid iarmhairtí *Phytophthora infestans* ar an bpráta as a dtáinig an Gorta Mór.

Tabharfaidh an leabhar nua seo léargas dúinn ar an gcaoi a n-idirghníomhaíonn an domhan nádúrtha agus cuideoidh sé le mic léinn agus leis na glúine atá le teacht idirghníomhú leis an ábhar inár dteanga dhúchais. Tá an t-ádh dearg linn go bhfuil Máirín Uí Chonchubhair, cainteoir dúchais a chaith an oiread sin dá saol agus dá fuinneamh leis an ábhar agus a fhágann oidhreacht iontach dúinn.

Is féidir an leabhar a fháil ar líne ó



**Crainn agus Toir – Cur síos cuimsiteach ar chrainn agus ar thoir in Éirinn. Máirín Uí Chonchubhair. Dingle Publishing. 2024. Hb. 764. ISBN 978-1-52728130-1. €85 Below: Máirín Uí Chonchubhair,**



crainnagustoir.ie ar €85 + €15 (seachadadh).

In this new book, all in Irish, with almost 800 pages and weighing three and a half kilos, Máirín Uí Chonchubhair has done an outstanding job, she writes superbly about trees and shrubs but also covers the soil, climate change, geology, everything that has happened since the ice age. Máirín puts this vegetation in the context of the development of Irish vegetation going back in the geological ages explaining the connection between geology, soil and the plants, why they exist and developed as they did. The entire story is elucidated with aptly annotated photographs and diagrams.

Never before has there been such an emphasis on nature, people understand that disrupting the natural world has consequences. Covid-19 has forced people to rethink their interaction with nature.

Ireland has a limited collection of native

trees and shrubs, being an island behind another island in western Europe. This happened because the rising tides, after the recent ice age about ten thousand years ago, did not give time for the entire European flora to arrive here. We have to be careful about introducing new plants. Yes, there are pests and diseases attached to plants and dangerous pathogens could be introduced onto the plants we already have. The sea provided us with a buffer from continental Europe but as we learned from the spread of Covid, pathogens move in trees and plants very quickly. No country is more aware than Ireland of the consequences of introducing a pathogen when we see the effects of *Phytophthora infestans* on the potato which led to the Great Famine.

This new book will give us insight into how the natural world interacts and will help students and future generations interrelate with the subject in our native language. We are very lucky to have Máirín Uí Chonchubhair, a native speaker, and is ideally situated to give the original names of trees and shrubs and the folklore associated with them. A botanist and science teacher, she taught at Greenhills College, Dublin. She devoted so much of her life and energy to the subject and leaves us a magnificent legacy. It is a lifetime's work for Máirín, and we are indebted to her for this superb achievement. Chorca Dhuibhne Heritage published her first book, *Flóra Chorca Dhuibhne*, in 1995, which contains a comprehensive account of the plants of the district in their natural environment, and a description of traditional customs and folklore related to them.

With the increase in Gaelscoileanna at primary and secondary level and the more teaching of subjects at third level through Irish this unique book will prove to be invaluable. The book is a marvelous addition to our knowledge of the trees and shrubs that grow in this country.

*The book can be obtained online from crainnagustoir.ie for €85 + €15 (delivery).*



**John McLaughlin** is the Business Editor of the Society of Irish Foresters and a past president of the Tree Council of Ireland.



The planting team in Paraguay



The Irish side of the project was held at Charleville Park Hotel in Cork

# In honour of Eliza Lynch

A remarkable tree-planting project linking Ireland and Paraguay led by Crann's **Korinna Duffy**

**I**N A heartwarming endeavour to celebrate and preserve the shared history between Ireland and Paraguay, a tree-planting initiative has taken root, linking the towns of Charleville in Cork, Ireland, and Paraguay City in Paraguay. This tree initiative, driven by Korinna Duffy, MD of Ecofitness and a Director of Crann aims to plant 3,000 trees along an eight kilometre stretch of Paraguay City's bayfront, leading up to the Presidential Palace. The project not only commemorates the legacy of Eliza Lynch but also promotes cultural and ecological sustainability.

Eliza Lynch was born in Charleville, Cork and moved to Paris during the Great Famine where she met Francisco Solano López, the future President of Paraguay. In 1854 she moved to Paraguay with López and eventually became the First Lady of Paraguay.

To honour her memory, the Paraguay Community (CLG) and Ecofitness launched this project on November 18, planting trees simultaneously in Paraguay and Charleville.

As a director of Crann, Korinna proposed using trees as a symbol of the bond between Charleville and Paraguay City. The project was originally conceived by Fabian Mendez, who is living in Paraguay and had the idea to plant 3,000 trees along the bayfront leading from the bridge in Paraguay City to the Harp, a kilometre before the Presidential Palace.

Korinna reached out to Fabian to discuss collaborating on this project and suggested involving Irish women to sponsor trees in memory of Eliza Lynch. Fabian agreed and they decided to name the project *Residenta Eliza Lynch*, symbolising strong women.

The term *Residenta* represents the resilient women of Paraguay who, after the War of the Triple Alliance that claimed 90% of the male population, helped rebuild the country. These women, known for their strength and determination, are the inspiration for Irish women to sponsor trees, honouring the legacy of Eliza Lynch.

On November 18, the tree planting event in Paraguay was accompanied by a host of media, including TV and newspapers. Actors from a theatre that

staged a play about Eliza were present, dressed in character costumes, adding a cultural touch to the ceremony. The Irish Paraguayan Committee was also present, including Angel Denis (Chairman), Lilian Cristaldo (Secretary), and Raquel Cristaldo (Treasurer).

At the same time in Charleville, Cork, a tree planting ceremony was held at the Charleville Park Hotel, where hotel manager Gerard Hanratty, representatives from the Charleville Heritage Centre, Evelyn and Michael, and Crann chairman Peadar Collins were present. Eliza Lynch's descendant, Franco Lopez, who is currently studying English in Ireland, was there to represent her legacy.

Eliza Lynch was not only the First Lady to the President of Paraguay but also a remarkable businesswoman who brought European goods, culture, music, dance, and products like perfumes, dresses, and household items into Paraguay. Her efforts are still honoured today, with her influence



Korinna after planting the first of 3,000 trees in Paraguay City

wevident in the buildings, culture, and dance in Paraguay. The tree planting initiative is part of a broader effort to boost tourism and cultural exchange.

Recently, Ecofitness, the Wellness Coordinator with the Paraguay Community, completed a 5-day tour of Paraguay to promote this unique project and the rich history of both countries.

The tour included a series of national radio and TV interviews, as well as meetings with government representatives to discuss further cultural and tourism initiatives. "The idea of having Irish women sponsor the trees to represent strong women like Eliza Lynch and their dedication is truly inspiring," said Korinna Duffy. "This project not only enhances the natural beauty of our regions but also fosters a deeper appreciation for our shared history and cultural connections."

The trees, symbolising growth and resilience, will serve as a living testament to the historical bond between Ireland and Paraguay.



**Alan Moore** of Hedgerows Ireland outlines the threat of the disease and the response to it

**T**HERE is growing concern amongst landowners and orchard growers about the apparently exponential growth and spread of the untreatable bacterial disease Fireblight (*Erwinia Amylovora*) in Ireland which affects members of the *Rosaceae* (Rose) plant family. These plants include apples, pears, whitethorn, (our most common hedgerow plant), and rowan.

### Rise in outbreaks

While not a new disease in Ireland, the rise in the number of recorded outbreaks in the last three years is alarming. There were 17 confirmed outbreaks in 2023 but the latest DAFM figures up to August of this year was 60. The number of counties affected has also risen dramatically from five in 2022 to 12 in 2023 and to a total of 21 counties to date this year.

### The disease in whitethorn plants

The bacterium responsible is native to North America and was introduced to Europe in the 1950's. The infection overwinters in bark cankers. In warm, wet and windy spring weather bacteria oozes from the cankers in a yellowish amber liquid. A plant will become infected if the bacteria reaches the inner bark. It is spread by wind-blown rain and pollinating insects who are attracted to the oozing cankers and deposit the cells on developing flowers. Spread is also possible via hedge cutting machinery in the autumn and winter months. It is believed that Ireland's relatively mild and moist weather conditions, enhanced by climate change, may favour spread and render this island especially vulnerable in the future. In appearance, twigs, branches and leaves of affected plants have a scorched appearance and in some cases the tip of the shoot bends to display a characteristic 'Shepherd's Crook' sign. Leaves show necrotic patches and fruit is shrivelled and turns brown or black. All suspected Fireblight infections should be reported to Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine, (DAFM), via email at [plantandpests@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:plantandpests@agriculture.gov.ie) and should include pictures



# Fireblight is now a real concern

of the plants. Initial diagnostic tests are carried out by DAFM inspectors who will visit onsite and who carry out lateral flow tests on plant samples similar to those used to detect Covid infections. Confirmatory tests are then carried out in a specialist laboratory.

### Background

Fireblight has been endemic to mainland Europe, the UK and Northern Ireland for many years and is believed to have originally entered through the import of infected Whitethorn plants from other regions. The Republic of Ireland has Protected Zone status with respect to this disease which

means that it has not become officially established here despite the growing number of outbreaks. Protected Zone status, which is governed by EU Directive 200/29/EC confers considerable responsibility upon our officials to identify, isolate and destroy Fireblight infections. However there has been growing disquiet amongst orchard growers, farmers, environmental groups such as Hedgerows Ireland and specialist plant pathologists that the Department is failing in its duties to adequately address the Fireblight threat and that DAFM may be actively considering relinquishing our Protected Zone status. Such a move would be seen



by these groups as unacceptable, effectively abandoning Ireland to uncontrolled Fireblight infection with potentially catastrophic effect upon our landscape and our apple and pear industry. There is also considerable frustration amongst the groups listed above that the risk of imported Fireblight was significantly and unnecessarily increased in November 2023 when, in response to great demand for Whitethorn whips under ACRES, the Department of Agriculture lifted the stipulation that only Irish Provenance/ Irish Origin plants should be used. Despite the oversight of a plant passport system for imported whips, it is believed that the influx of millions of these plants represents an entirely unacceptable risk and that in addition, the use of non native hawthorn carries the drawback of genetic incompatibility with Irish conditions and biodiversity. The importance of hedgerows as stepping stones for species to move across the countryside is reflected in Article 10 of the Habitats Directive. DAFM has responsibilities to act in a manner that is compatible with Ireland's obligations under the Nature Directives.

### What we are asking for

Hedgerows Ireland have been vocal in their criticism of DAFM's approach and

response to the risk of Fireblight gaining an uncontrolled hold in this country and have written to Minister McConalogue on a number of occasions requesting his direct intervention. We have cited the Precautionary Principle enshrined in EU Article 191 which states that when an activity raises threats to the environment, precautionary measures should be taken. Amongst the measures recommended are:

- Reinstatement of the Irish Provenance/ Irish origin requirement for Whitethorn in ACRES.

- A detailed plan to be drawn up by DAFM to address all aspects of Fireblight disease in Ireland with necessary resources allocated to ensure its success.

- A nationwide education campaign to inform landowners, orchard growers and agricultural advisors about the nature of the disease and the steps to be taken when it is suspected.

- A review of the efficacy of Plant Passports and their current implementation which have implications for a range of imported disease threats including xyella, gymnosporangium and others.

- DAFM to actively support Irish nurseries to grow indigenous Whitethorn and other hedgerow plants from Irish seeds

so that we are no longer reliant on imported specimens.

- A further suggestion from Woodlands of Ireland is that there should be a quarantine imposed on imported species prone to Fireblight which would mean holding stock and growing it on in the importers premises for one growing season so that it can be monitored for infection.

- The NPWS to investigate whether DAFM's (in)action is compliant with its obligation under Section 27 of the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations.

The Fireblight disease issue may be seen as symptomatic of a wider threat to plant health and biodiversity in Ireland. Some observers believe that short term commercial interests are being put ahead of potential biodiversity loss caused by insufficient control of imported diseases. In this respect, *Erwinia amylovora* infestations may be seen as representing the 'canary in the mine' for other fungal, bacterial and pest introductions from the EU, UK and further afield. Ireland's island status presents an opportunity to avoid imported disease but this can only be realised by a top down approach with political will and associated investment.



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The 2024 Crann/Coillte Photographic Competition is sponsored by Coillte, Ireland's largest commercial forestry and land solutions company.



**Judge**  
Mark Wilkinson, LIPF

## Bells ring out for Whitaker

Here is what the Shankill based photographer, **Dave Whitaker** has to say about his winning photograph



**T**HE photo was taken in the mid-morning light on August 5, 2016. I had travelled to Lough Key Forest Park to photograph the bluebells because I had seen them the year before when I was without my camera. The morning had been damp and misty but as I arrived the light started to come through. I particularly liked the way the young leaves on the trees showed up their delicate green colour over the carpet of bluebells.

I used a Canon 5DMk3 with settings of F9, 1/50 sec, 47mm, and ISO 400, supported by a RRS tripod to ensure stability in the damp conditions.

As an enthusiastic amateur photographer, I specialise in landscapes and nature photography, though I enjoy experimenting with various genres. I'm a proud member of the Offshoot Photographic Society, based in Cabinteely, Dublin 18. The club is highly active, organising a diverse range of outings and informative evenings for its members, offering great opportunities for learning and collaboration.

**FIRST PRIZE €250**

**BLUEBELL CARPET**

Location: Lough Key Forest Park  
Photographer: **David Whitaker**,  
Shankill, Dublin 18





SECOND PRIZE €100

**CHIMNEY PLANT**

Location: Waterville, Co. Kerry

Photographer: **Gerard Cahalane**

Blackrock, Dublin



**EVENING**

Location:

Mountshannon, Lough  
Derg

Photographer: **Martin  
Smith**

Ennis, Clare





THIRD PRIZE €50

**HIDDEN HOUSE**

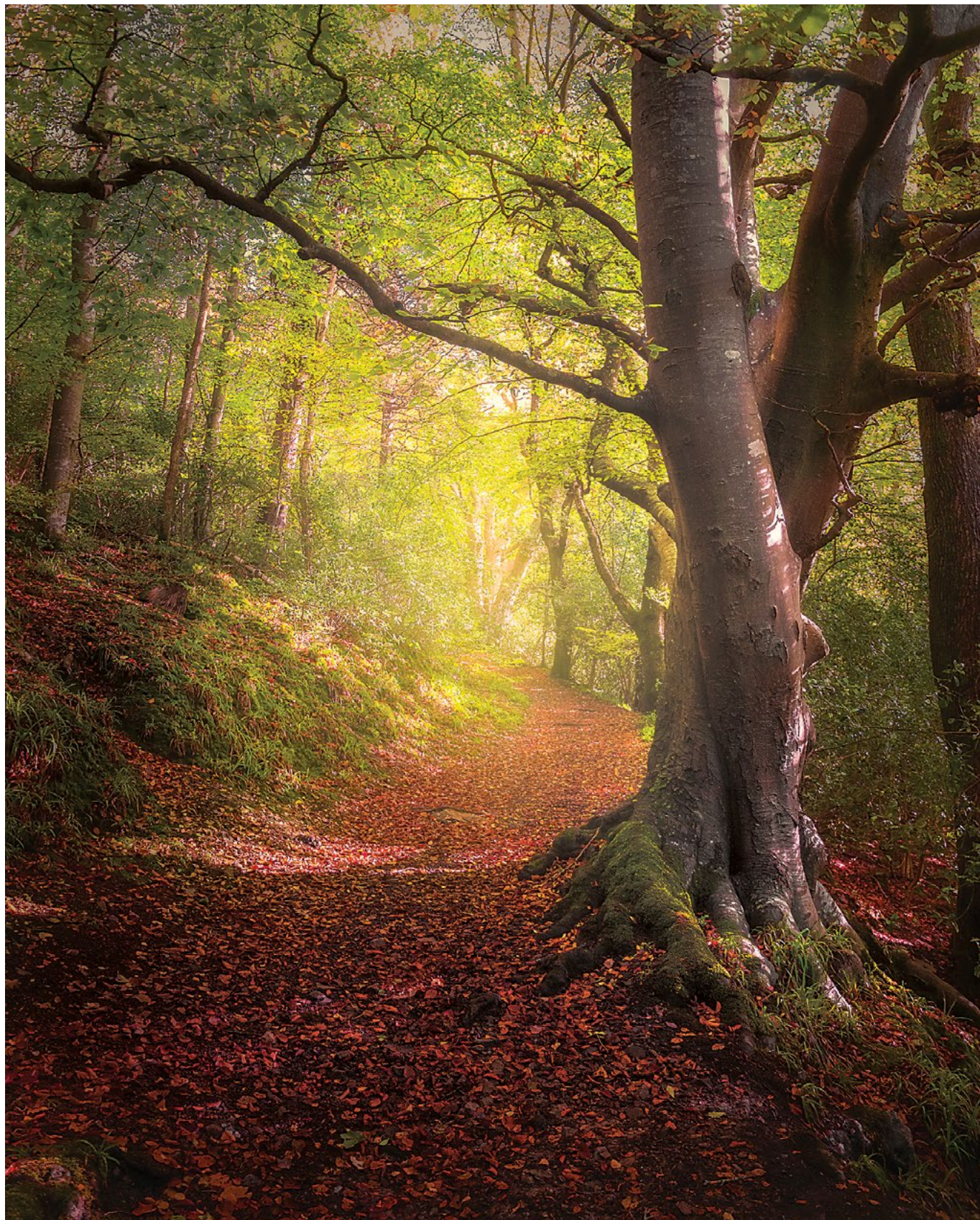
Location: Villerstown, Waterford

Photographer: **Tracy James**

Dungarvan, Waterford







**LEAF WALK**

Location: Glen of the Downs,  
Wicklow

Photographer: **Aoife Hester**  
Bray, Wicklow



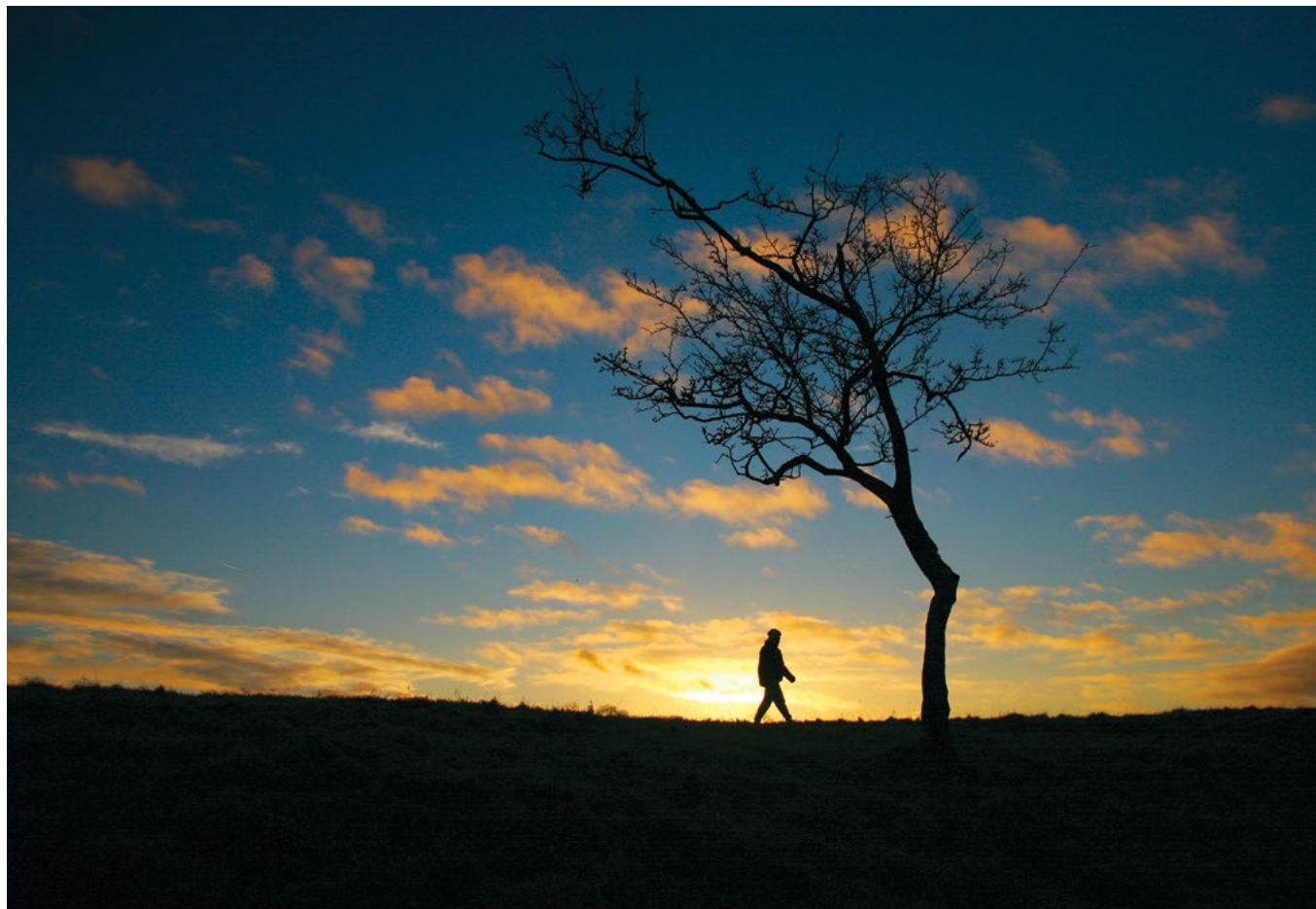
**PURPLE MAZE**

Location: Powerscourt  
Photographer: **Kieran O'Loughlin**, Kilmacanogue, Wicklow

**LONE RANGER**

Location: Dunboyne, Meath  
Photographer: **Elizabeth Murphy**, Meath





**PHONE PHOTO  
WINNER €50**

**SUNSET**

Location: Phoenix Park  
Photographer: **Robbie Butler**  
Prosperous, Kildare



**TRUNK**

Location: Powerscourt  
Photographer: **Kieran O'Loughlin**  
Kilmacanogue, Wicklow

**AUTUMN IN WICKLOW**

Location: Enniskerry  
Photographer: **David Whitaker**  
Shankill, Dublin







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# Crann in schools!

## Education news for Autumn 2024 and the school year ahead

by JAMES LOWRY

**C**RANN'S education programme for schools around the country is burst back to life this term with school visits taking place all across Ireland.

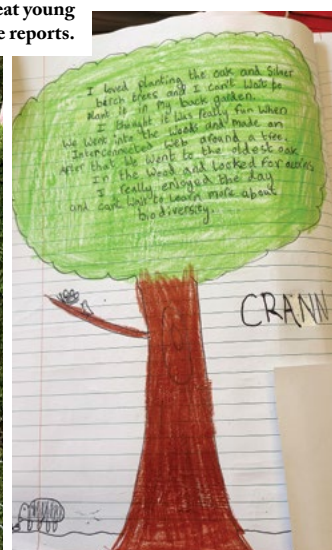
As Crann said a very fond farewell to Dale Treadwell our intrepid outdoors educator and botanist of many years as he returned to his homeland in Australia earlier this year, James Lowry took up the baton of co-ordinating Crann's marvelous educational mission. James is a primary school teacher of 20 years' experience with a passion for outdoor learning and trees.

So far James has visited Scoil Bhríde in Tullamore and Ballyhass NS in Cork, with many more school visits planned this term before December. Dysart NS in Westmeath, Kilrickle NS in Galway and Holy Rosary School in Tallaght are the other schools all set for the Crann outdoor learning and tree planting workshops this year.

Children from all class levels participate in an exciting outdoor adventure to explore and learn more about the wonders of nature in their school environment. The day concludes with the children getting their hands in the good earth as they learn how to plant native Irish trees around their school grounds and can also take home a native sapling for planting. They start with some forest school-themed activities such as a mini habitat survey, the 'Interconnectedness Game', an insect safari and also how to create your own art materials and paint-brush from the natural world and bio-based materials.



Here are pupils of Ballyhass NS enjoying their first Crann Day! Well done to these great young reporters for their nice reports.



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## Forestry Programme 2023-2027 Afforestation Grant and Premium Rates

Forest type	Planting option	Description	Grant/ha (excluding fencing)	Annual Premium for farmers (ha)
<b>1</b>	Native forests	Plant a forest with a mix of native tree species.	<b>€6,744</b>	<b>€1,103</b> for 20 years
<b>2</b>	Forests for water	Protect water bodies by planting a native tree forest.	<b>€6,744</b>	<b>€1,142</b> for 20 years
<b>3</b>	Forest creation on public lands	Scheme for public bodies to plant new native forests.	n/a for farmers	n/a for farmers
<b>4</b>	NeighbourWoods	Create a forest that's open to the public.	<b>€10,200</b>	<b>€1,142</b> for 20 years
<b>5</b>	Emergent forest	Enhance rewilding and emergent native forests.	<b>€2,500</b>	<b>€350</b> for 20 years
<b>6</b>	Pure Broadleaves – oak or beech	Plant pure oak or beech forests for timber.	<b>€6,744</b>	<b>€1,037</b> for 20 years
<b>7</b>	Other Broadleaves	Plant a mix of faster growing broadleaf species.	<b>€4,314</b>	<b>€973</b> for 20 years
<b>8</b>	Agroforestry	Silvopastoral systems (trees and grass)	<b>€8,555</b>	<b>€975</b> for 10 years
<b>9</b>	Seed orchards	Plant seed orchards and seed production areas.	<b>€10,000</b>	<b>€1,142</b> for 20 years
<b>10</b>	Continuous cover forestry	Create a continuous cover forest system with conifer and broadleaf trees.	<b>€5,421</b>	<b>€912</b> for 20 years
<b>11</b>	Mixed high forests: conifer, 20% broadleaves	Plant a diverse conifer forest for timber production with 20% broadleaf species.	<b>€4,452</b>	<b>€863</b> for 20 years
<b>12</b>	Mixed high forests with mainly spruce, 20% broadleaves	Plant a mainly spruce forest for timber production with 20% broadleaf species.	<b>€3,858</b>	<b>€746</b> for 20 years
<b>NTA 1</b>	Native tree area scheme - 1ha, no licence required, but approval from the department is necessary	Creation of small native forests.	<b>€6,744</b>	<b>€2,206</b> for 10 years
<b>NTA 2</b>		Creation of native forests for water protection.	<b>€6,744</b>	<b>€2,284</b> for 10 years

To find out how much you could be paid under the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027, check out the Forestry and Fencing Payments Calculator at:

<https://www.gov.ie/ForestryPaymentsCalculator>



# Native Tree Area Scheme

## Making it easier to plant trees

Forest type	Planting option	Description	Grant/ha (excluding fencing)	Annual Premium for farmers (ha)
NTA 1	Up to 1 hectare, subject to Department approval (no licence required).	Creation of small native forests.	€6,744	€2,206 for 10 years
NTA 2	Up to 1 hectare, subject to Department approval (no licence required).	Creation of native forests for water protection.	€6,744	€2,284 for 10 years

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