

Local communities

Actions to help pollinators



All-Ireland
Pollinator Plan

National
Biodiversity
Data Centre



Documenting Ireland's Wildlife

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The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan



The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is a framework bringing together different sectors across the island of Ireland to create a landscape where pollinators can survive and thrive. Its implementation is coordinated by the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

About this guide:

This guide is aimed at groups who are interested in making their community pollinator friendly such as Tidy Towns, Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, Green Communities, community gardens, residents' associations, and local wildlife, environmental, or youth groups.

The following pages will explain how your community can help pollinators through a series of evidence-based actions. All recommendations are backed up by science and have been developed from what we know about pollinators and their needs.

No matter the size of your community, you can help make a difference. The actions in this guide can be applied to public and private land alike.

These actions are inexpensive, and some may even save money. The more actions you can take the better,

but you do not need to do them all to help pollinators. You can choose the actions that are realistic for your community and the resources available to you.

At the back of this guide you will find an Actions for Pollinators checklist. This is an optional tool to help you keep track of your progress and identify further areas to focus on.

For more information on these recommendations and to find further resources, visit the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan website: www.pollinators.ie





What are pollinators?

Pollinators are insects that transfer pollen between plants. They visit flowers for nectar which gives them energy, and pollen which gives them protein. In doing so, they fertilise plants and help them reproduce.

On the island of Ireland, most insect pollination is carried out by bees, and to a lesser extent insects like hoverflies and moths.

Why are pollinators important?

Without pollinators, many plants would not exist. Globally, 100 crops provide 90% of the world's food. Of these, 71 are pollinated by bees. On the island of Ireland, insects pollinate more than three quarters of our wild plants, providing food and shelter for birds and mammals and contributing to healthy ecosystems. They are also responsible

for the healthy yields of many crops, fruits, and vegetables such as apples, berries, tomatoes, and pumpkins.

We need pollinators to maintain a nutritious food supply; to nourish our health and wellbeing; to support the livelihoods of our farmers; to continue growing our own food; and to protect biodiversity. And of course, pollinators deserve a landscape that supports them for their own sake.



Who are our pollinators in Ireland?

On the island of Ireland, we have one 'managed' pollinator, the honey bee, and over 100 different types of wild bee. 20% of wild bees are bumblebees and 80% are solitary bees. Research tells us that we need an abundance and diversity of wild bees as well as healthy managed honey bees to pollinate crops and wild plants.



Early Bumblebee

Bumblebees

Bumblebees have fat, furry bodies. They are important pollinators of plants like strawberries and tomatoes. They make their nests on the ground, hidden in long grass often at the base of hedgerows.

Bumblebees live in a colony with a queen, female workers, and males. Queen bumblebees hibernate over winter and emerge in spring to begin their colony. In late summer/autumn, mated new queens need to fatten up before going into hibernation, while all the other bumblebees, including the old queen, die off. To complete this lifecycle, it is vital that they have access to food from February through to October.

Solitary bees

Solitary bees are the largest group of wild bees on the island of Ireland. They come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and some of them look like wasps or flies. Unlike bumblebees and honey bees, they nest alone.

Solitary bees emerge from hibernation in spring, and make a nest by burrowing into bare soil, in holes in wood or hollow stems, depending on the species. The female lays fertilised eggs and leaves a supply of pollen beside each one. Then the adult females and males die, the eggs hatch and the larvae eat the food supply before overwintering in a cocoon to emerge the following spring.

Solitary bees are very efficient pollinators. One Red Mason solitary bee can do the work of over one hundred honey bees.



Orange-legged
Furrow Bee



Dark European Honey bee

Honey bees

There is one native honey bee species in Ireland, and it is not currently in decline. Honey bees live in hives and are usually looked after by beekeepers who make sure they are healthy and have enough to eat, especially in the winter. They make honey from nectar and store it in the hive as a source of food for when it's too wet or cold to go outside.

Honey bees are very efficient foragers, and too many hives in the landscape can create competition for food, putting pressure on our struggling wild bees (bumblebees and solitary bees).

Endangered bees

One third of Ireland's wild bee species are threatened with extinction from our island. They include bumblebees like the Great Yellow Bumblebee, the Shril Carder Bee, and the Large Carder Bee. Many solitary bees are also endangered, like the Northern Colletes.

The National Biodiversity Data Centre has developed resources on some of these bees for communities where they are found. These resources can be downloaded for free from the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan website.



Great Yellow Bumblebee

100+

Different types of wild bee

20%

Bumblebee species



80%

Solitary bee species



Only 1

Honey bee species



Why are pollinators in trouble?



Research shows that pollinators are in decline. This is mainly because we've drastically reduced the habitats that provide them with food and shelter. Other factors include pesticides, pests and diseases, and climate change.

To help them, we need to ensure pollinators have food, shelter, and safety from chemicals.

Food

Hunger is the main reason for pollinator declines. Wild bees rely solely on pollen and nectar. They don't make honey, so have no way of storing food. Pollinators need to have access to a range of different flowers from February right through to October. Native flowers are best, particularly native wildflowers, trees, and hedgerow plants.

Shelter

Pollinators need the right habitats to lay their eggs, raise their brood, and complete their lifecycles. Most bees don't live in hives - they nest in long grass (often at the base of hedgerows), in tunnels in bare soil, or existing cavities in dry stone walls, masonry or wood.



Bare soil for solitary bee nesting

Safety from chemicals

Certain chemicals like pesticides can kill, harm and disorientate pollinators. Insecticides harm them directly, and herbicides poison the wildflowers they depend on for food. It is important that we ensure pollinators have safety from chemicals by ending our use of harmful pesticides.

A manicured landscape which is mown and sprayed regularly might look tidy to us, but it squeezes out nature and puts these important insects at risk. If we want to protect crops and wild plants and ensure they are still here for future generations, we need to create a joined-up network of diverse, flower-rich habitats to support pollinators. This requires all of us to act, from councils to local communities; farmers to gardeners; businesses to schools.

Fortunately, there are simple, affordable ways we can manage our communities to support pollinators and people. The following actions will tell you everything you need to know about how to help these important insects.

Actions to help pollinators

A

Identify and protect existing areas that are good for pollinators

Most local communities have areas that are already helping pollinators.

The most important first step is to identify and protect these areas so they can continue to provide support.

▶ ACTION 1

Protect existing sources of food and shelter

Create a map of existing areas that are already good for pollinators and biodiversity. These might include flowering hedgerows, patches of wildflowers on waste ground, small wild areas with bramble/ivy (food sources) and bare earth banks and dry stone walls (nesting habitat).

Plan how you will protect these areas. You could even get an ecologist to conduct a biodiversity survey in your local area and provide tailored advice for managing it. To find out how to do this, and learn about funding options, talk to your local Heritage or Biodiversity Officer.

Learn how to identify pollinators using the tools and resources on the National Biodiversity Data Centre website, including a free online course in identifying common Irish bumblebees.

Find out which pollinators have already been spotted in your local area using the Biodiversity Maps website: maps.biodiversityireland.ie

If you have rare species such as the Large Carder Bee, Northern Colletes, or Great Yellow Bumblebee, you can find specific guidelines for protecting them on the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan website.



B

Mow less in grassy areas

If you have areas of grass, mowing less allows wildflowers such as Clovers, Knapweed and Bird's-foot-trefoil to naturally appear over time. This is the most cost-effective way of providing food for pollinators and other insects.

The following actions can be carried out side-by-side, transforming an expanse of grass into a mosaic of flowering areas of different heights. If some areas are used by people, you can frame these areas with longer grass, or mow a path to show it is being managed deliberately.

Suitable areas could include parks, roadside verges, pavement verges, greenways, roundabouts, off-road walking/cycle routes, waterway towpaths, housing estates, school grounds, hospital grounds, and old graveyards. In some cases, managing these spaces might involve working with local authorities or NGOs. In all cases, make sure you choose your space carefully and consider the needs of your community.

▶ ACTION 2

Create a long-flowering meadow

Identify areas in your local community where you could allow long-flowering meadows to grow.

Long-flowering meadows are grassy areas that are cut once a year. This type of management allows wildflowers to bloom naturally and creates undisturbed nesting areas for Bumblebees and other insects. Over the years, the meadow will become more flower-rich with local wildflowers, all without spending money on wildflower seeds.

Goal: Manage a long-flowering meadow of at least 40m². If you don't have an area this large, try managing several smaller areas in this way.



How to create a long-flowering meadow

1 Choose the right location

- This is very important. Choose a sunny, open location with low soil fertility. If the site is on public land, you will need permission from the local authority and public support.
- Make sure the area is accessible for mowing and is suitable for longer grass (has a low risk of litter and dog fouling). Ensure you have a plan for dealing with the grass cuttings in September.



2 Manage your long-flowering meadow or margin properly

- Remove larger, fast-growing plants (Docks, Nettles, Ragwort, Thistles) between March and August to prevent them from dominating.
- Cut in September and remove the grass. Flower-rich meadows need low soil fertility. Removing grass cuttings reduces soil fertility over time.
- Communicate your actions in public areas. Use signage to explain your management is deliberate. Free signage templates are available on the resources page of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan website.
- Keep the outside edge of your meadow short to show deliberate management. Cut paths through the grass so people can enjoy the meadow.
- Leave small sections entirely uncut and rotate these each year. This provides a habitat for overwintering insects and mammals to nest.

3 Be patient and manage human expectations

- A long-flowering meadow takes time to develop and can look untidy to humans at times. Be patient and manage each stage properly. Don't expect your meadow to become flower-rich immediately but be assured that it will help biodiversity above and below ground from the very beginning.

In late summer, you could harvest local wildflower seed to sow in trays and grow-on as small plug plants to add to your meadow in spring and autumn. See website: How-to guide: Collecting and using pollinator friendly wildflower seed

▶ ACTION 3

Create a short-flowering meadow

Identify areas of grass that could be cut on a 4-6-weekly rotation to allow Clovers and Bird's-foot-trefoil to flower. These locations could be beside areas of shortly mown grass, a path, or a long-flowering meadow.

Cut on a schedule that suits your community and the equipment that you have. You can mow around where flowers appear, giving them a chance to grow. Be as creative as you like e.g. mowing patterns or spirals.

If grass cuttings are lifted, your short-flowering meadow will gradually become more flower-rich on its own. If you choose to mulch the grass back in, you are repeatedly fertilising the soil, and your meadow will not become flower-rich as the more dominant grasses will outcompete the wildflowers.

Goal: Manage at least one quarter of all grassy areas as short-flowering meadows.



▶ ACTION 4:

Let Dandelions bloom

Dandelions are a vital food source for bees in spring. If you can't create a long-flowering or short-flowering meadow, identify areas of grass where you can delay the first cut of the year until mid-April. This will allow Dandelions to bloom.

Goal: Manage at least half of all grassy areas so that Dandelions are allowed to bloom in spring.

Find out more: How-to guide: Creating and restoring meadows in local communities and gardens



Dandelions



Pollinator-friendly planting

The best food for pollinators is the native Irish flowers they have evolved alongside. These include wildflowers, flowering trees, and hedgerows.

We've already seen that the best way to encourage wildflowers is by reducing mowing. But sometimes it may be necessary to carry out **native planting** of flowering trees and hedgerows.

Another type of planting is known as **ornamental planting**. This is the planting we do in gardens, parks, and in community planters and beds, that might include non-native species.

Non-native species have a role to play in providing pollinators with food, but it is important that we do not do ornamental planting in the wider landscape where native planting or natural restoration are the best ways to create the habitats they need.

It is also important that we ensure the plants are a good source of nectar and pollen. Traditionally, a lot of ornamental planting in communities has included annuals such as Daffodils, Begonia, Primula and Busy Lizzie. Unfortunately, these are not good sources of pollen or nectar and do not provide food for bees and other insects.

There are many other plants that can look attractive whilst also supporting pollinators. You can find lists of native and ornamental pollinator-friendly plants in 'Top Ten Pollinator-friendly Plants for Different Situations' on the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan website.



Native planting:

▶ ACTION 5:

Maintain or plant a native flowering hedgerow

Native hedgerows are important nesting habitats for many creatures including pollinators. They form vital corridors for nature through our sterile modern landscape. Plants like Willow, Hawthorn, and Blackthorn flower in spring and provide an early source of food.

If you already have a native flowering hedgerow, make sure to manage it in a pollinator-friendly way (find out more in our How-to-guide Hedgerows for Pollinators):

- Flowers only grow on older wood. Cut hedgerows every three years (outside the bird nesting season) to encourage flowers for pollinators and fruit for birds.
- Avoid cutting all hedges in the same year or cut one third of the hedge annually. This ensures that part of the hedgerow will always bloom and fruit every year.
- Allow hedges to grow into a natural A-shape profile rather than a neat box shape.

Goal: *Manage at least 50m of native hedgerow for pollinators in your local community. This could be on public or private land.*

▶ ACTION 6

Plant native pollinator-friendly trees

Native trees and shrubs such as Willow, Hawthorn, Rowan, Crab Apple, and Holly support huge numbers of insects including pollinators. Plant a young tree in the autumn or winter or grow them from seed. Make sure your trees are of local provenance (grown from Irish stock, and ideally from local trees).

It is important that you choose the right place to plant a tree. Some habitats are already valuable to biodiversity, so it is best to avoid planting in these areas. They include species-rich grassland, wetlands or areas adjacent to streams, coastal habitats, bogs, heathland, or sites with rare or protected species. Some organisations can help you source native trees for your community. Talk to your local Heritage Officer or Biodiversity Officer to find out more.

Goal: *Maintain or plant at least twenty native pollinator-friendly trees & shrubs in your community, on public or private land.*



Problematic plants: Invasive species should always be removed. Some ornamental species may attract pollinators, but are invasive and should never be introduced e.g., *Buddleja davidii*, *Cotoneaster horizontalis*. If you're not sure, check the Pollinator-friendly Planting Code.



Ornamental planting:

▶ ACTION 7

Plant an orchard of flowering fruit trees

Orchards are great habitats for pollinators, who in turn help them produce fruit. Planting just five fruit trees can provide food and shelter for pollinators and homegrown fruit for you.

Goal: Create at least two orchards in the community, each with at least five fruit trees.



▶ ACTION 8

Add pollinator-friendly bedding plants to containers & hanging baskets

Identify some community planters or hanging baskets where the annual bedding mix could include some pollinator-friendly plants (see page 26).

Goal: Mix pollinator-friendly plants into at least 75% of all containers/ hanging baskets.

▶ ACTION 9

Plant pollinator-friendly bulbs

Planting pollinator-friendly bulbs like Snowdrops, Crocus, and Grape Hyacinth can provide a vital early source of food for pollinators when they emerge from hibernation. Remember that some popular bulbs like Daffodils are not a good source of pollen and nectar.

Goal: Ensure at least 50% of all bulbs planted are pollinator friendly.



▶ ACTION 10

Plant ornamental trees and shrubs

Ornamental trees and shrubs can be a great addition to communities, providing food for pollinators and colour for humans. Add plants like Viburnum, Hebe, Firethorn, and Barberry to planted areas.

Goal: Ensure at least 50% of ornamental trees and shrubs are pollinator friendly and planted in appropriate locations.



▶ ACTION 11

Plant pollinator-friendly perennials

Incorporate pollinator-friendly perennial plants into urban areas to provide food for pollinators from spring through to autumn. Like bulbs, perennials are much more sustainable than annual bedding, as they don't have to be replanted each year. You could work with local authorities to plant pollinator-friendly perennials on roundabouts or add herbs to community planters (see Top Ten pollinator-friendly plants for different situations).

Goal: Create at least three beds of pollinator-friendly perennials, each at least 4m².



A Warning about Wildflower Seed Mixes

The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan does not recommend the use of wildflower seed mixes or 'seed ball' type products. There is no regulation over the content of wildflower seed mixes in Ireland. Many have been found to contain non-native species and can inadvertently introduce invasive species. If you do decide to sow them, keep them to garden settings, and ensure they are native and of Irish origin. Bear in mind that many seed mixes contain annuals and will need to be resown annually. You should never spray existing vegetation with herbicides prior to planting.

D

Provide wild pollinator nesting habitat

Nesting habitat for wild bees (bumblebees and solitary bees) is easy to create. It includes hedgerows, earth banks, and insect hotels. Wild bees live in small colonies, or nest alone, and are entirely focussed on finding enough pollen and nectar to feed themselves and their offspring. They are not aggressive, have no interest in interacting with humans, and do not present any risk to the public.

Bumblebees nest in long grass, often at the base of a hedgerow. About 85% of our solitary bees are mining bees. They nest by making tiny burrows in south/east facing bare earth (soil, sand, clay and peat). The remaining 15% are cavity-nesting bees. They make their nests in existing cavities in south-facing stone walls, masonry, wooden structures, or insect hotels.



▶ ACTION 12

Provide nesting habitat for bumblebees

- 1 Leave areas of undisturbed long grass as nesting sites for bumblebees.
- 2 Make sure the bases of hedgerows are not sprayed with chemicals. This will allow flowering plants like Clovers, Vetches and Knapweed to provide additional food throughout the season and will ensure nesting bees are safe.
- 3 If any vegetation beside and under hedgerows needs to be cut, only do this between September and February to allow bumblebees to nest during the spring and summer.



Goal: Leave at least 20m² of long grass as nesting sites for bumblebees and other insects.

▶ ACTION 13

Provide nesting habitat for mining solitary bees

Mining solitary bees nest in the ground. If you have existing earth banks, visit them on sunny evenings between April and September to see if they are being used by nesting solitary bees. You will see small bees returning laden with yellow pollen. If you are lucky enough to find such nesting areas, protect them. Make sure no chemical sprays are used there. Mark the area on maps and consider putting up a small sign to mark the site as special and under protection.

Create new south or east facing earth banks for mining solitary bees. Once established, scrape vegetation away to maintain the bare soil on an annual basis.

Goal: Manage at least ten bare areas of soil for pollinators, each with an area of at least 50cm².



▶ ACTION 14

Provide nesting habitat for cavity-nesting solitary bees

Where wooden fencing exists in public areas, consider drilling small south or east facing holes for cavity nesting solitary bees. These holes should ideally be 1.5-2m high (or as high as possible), 10cm in depth and 4-10mm diameter (a range of different diameters is best).

Goal: Drill holes in untreated wooden blocks and place these in appropriate locations close to food sources.



Bee hotels: Only a small number of bees (cavity-nesting bees) use bee hotels. If you do decide to buy or build a bee hotel, make sure it is close to a food source, and that it is no bigger than an average-sized bird box to reduce the risk of predators and disease.

Find out more:

How-to-guide
Creating wild
pollinator
nesting habitat



E

Eliminate or reduce the use of pesticides

Pesticides (insecticides, fungicides and herbicides) can kill, harm and disorientate pollinators, either through direct exposure or by poisoning their food.

In some cases pesticides are necessary, for example in the treatment of invasive species like Japanese Knotweed. In other cases, we have fallen into the habit of using these potent chemical cocktails to tidy or sanitise our local areas.

▶ ACTION 15

Eliminate pesticide use

If you can, eliminate pesticide use altogether. Consider manual weeding instead, using organic alternatives, or simply letting Dandelions bloom.

Note: herbicides should still be used on invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed.



▶ ACTION 16

Reduce pesticide use by 50%

If you cannot eliminate pesticides straightaway, start by reducing their use by 50%. You could do this in places where your group is willing to take responsibility for manual weed control. Identify areas that could be spot treated rather than with the use of blanket sprays. Take this action as a step on the journey towards eliminating pesticide use altogether.

For more advice on pesticide alternatives, visit our pesticide pages:
<https://pollinators.ie/pesticide-free-places/>

F

Raise awareness of pollinators in your local area

For the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan to be successful, everyone needs to know about the importance of pollinators and understand why we need to help them. Local communities can play a vital role in spreading the word.

▶ ACTION 17

Promote the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan resources in your community

The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan has published many free resources with advice on actions for pollinators. These include the Junior Pollinator Plan for children, guidelines for schools, farmers, councils, gardens, businesses, sports clubs, faith communities, group water scheme sites, and golf courses.

Also available are pollinator-friendly plant lists, flyers, posters, and signage templates, and several 'how-to' guides with advice on specific topics including how to create wild pollinator nesting habitats and how to create and restore meadows in local communities and gardens.

All resources are freely available to download from the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan website.



▶ ACTION 18

Run at least one pollinator event or project every year in your community

Running a biodiversity event can be a great way of raising awareness and bringing the community together. Why not run a pollinator-friendly plant swap, a local wildflower seed harvesting day, or a biodiversity walk around the local area?

Your project could include delivering pollinator training, creating a mural or art project with a youth group, or helping a local school create a pollinator-friendly garden.



▶ ACTION 19

Work with your local authority and other groups to create wildlife corridors

The more people involved, the better chance we have of creating a landscape where pollinators can survive and thrive. Work with your local authority, local businesses, and other organisations to create a joined-up network of pollinator-friendly habitats across your community.



▶ ACTION 20:

Put up signage

Put up signage explaining the importance of pollinators and how you are managing your area to help them. You can find free templates on the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan website.



G

Tracking progress and receiving recognition

We will only know if all our hard work is paying off if we track our progress and record pollinators. You can help do this by using the online mapping system 'Actions for Pollinators', which tracks pollinator-friendly actions across the island.

You can also get involved in a citizen science initiative to help monitor pollinators. These include the All-Ireland Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme, which is used to track changes in bumblebees, and Flower-Insect-Timed Counts, which help us track changes in insect abundance. Both of these schemes are run by the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

▶ ACTION 21

Log your 'Actions for Pollinators' on the online mapping system

The 'Actions for Pollinators' mapping system allows anyone who takes pollinator friendly actions to upload their site and the actions taken there. This helps us track areas providing food, shelter and safety for pollinators in the landscape.

Local communities can use the system to log actions and show the creation of pollinator resources in the area.



▶ ACTION 22

Submit annual Flower-Insect-Timed (FIT) Counts

Pollinating insects are in decline, but we need much more data to be able to track changes in their abundance. You can help by doing a Flower-Insect Timed Count (FIT Count) to collect data on flower-visiting insects. FIT Counts are also a useful tool for measuring changes in your local biodiversity.

FIT Counts are very simple – watch a patch of flowers for 10 minutes and count how many insects visit. Because FIT counts are so simple, and don't require any specialist knowledge, they also make a great activity to do with community groups and schoolchildren.

The easiest way to carry out a FIT Count is to use the free FIT Count app. To find out more, visit: <https://biodiversityireland.ie/surveys/fit-counts/>

▶ ACTION 23

Take part in the Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme

In this scheme, volunteers walk a fixed 1-2km route once a month between March and October and record the diversity and abundance of bumblebees that they see. It is vital for tracking what is happening with wild pollinators in the landscape and can be used to assess the effectiveness of your local actions for pollinators when compared year on year.

Find some keen people and set up at least one Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme walk within your local community. The scheme is run by the National Biodiversity Data Centre who provide full support and training. To find out more, visit: <https://biodiversityireland.ie/surveys/bumblebee-monitoring-scheme/>

▶ ACTION 24:

Enter the Tidy Towns Pollinator Award

If you are a registered Tidy Towns group in the Republic of Ireland, you can enter the Local Authority Pollinator Award in the national Tidy Towns competition. This Special Award uses the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan recommendations to give recognition to communities who are taking actions for pollinators.



Three Things to ‘Bee’ Aware of

A Honey bee hives

On the island of Ireland, we have one native honey bee. Most live in hives managed by beekeepers. While the honey bee is an important pollinator, studies have shown if we have too many honey bee hives in the landscape, they can compete for food with wild pollinators who are already struggling.

You should only get a honey bee hive if you want to start a new hobby, but it's not an action for biodiversity, or if you want to support wild bees. If you are thinking of getting a hive of honey bees, please get in touch with your local beekeeping association to learn how to keep healthy honey bees, and to avoid spreading disease to our struggling wild pollinators.

B Wildflower seed mixes

There is no regulation over the content of wildflower seed mixes and ‘seed ball’ type products in Ireland. Many have been found to contain non-native species (such as Corncockle) and they can inadvertently introduce invasive species. They are usually colourful mixes that are attractive to humans, but they won't necessarily result in the native wildflower meadow that you can create by reducing mowing.

If you do decide to sow wildflower seed mixes, keep them to garden settings, ensure they are native and of Irish origin,

and never use them where natural habitat restoration is possible. To enhance your long-flowering meadow, you could collect and sow seeds from local wildflowers.



C ‘Gardening nature’

Think carefully about how you are planting different areas of your community. Keep non-native ‘ornamental’ plants to gardens and parks. In the wider landscape, stick to natural restoration and native planting where appropriate.

Pollinator-friendly Plants

Pollinators need to be able to feed on pollen and nectar from a range of flowers from early spring to autumn.

Flowers rich in pollen and nectar are known as 'pollinator-friendly'. It's important to always prioritise increasing the numbers of **native** plants (trees, shrubs, and wildflowers). These are the plants our pollinators have evolved alongside, and so are perfectly adapted to give them what they need.

In our gardens, parks, and urban spaces however, we can choose non-native plants (or '**ornamental**' species) that are pollinator friendly to help provide additional sources of food. Whilst not as valuable as native species, ornamental plants can still be an important food source for pollinators in the right settings. However, they should be kept to gardens, parks, and containers, and not planted in the wider landscape.

The lists below are not exhaustive – they are examples of common pollinator-friendly plants that you might consider for your local community. More complete lists can be found on the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan website.



Crocus

Native meadow plants



Native hedgerows



Flowering time:

☐ Spring ☀ Summer 🍂 Autumn ❄ Winter

Ornamental summer bedding plants: hanging baskets



Ornamental bulbs



Flowering time:

☀️ Spring ☀️ Summer 🍂 Autumn ❄️ Winter

Frequently Asked Questions

Where can I find out more?

The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan website is full of free resources, guidelines, and articles to help you learn more about pollinators and how to help them. Visit pollinators.ie

Where can my community group find funding for this type of work?

There are several funding options for local community groups who want to do work for biodiversity. These vary depending on where you live. Ask your local Heritage Officer or Biodiversity Officer for advice on what is available locally.

Who can help us take the right actions?

If you're unsure about the right actions to take, your local Heritage Officer or Biodiversity Officer might be able to help you find an ecologist who can come and survey your site. You can also find plenty of guidance on the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan website.

Can the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan give a talk or workshop for my group or event?

Unfortunately, the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is a very small team and we don't have the capacity to deliver bespoke talks and workshops. However, you can find several recorded talks on the website, and we try to run at least one community-focused event each year.

How can I get hard copies of your signs and resources?

There are many resources including signage templates, plant lists, posters and how-to guides available to download for free from the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan website. You can print any of our resources at home, or send PDFs of the signage templates to your local printing shop to be printed on weather-proof material making the sign suitable for outdoor use.

Unfortunately, the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan does not have the funding for the printing or distribution of hard copy resources. You may be able to request hard copies of resources through your local Heritage Officer or Biodiversity Officer, however, it is not guaranteed that they will have them in stock.

Community Pollinator Calendar

January

Make a pollinator plan for your community

Wild pollinators are hibernating and don't need our help just yet, but you can use this time to get prepared. Create a map of existing areas that are already good for pollinators and biodiversity, and start to plan your actions for the coming year.



February

Create solitary bee nesting sites

Prepare nesting habitat for mining bees by exposing south/east-facing banks. Drill holes in untreated wooden blocks and place these in appropriate locations close to food sources. Cut back existing pollinator-friendly perennials to encourage this year's growth.

March

Engage your community

Start raising awareness of pollinators and biodiversity in your community. Plan a biodiversity event or project. Consider taking part in the Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme which begins this month.



April

Let Dandelions be

The humble Dandelion is a super food for pollinators. Encourage your community to let them grow to provide a vital early source of food.

May

No Mow May

Put away the lawnmower for No Mow May, and let native wildflowers like Clover and Birds-foot Trefoil pop up naturally to feed the bees. Get the community involved, hold competitions for the best No Mow May lawn.

Date for the diary: World Bee Day, 20th May.



June

Choose Pollinator-friendly plants

Plant nectar and pollen-rich plants in your community. Why not start edible containers of herbs and vegetables, or a sensory garden full of pollinator-friendly plants?

Date for the diary: Tidy Towns Local Authority Pollinator Award deadline (Republic of Ireland).

July

Plant pollinator-friendly hanging baskets

Floral displays in hanging baskets and containers are looking their best at this time of year. Choose pollinator-friendly varieties for gorgeous summer colour, like Trailing lobelia, Bidens and Bacopa.



August

Collect wildflower seeds

It is important to only plant native wildflower seed of local provenance. Collect seeds from your long-flowering meadows. They can then be grown on in pots and added as plugs to your meadow areas.

September

Mow your meadows

Now is the time to cut your long-flowering meadows. Make sure you remove the grass clippings. This reduces the fertility of the soil and will make your meadow more wildflower-rich. Find free meadow signage on our website to help raise awareness of what native meadows look like at different times of year.



October

Plant bee-friendly bulbs

Plant pollinator-friendly bulbs such as Crocus and Snowdrop now, to flower in February/March. This will give early bumblebees a good start to the new year. Bulb planting is also a great way to get the community involved.



November

Plant native hedgerows or trees

Plant pollinator-friendly native hedgerows and trees such as Blackthorn, Crab apple and Willow, or a community orchard. Make sure you choose the right tree, right space, and right place.

December

Track your actions and review your year

Keep a record of the work you have done across the year for pollinators and biodiversity. Map your actions on the Actions for Pollinators online map and see what other work has been happening in your area.

Communities Actions For Pollinators Checklist

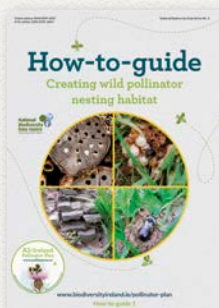
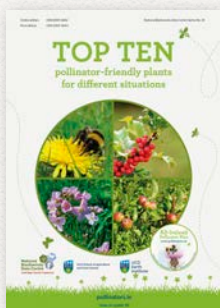
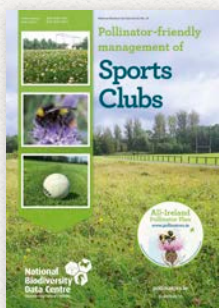
This checklist is an optional self-assessment tool to be used alongside the recommendations in this guideline. It is designed to:

- Help you choose and prioritise actions that are suitable for your community.
- Show how valuable each action is compared to the others.
- Provide a 'pollinator-friendly score threshold' to aim for (70 points)
- Help you track your progress over time, scoring your community year on year as your work develops

ACTIONS		Max score	Yearly score
A: Identify and protect existing areas that are good for pollinators		15	
1	Protect existing sources of food and shelter		
	Create a map showing existing areas that are already good for pollinators and biodiversity e.g. native flowering trees, hedgerows, and wild areas.	2	
	Have a plan to protect these existing areas for biodiversity.	5	
	Find out which pollinators have already been spotted in your local area using Biodiversity Maps. If you have rare species e.g., Large Carder Bee, follow the Pollinator Plan's specific guidelines for protecting these species.	3	
	Have an ecologist conduct a biodiversity survey in your local area and provide tailored advice for managing it.	5	
B: Mow less in grassy areas		20	
2	Create a long-flowering meadow		
	Manage a long-flowering meadow of at least 40m ² . This can be across more than one location (2 points per 10 m ²).	8	
3	Create a short-flowering meadow		
	Manage at least one quarter of all grassy areas as short-flowering meadows.	8	
4	Let the Dandelions Bloom		
	Manage at least half of all grassy areas so that Dandelions are allowed to bloom in spring.	4	
C: Pollinator-friendly planting		20	
Native planting:			
5	Maintain or plant a native flowering hedgerow		
	Manage at least 50m of native hedgerow for pollinators in your community. This could be on public or private land (1 point per 10m).	5	
6	Plant native pollinator-friendly trees		
	Maintain or plant at least twenty native pollinator-friendly trees & shrubs in your community, on public or private land. (1 point per 5 trees/shrubs).	4	

Ornamental planting:			
7	Plant an orchard of flowering fruit trees		
	Create at least two orchards in the community, each with at least five fruit trees.	3	
8	Add pollinator-friendly bedding plants to containers & hanging baskets		
	Mix pollinator-friendly plants into at least 75% of all containers/hanging baskets.	1	
9	Plant pollinator-friendly bulbs		
	Ensure at least 50% of all bulbs planted are pollinator friendly.	2	
10	Plant ornamental trees and shrubs		
	Ensure at least 50% of ornamental trees and shrubs are pollinator friendly and planted in appropriate locations.	2	
11	Plant pollinator-friendly perennials		
	Create at least three beds of pollinator-friendly perennials, each at least 4m ² .	3	
D: Provide wild pollinator nesting habitat		5	
12	Provide nesting habitat for bumblebees		
	Leave at least 20m ² of long grass as nesting sites for bumblebees and other insects. (1 point per 10m ²).	2	
13	Provide nesting habitat for mining solitary bees		
	Manage at least ten areas of bare soil, each with an area of at least 50cm ² .	2	
14	Provide nesting habitat for cavity-nesting solitary bees		
	Drill holes in untreated wooden blocks or put small bee hotels in appropriate locations close to food sources.	1	
E: Eliminate or reduce the use of pesticides		20	
		max	
15	Eliminate pesticide use (note that herbicides can still be used on invasive species)	20	
16	Reduce pesticide use by 50% as a step towards total elimination	10	
F: Raise awareness of pollinators in your local area		10	
17	Promote the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan resources in your community	1	
18	Run at least one pollinator event or project every year in your community	2	
19	Work with your local authority and other groups to create wildlife corridors	5	
20	Put up signage	2	
G: Tracking progress and receiving recognition		10	
21	Log your 'Actions for Pollinators' on the online mapping system	5	
22	Submit annual Flower-Insect-Timed (FIT) Counts	2	
23	Take part in the Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme	3	
TOTAL POINTS		100	

This booklet is one of a series of guidelines produced to help different sectors take actions under the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. For more information and other useful resources, please see www.pollinators.ie



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About the National Biodiversity Data Centre

The National Biodiversity Data Centre is a national organisation that collects and manages data to document Ireland's wildlife resource, and to track how it is changing. See maps.biodiversityireland.ie

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