

How to protect and enhance natural heritage and biodiversity in your local habitats

Gardens and school grounds

- Try to plant native species of flowers, grass and trees which are best suited to your soil and landscape and local wildlife.
- Use only plants and seeds that have been grown in Ireland and if possible from your local area.
- Avoid planting invasive exotic species such as Japanese knotweed or rhododendron. If you prune or remove invasive plants or clear excess oxygenating plants from your pond, compost or burn them to make sure they cannot invade nearby land or waterways.
- Aim for a mixture of species of plants to appeal to a range of animals.
- Choose plants which are rich in nectar and pollen to attract insects
- Choose plants with plenty of berries and seeds to provide food for birds
- Try to maintain or create a variety of habitats such as a stone wall, a flower area, a hedge, a pond and a mini woodland.
- Put up bat and bird boxes and feeding tables.
- Make sure to clean bird feeders regularly. Germs or rotten food picked up at feeders can be lethal to small birds.
- Site your feeder where the cat cannot get at it. Just for good measure, but a bell on the cat.
- Provide hibernators for hedgehogs in the form of a leaf pile in a quiet sheltered corner.
- A pile of logs will attract all sorts of creepy crawlies which are food for hedgehogs, birds and other animals.
- Bundles of twigs or straws provide nesting and hibernation spots for a range of insects including ladybirds and bumble bees.
- Use only peat free compost or make your own. For best results, get some good advice about composting from someone who knows what they are doing before you start.
- Slug pellets and weed killer are very harmful to birds and hedgehogs. Try to use natural methods of pest and weed control.
- Don't be afraid! There are plenty of good books and information sources available. Wildlife gardening has become increasingly popular in recent years and you will find that many garden centres now stock native wildflower seeds and plants.

Hedgerows

Important species: Birds, bats and other mammals, insects, flowering plants, fruiting shrubs, mosses, fungi and lichens

- With certain exemptions (NOT including local community groups) the Wildlife Amendment Act (2000) prohibits the cutting of hedges during the period 1st March to 31st August (inclusive)
- Where necessary, trim or lay while dormant, from the beginning of September to the end of February
- To keep the base dense, trim hedges so that they are wider at the base and narrower at the top
- Hedges that are trimmed every year produce much less flowers and fruit
- Avoid the use of herbicides within 1.5m of hedge
- Store grass clippings away from base of hedgerow

Trees and woodlands

Important species: Birds, bats and other mammals, insects, mosses, fungi, lichens

- With certain exemptions (NOT including local community groups) the Wildlife Amendment Act (2000) prohibits the cutting of hedges during the period 1st March to 31st August (inclusive).
- Where necessary, cut while dormant, from the beginning of September to the end of February
- Use appropriate native species (see chart)
- Groups of trees are preferable to single trees
- Do not use herbicides, use tree tubes as an alternative
- Do not use fungicides
- Put up bat and/or bird boxes
- Leave some standing deadwood and log piles

Stone walls and bridges, derelict buildings and monuments, graveyards

Important species: Lichens, mosses, ferns, bats, birds, insects

- Leave mosses, lichens and ferns on walls etc
- No herbicides
- Do not use concrete to re-point
- Do not remove render
- Keep ivy in check (do not remove)
- Plant ivy and honeysuckle on modern concrete walls
- Do not remove mosses and lichens from headstones or walls
- Set aside an area for nature conservation that is only cut once or twice a year
- When cutting grass close to headstones use a hand-held clippers
- Do not use fungicides
- Do not use herbicides at the base of headstones or walls
- Keep old trees free of ivy by hand weeding

Grassland – road verges, parks

Birds and insects

- Leave grass in verges on outskirts of town less tightly mown
- Do not use herbicides or fungicides
- Grass clippings to be removed to an appropriate area for composting
- Leave areas for wildflowers, nettles etc
- Reduce mowing regime

Rivers and canals

Fish, insects, birds, snails, mammals, undisturbed grassland

- Do not use herbicides
- Leave areas of vegetation at bank side
- Create log piles
- Do not introduce plants

Lakes, ponds, ditches and wet areas

Frogs, newts, insects, waterfowl

- Do not use herbicides
- Retain at least 2m strip of bank side vegetation
- If planting trees and shrubs, check for appropriate species
- Waterways Ireland must be consulted for works on canals