

A PLANTING SEASON LIKE NO OTHER



A workshop on carbon capture with Professor Yvonne Buckley and Dr John Devaney, Trinity College Dublin

ORLA FARRELL reports on a busy year, including progress on the quest to plant a tree for every school child in the country – and the world's first virtual planting, on Zoom!

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

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

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

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

nature on their doorstep now that we are confined to base and there is a new value placed on the importance of clean air and a clean environment. Our very-washed hands attest to this!

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





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

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



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

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

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

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

so nearby towns were also keen to join.

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



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



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

of planting a ceremonial tree – in that case of the lemon variety.

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

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

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



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

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

Our Patagonia Power Planting event in the Shankill community attracted an exciting film crew following an approach by Emmy Award-nominated Kate Bradbury and her partner Emre who have made several films for National Geographic. The children of St Anne's in Shankill were delighted to oblige and not only cheerfully smiled for the

cameras on a freezing cold and wet day, they invented a tree-planting dance to keep warm in a performance for a filming drone. You can see our resulting film on www.easytrees.ie where we are building up a useful archive of films covering why we plant and how to plant as well as suggestions for what to plant (including our 28 native trees series). A special thanks is also due to Mason Hayes Curran who carried out planting at Santry Park Demesne and Docusign who helped local school Coláiste Choilm at Swords Town Park.

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

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

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

CORPORATE ACTIVITIES

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

Some of the companies mentioned in this article have participated in such partnerships with Crann – Trees for Ireland in various ways. We urge our members to be on the alert in identifying likely companies to participate in this form of corporate activity.

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

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

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



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

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



Goresbridge. Athenry took the 'Crann Crown' with 1,000 planted during Science Week and a further 10,000 planted by their Children's Project in February.

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

event!

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

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

home schoolers <https://podcasts.apple.com/ie/podcast/id1505305020>.

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

Thanks to all our tree-mendous supporters. We have proven our ability to adapt in our determination to achieve our million-tree target by 2023.

