

Record tree deliveries all over the country

By ORLA FARRELL

“100,000 TREES planted in the middle of our Level 5 Lockdown?”, I am asked by RTÉ *Nationwide* journalist Valerie Waters, who has come to my Clontarf garden for a National Tree Week feature on the Easy Treesie/Crann project. “And where are all the events?”

I explain. A lengthy cast-list of tree luminaries and enthusiasts starred in nationally-broadcast webinar and Zoom events running throughout Tree Week. On the Wednesday evening I was recording our *Nationwide* interview while in two Zoom rooms at the same time! All our meet-ups were, of course, virtual.

Now here is the magic: for the second year in a row, simultaneous record tree-deliveries took place to local authorities and communities all over the country where socially-distanced planting was carried out following all the guidelines. In their bubbles

and in their pods, people are relishing every chance to be outdoors enhancing our local parklands, community gardens and surroundings. It brings the Easy Treesie tree-planting counter very close to the 200,000 mark by the closing bell of Tree Week (which took place with an Earth Hour cherry tree-planting ceremony back in March – in the dark!).

You may have spotted us celebrating National Tetrapak Tree Day way back at the kick-off to our planting season last autumn? Our delegation presented President Michael D Higgins, Crann Patron, with our 100,000th sapling. A huge thank you to both Coillte, which is making an additional contribution of 100,000 native saplings to our million-tree initiative, and to Trees on the Land who have delivered a second 30,000-tree donation for our 2021 planting programme. Alder and oak, silver and common birch, Scots pine, rowan and whitethorn: what a varied woodland mixture! Add to this the standard and other species supplied to us by voluntary and commercial Irish nurseries and 2021 is already



a record year for our ongoing community planting.

DAY 1. Launch Day dawns sunny and warm. Lusk National School 6th classes were back to school that very week for the first time since Christmas. The excitement of the children being back with their friends could be heard in their cheery laughter as they helped line up trees, spades and watering cans and, of course, PPE: buckets of gloves of all sizes and



patterns from our vast glove-library. I joined 90 children, delighted to be outside to plant a shelterbelt of 150 silver and downy birch backing the willow wall planted earlier to help protect their playground. The Junior School 2nd class added rowan to the mix. I am old friends with this school community, having been on its teaching staff since the year I left college until I departed to restore trees at scale to the Irish landscape fulltime in 2018. And what a school it is with its model tree-planting

template! I had the pleasure of joining the children to plant 1,000 trees for each member of the school ‘family’ the year its state-of-the-art new complex opened. On another picnic day we took a double decker bus to nearby Newbridge House Demesne and planted another 400-sapling Tiny Forest near the children’s playground and farm.

This school merits an award, don’t you think? A sycamore bowl from Blackwater Valley makers, made from a tree downed during Storm Ophelia, was presented to Principal Teacher Paul McComiskey to celebrate their outstanding commitment to enhancing their school with trees. They are joining a tradition of Easy Treesie/Crann Crown Award winners. In addition, the schoolchildren took ownership of three bird houses made by Wellwood, Mitchelstown, specially commissioned in a natural finish to enable the school to serve as Tree Trail signage. Chocolate is central to our MO so there had to be Easter Eggs (rainforest certified). We were celebrating World Forestry Day after all. Since Lusk is our premier market-gardening town,

a planting day is a reason to celebrate local produce. Another old friend – he has supplied our project with apple rewards on planting day picnics and guided walks in the past – local orchard owner David Llewellyn pulls up his van to the school gate as the school bell rings with crates of local red juicy apples and pressed apple juice. And how nice it was to see one of our great photographs in the national media afterwards, capturing the joy of our healthy and happy launch day feature.

DAY 2. My phone hops a little dance across the spreadsheets laid out on the desk as reports come in of the deliveries being received. 11,600 trees arrive in Shankill. The call is to say they are here at the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Council depot with compliments to the great Pat Peters who, with Pat Neville and Mark Carlinn of Coillte, have rolled out a distribution *par excellence*. Crann Director Diarmuid McAree and team are standing by and not an hour has passed when he sends on great pictures of the first batch of trees already in the ground with thanks to the efforts of



Ciara Hanratty, a 6th class pupil from Lusk Senior National school, at a Scots Pine planting ceremony with Crann/Easy Treesie for National Tree Week

Below left: Darryl Pyper-Dill, a 6th class pupil from Lusk Senior National School pictured at the Easy Treesie Planting of Coillte Native Trees for National Tree Week

Below right: Jennifer Umenwa (left) with John Ryan and Deborah Oyedeji, all 6th class pupils from Lusk Senior National School, pictured at the Crann/Easy Treesie event for National Tree Week