



James Nolan, Ballyknockan, Co. Wicklow digs in for National Tree Week as one of the youngest Easy Treesie volunteers.

# Saying THANK YOU with Flowers? We say it with TREES!

ORLA FARRELL brings us up-to-date with the wonderful ongoing work of Easy Treesie and their mission to plant one million trees

**B**EFORE regaling you with the latest escapades of the Easy Treesie planters it is incumbent upon me to acknowledge the contribution of Paddy Smith, our esteemed Crann editor and wonderful mentor. Paddy has done so well in capturing the scope of our project - (planting a million trees with Ireland's million school children and their communities) and telling our story starting with our first Plant-for-the-Planet Tree Academy back in 2017. That was the cold winter day when that first merry band of Climate Justice Ambassadors planted 300 saplings in North Dublin. We are very grateful to him for his journalistic excellence which put a shape to our snowballing story (now at over 330k trees planted!) and wish Paddy every happiness in his well-earned retirement. We are this summer in the safe hands of our new editor Gabriel Bruton and we wish him

continued success with his work on this much-loved publication.

It's Monday morning on National Tree Week, our busiest week of the year and I notice a slight, just a very slight, tickle in my throat. The launch the previous day on a sunny, breezy March Sunday had been my idea of peak fun! The opening event took place in the Botanic Gardens with a Tree Planting Masterclass by its director, Matthew Jebb and his godfather, Thomas Pakenham. On the way, Crann director Mark had made me coffee and toast with honey (from his own beehives) after we loaded up many boxes of the latest Crann magazines from his garage for distribution to the great and the good. Maybe I had picked up a chill? Or was I simply feeling the effects of the dust from deep-cleaning our electric tree-transporting workhorse, the Leaf? We'd had a particularly muddy planting party with Swords Tidy Towns. Well, best do another test all the same.

In dressing gown and slippers, I waited for a single red-line to show.

I'd been just about to suit-up in tree planting attire and wedge the remaining kit for Tree Week between our boxes of magazines into the car; 30 spades, 250 pairs of gloves and of course, for afters, chocolate. The great Pat Peters from the Coillte nurseries in Ballintemple (who also retires this year; a huge thank-you to him and the Coillte team for their tree-mendous support!) had delivered sealed forestry bags with seven different native tree species, to be delicately packed at the end.

My destination? West Cork, to a Junior Infant workshop in a small primary school as part of a wider "Tree of Life" art project sponsored by Biomarin based in Ringaskiddy. From there to Limerick to our great project collaboration at the newly-opened Coláiste Chiaráin with planting to be captured on video by drone. And after that to Connemara and the celebration of the GAA Green Clubs'

45,000 sapling-project at their Connacht Centre of Excellence in Ballyhaunis. Then back to do a webinar at the invitation of the Tree Council for "Film Friday". Finally, a chance to thank all these planters in person after two years of Covid restrictions. We'd already met many of the Dublin volunteers as these restrictions were lifted and had the pleasure of supporting many planting parties and team up with some new and existing collaborators such as Life Terra, One Tree Planted, Trees in the City and the Swords Woodland Association. Everything we do is in fact a collaboration and I was looking forward, with great excitement to meeting our friends across the country.

Oh I must sit down! After evading the dreaded Covid for two solid years of all the days to find myself looking at those two bold red lines! Now of course every week is Tree Week with us, every day is Tree Day for that matter. But what timing!

I register my test result on the App, my husband at least tests negative and I phone those I have met recently. Crann vice-chairman Mark had brewed me that coffee in his lovely conservatory; he reports feeling fine. I'd also enjoyed a hot chocolate with Crann director, Diarmuid, in the Botanic Gardens' Garden café; he too felt fine. Not so our children though and some of their friends we'd been on a trip with the week before. Oh dear. Well this is what we have all been living through so like everyone else there was nothing for it but to isolate myself and see how the show might go on.

First call is to our chairman, Peadar. He kindly agrees on the spot to head to Limerick to congratulate all the children and their school community there who will be finishing their 2,000-tree project. This works out very well because we are sending this school an Award of three seven-metre lime trees in recognition of their Trojan efforts and now Peadar can scope out the best spot for them in keeping with our right-tree-right-place mantra!

What of the Cork Infants? Well guess what, it turns out that we can all talk on Zoom! What of Connemara? Éanna Ni Lamhna, Tree Council President and Brendan Fitzsimons, CEO will be there to congratulate the GAA - so like magic all is sorted. The webinar? Let's postpone until Biodiversity Week and who knows, we might even get a sponsor for it then... (we did! Thank you, Irish Environmental Network! Watch our "Trees on the Farm" webinar with Dr. Rory Harrington of VESI on our YouTube channel). We have a superb team of Easy Treesie volunteer helpers and they worked so hard all week with the Coillte and other nurseries who were getting trees to all corners of Ireland. When life gives



Pupils from Coláiste Chiaráin at Ward River Valley Park, arriving at a Planting Party in collaboration with Fingal County Council and the Swords Woodland Association



Seachtain na Gaeilge le Energia i measc na gCrann



Members of the Irish Refugee Council and the Scoil Mhuire School community, Tullamore join Brendan Fox, Curator, Museum of Everyone and Orla Farrell

us lemons in this project, we like to make lemonade and on that Monday morning, sipping a fragrant lemon and honey drink, I thanked my lucky stars for all who worked to vaccinate us which now allowed me to feel well enough to carry on with doing what could be done confined to base. What joy to now be able to join in the series of online events that were going on all week on all things trees!

And first among the virtual sessions was a broadcast of the second visit by RTÉ Nationwide to our project "birthplace" at

Seagrang Park, North Dublin. Many of the children who had planted our original 300-sapling woodland in the park had returned to admire them, to add to the planting and to talk on camera with their local Tidy Towns group about how this area of once-bare grass is now a haven for wildlife. "There used to be no trees here at all", says Hannah Kaye Ricablanca as they walk through the woodland they planted when still in primary school. Now they are in Transition Year they delight in coming out to enjoy



Willow and Charlie McCoy, Co. Wicklow. Go Greener with Grange Con in their community tree planting initiative

this local new amenity and keep it spruce! "I'd say it was about this big", says Hannah, holding her hand out at waist height beside a Hornbeam which towers over her now, "and now it's nearly triple the size!". Their enthusiasm is evidence enough and a clear endorsement that tree planting encourages stewardship of the local environment among youngsters.

"This isn't just the community coming out for the benefit of meeting others...well there is that, it's a really important aspect of course, but we are in a Climate and Biodiversity crisis Emergency", says Aoife Cannon of Baldoyle Tidy Towns. "So it's so much more now; people are doing it out of concern and also to feel like they're doing something really positive to help with these crises". RTÉ interviewed many of the tree lovers in this seaside Dublin Biosphere town which has planted a tree for every member of its 7,500 residents, and visited the Racecourse Community Garden, where the first of our Dublin nurseries was established. Journalist Valerie Waters took her crew to meet Una and Sam Wilson who showed us the trees they had fundraised for and planted with their neighbours on a bare green, back when they moved into their new house over fifty years ago. They spoke with pride as they stood under these stands of magnificent mature trees of how once their



Pioneering Tree Academy planters celebrate planting a tree for every resident of Baldoyle

children and now their grandchildren enjoy them for play. The green is a model for anyone looking for a template to move from a grass-only vista!

One popular discussion of relevance to our project is why not just fence areas off, walk away and leave nature to rewild and the trees to plant themselves? Surely this would save lots of work? There is a fashionable idea circulating that this is the fastest, best way to restore our environment and it certainly sounds easy. I asked many experts for their opinion about this idea, among them Crann board member Mark Wilkinson.

Mark has a lot of experience with areas set aside to rewild. His answer is that the usual result in Ireland is for invasive or dominant species to take over. Results depend on what species are immediately local to the rewilding area and, given the sterility of much of our landscape, one ends up as a rule with a general lack of variety. A related issue is how we are to provide timber, a renewable raw material in this era of a new respect for home-grown sustainability. I guess re-leafing Ireland will take more than one approach, a balance always sounds sensible to me. Given the urgency of bringing down global heating and supporting habitats for biodiversity, David Attenborough recommends having a blend of forests, woodlands AND well-managed tree farms so we won't argue

Mayor of Fingal Cllr Seána Ó Rodaigh presents Orla Farrell with a Certificate of Appreciation at the Fingal County Council Mayor's Awards 2022



with him! Our contribution to making Earth cooler relies on engaging with local experts as we employ tried and tested methods of re-establishing woodlands using a diversity of appropriate species, giving nature a helping hand.

As more tree planting communities join us - a list of over 315 at the last count, not including our essential supporters and sponsors - the list of thank-yous could easily fill the whole magazine! We are also adding to our list of new well-wishers and supporters apace and we continue to treasure our long-standing sponsors, among them; ReThink Ireland, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Crowne Plaza - Tifco, Seachtain na Gaeilge, Maxol, ServiceNow, HHGlobal and the IEN. We welcome new sponsors this year, among them, Nando's, Truform Laser Dies, Kelsius, Penneys and EY as well as many generous tree-lovers such as Edith Delaney, Gerard and Agata Byrne, and Leonard Daly. Our thanks to all for this invaluable support.

A special mention to Rachel Byrne who, under the direction of Prof. Yvonne Buckley of Trinity College, Dublin has carried out an impressive study of tree survival rates on three of our Dublin planting sites and our TU Dublin environmental intern, Virginia Njagi who has, with her engineering background from Cape Town University, been applying her project management skills to putting our expanding project into better order. We are proud to report that our former Masters in

Sustainability interns Asfand and Opeyemi are enjoying their new roles in An Taisce and StitcheAds and that Asfand has been accepted on a PhD. study programme.

Another volunteer who has logged truly outstanding results is our Community Liaison Facilitator, Steven Doody. Steven's Masters Degree in Fine Arts is such a great background for his public participatory art work. His current projects include leading his original "Orchard Project", new projects "Putting Down Roots" and "Hiding a Forest in Plain Sight" as well as a slew of other initiatives. His delight in establishing orchards and woodlands has inspired the planting of countless trees and he has held children as young as four utterly spellbound. At Steven's orchard planting at Bonnybrook Early Education Centre, our tiny tree planters had their own impressive garden tool collection but universally preferred digging in the mud with their bare little hands, calmly carrying over fat worms and other exciting minibeasts for us to admire.

We declare every day to be a Tree Day on the Easy Treesie project. But there is an actual National Tree Day, National Tree Week and many other highlights of our year. Here are the ones we always generally mark with an action, big or small. As we're a project of school children, their communities and supporters we use the Academic Year format.

### USEFUL CALENDAR OF TREE EVENTS

Month	Event	2022 - 2023 dates;	Notes
September	Culture Night (Dublin).	Friday 23rd In-person event	Patagonia Dublin
October	National Tree Day	Thursday 6th	A day marked by school educational initiatives
October	Climate Action Week	Mon 10th - Sunday 16th	An Taisce Green Schools' Climate Action Week
November	Science Week	Mon 7th - Mon 14th	SFI-lead Initiative.
November - late April	Bare Root planting season		Bare Root planting continues. This is the easiest and most cost-effective time for tree planting.
March	National Tree Week	March 19th - 26th TBC by Tree Council of Ireland	Traditionally this week incorporates International Day of Forests on March 21
March	Seachtain na Gaeilge	Wed 1st- Fri 17th	Bíonn plandáil trí mheán na Gaeilge le scoileanna
March	Earth Hour	Sat 25th 20:30 - 21:30	Turning off non-essential lights for one hour as a symbol of commitment to the planet, started in 2007
April	Earth Day	Saturday 22nd	Anniversary of the birth of the modern environmental movement in 1970
May	Potted/Root Ball Tree planting	Year round	
June	World Environment Day	Monday 5th	Also the birthday of our charity, Crann - Trees for Ireland in 1986.

If your community would like to participate, to join our waiting list, email [orla@easytreesie.com](mailto:orla@easytreesie.com) with "Trees" in the subject line and we'll help if we can. If you can't plant a tree yourself, Easy Treesie can plant one - or many - at €10 per tree at one of the new woodlands we are establishing! You'll be helping children & their communities improve our environment by sponsoring us on [www.easytreesie.com](http://www.easytreesie.com)