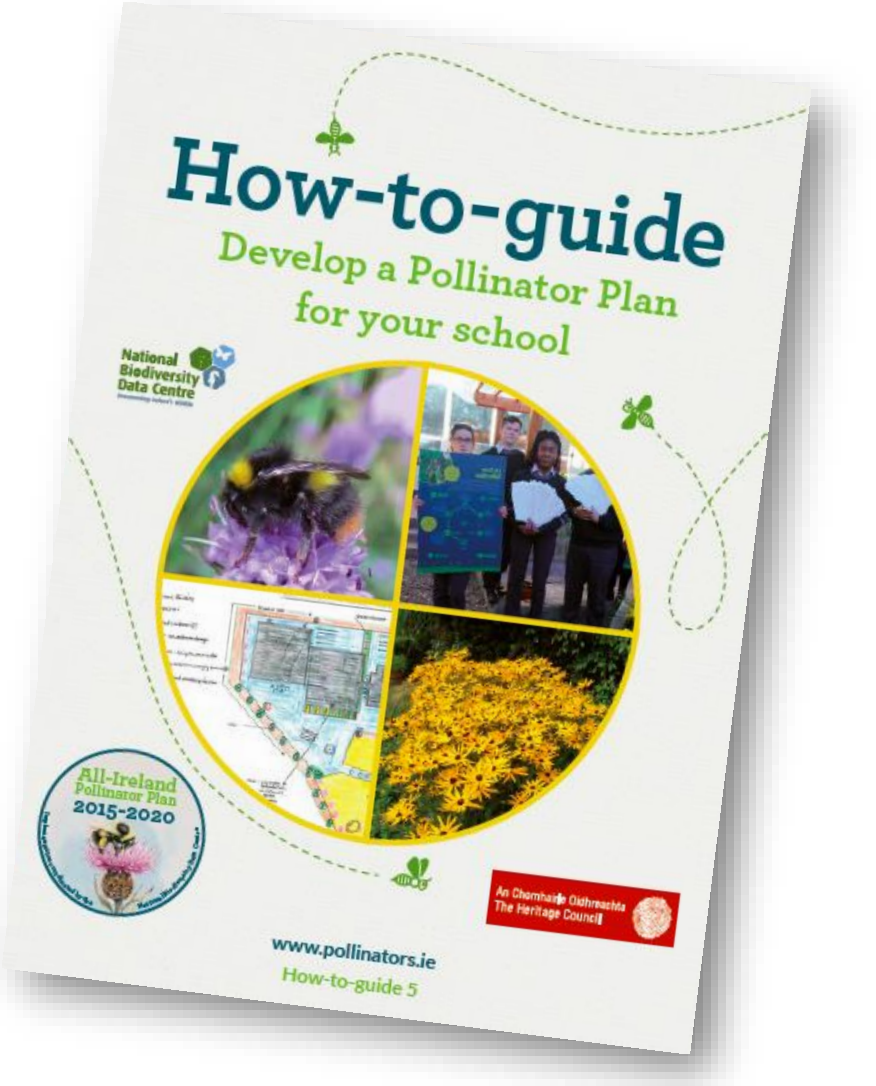
How to create a Pollinator Plan for your School



1 Form a 'Pollinator Team' to include some teachers, students and perhaps your school caretaker. This may be your Eco -schools/Green Flag Committee or a class interested in doing a nature project.

2 Visit our website, **www.pollinators.ie,** to learn more about bees and other insect pollinators.

3

Draw a map of your school grounds. You can use this to identify areas where you can take action to help pollinators.

Habitat map produced by students at St. Mary's & St. Gerard's, Enniskerry , Co. Wicklow.

Protect what you have

4

Walk around the school grounds and look for areas that are **already** pollinator-friendly. These might be areas of longer grass with wildflowers; flower beds; areas where plants like dandelions and clover are allowed to grow; native trees; wild corners; native flowering hedgerows; the wild base of hedgerows; or bare ground for nesting solitary bees. Mark all of these areas on your map. You could put up signs to identify these areas and to help protect them in future years. You can print special Pollinator Plan 'Managed for Wildlife' signs from the 'Resources' section of our website, **www.pollinators.ie.**

Wild area with Bramble and Ivy

Reducing mowing

5

It is very important that schools have large areas of short grass for playing and for sports. However, very tightly mown grass provides no food for pollinators. There may be areas on the margins of playing fields where the grass could be mown less frequently in order to allow wildflowers to grow and provide food for bees.

Walk around the school grounds and see if there are areas that could be mown less frequently. You will have to liaise with ground staff to make this happen. For example, narrow strips of longer grass that allow clover to grow will attract pollinators. Your school caretaker may like to be involved in choosing suitable areas for this. It is very useful to put up a sign to explain to everyone why the grass is being allowed to grow longer. In second level schools, erecting signage is something that Woodwork or Art departments might like to help with.

Mowing 'less frequently' means that the grass is cut approximately every 6 weeks (instead of every week or fortnightly). This should be timed to allow dandelions to bloom (which provides food in spring) and clover to grow (which provides food in summer).

If your school has large grounds, there might be a place where you could create a small meadow. This is mown just once a year (in September) and the cuttings are removed. Paths can be mown through the meadow so that it can still be used for walking. These kinds of meadows provide both *food* and *shelter* for pollinators.

Leaving narrow strips for wildflowers is a great way of balancing the need for short grass for sports and room for wildlife.

Trees & Hedgerows

6

Check if any native tree species are growing within your school grounds. Trees are very important sources of food for pollinators in spring. The best native trees for pollinators include: Willow, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Wild Cherry, and Crab Apple.

If you are planning to plant any new trees, why not choose a variety that is pollinator friendly?

If your school has a hedgerow, these are vital for pollinators! Rural schools may have native Hawthorn and Blackthorn hedgerows around their boundaries. If these are managed so that they are allowed to flower, they will provide lots of food for bees and other insects. Cut every three years, or one-third of your hedge each year to make sure there are always spring flowers available.

Our Native tree swatch will help you identify trees around your school

Whitethorn or Hawthorn flowers in spring

Spring is when hunger gaps are most likely to occur

Pollinator-friendly planting

7

Walk around the school and see if there are any flower beds. If there are, check if the plants used are good sources of pollen and nectar. If not, you could investigate whether pollinator-friendly plants could be included in these in the future.

8

If your school plants bulbs, try to encourage them to include Crocus, which is a great source of food for pollinators in spring.

Humans like Daffodils and Tulips because they provide colour, but pollinators don't because Daffodils and Tulips produce hardly any pollen or nectar!

Our Pol
choose
our web

Provide nesting sites

9

It is very easy to provide nesting sites for wild bees. Walk around the school grounds to check for areas where you could provide safe nesting sites for bumblebees (long grass), mining solitary bees (bare soil) and cavity nesting solitary bees (bee nest boxes).

To learn more about wild bee nesting see our *Junior All-Ireland Pollinator Plan* and our *How-to-guide 'Creating wild pollinator nesting habitat'*. These are freely downloadable from our 'Resources' section on www.pollinators.ie.

It is easy to provide nesting areas for our 62 species of mining solitary bees as they just need exposed soil on a south-facing bank. You can use a spade to scrape away vegetation to create these areas. Our 15 cavity-nesting solitary bees use holes in wood or stone walls.

Reduce pesticides

10

Speak to your School Caretaker to see how much pesticide is being used and try to reduce this. Most schools probably don't use insecticide, but might use herbicide to kill weeds. If herbicide is being used, try to make sure it is only for health and safety reasons (e.g. to stop paths becoming slippery) and not to tidy up 'weeds', which are actually wildflowers that provide really important insect food!

Project:
Eliminate pesticide completely and have a 'weeding-by-hand' day in the school in areas where weeds need to be removed

11

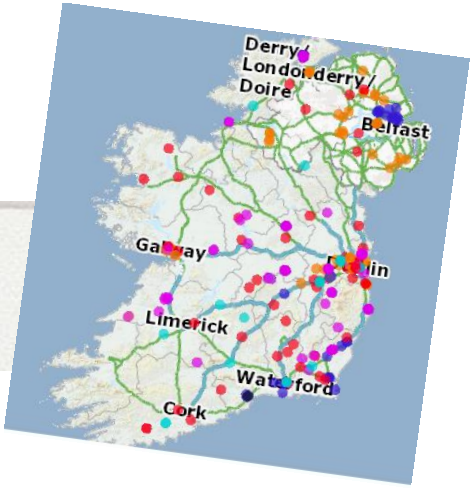
Make sure to put up signage around the school to show what you are doing. Artwork for the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 'Managed for Wildlife' signs can be downloaded freely from our website or you can make your own.

12

Consider associated projects to raise awareness of pollinators, their importance and the actions that are being taken to help. This could be anything from writing projects on pollinators to art, poetry competitions, or the Young Scientist competition, etc. You could also run a blog on your school website about your Pollinator Plan and each action you take.

Your school's Art Department might like to design some unique signs for your pollinator project

Record your actions



13 Ask a staff member or parent to help you add all your actions to the Pollinator Plan mapping system (Actions for Pollinators). This system tracks what people are doing right across the island and is a great way for you to get recognition for your efforts. **https://pollinators.biodiversityireland.ie/**

14 If you are able to identify your visiting bumblebees, butterflies or other insects, why not submit your records to the National Biodiversity Data Centre. See **http://records.biodiversityireland.ie/** Or to CEDaR in Northern Ireland: **https://www.nmni.com/CEDaR**

To help develop your identification skills, download our free online resources or consider buying copies of our bumblebee or butterfly identification swatches for your school library (from **http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/shop/**).

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Update your school map showing all your pollinator-friendly areas. Take photographs and store them with your map to identify the actions you have taken. It is very useful to take before and after pictures and to update these annually so that you can see progress.

St Mary's & St. Gerard's, Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow

The Eco Club at St Joseph's, Co. Antrim, transformed an unused area into a bee bank and feeding station.

Killyhommon Primary School, Co. Fermanagh, changed a mown grass bank into a border packed with pollinator-friendly plants.

St. Annin's NS, Rosscahill, Co. Galway.

Links to the Primary School Curriculum

One strand of the Primary Geography Curriculum is 'Environmental awareness and care'.

- It states that 'By exploring the interrelationships of peoples and their environments, geography helps to promote knowledge about and concern and awareness of the potential of these environments'.

- It also 'places an emphasis on skills development through observing and exploring the richness of the immediate environs of the school and home. This involves the children in questioning, observing, experimenting and recording the features of the natural and human environments that they encounter'.

*A **School Pollinator Plan** can be used to teach these aspects of the curriculum.*

ROI: Links to Post-primary Curriculum

The new junior cycle has been developed as a new way of teaching all post-primary subjects. This incorporates not only subject knowledge by the development of 8 key skill and 24 statements of learning.

The 7th Statement of Learning is :

'values what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts'

The 10th Statement of Learning is:

'has the awareness, knowledge, skills, values and motivation to live sustainably'.

Having a school pollinator plan encapsulates both these statements of Learning. It also develops the following Key Skills:

- Staying Well
- Being Creative
- Communicating,
- Working with others
- Managing information & thinking.

The New **Junior Cycle Science** curriculum states that students should be able to:

- conduct a habitat study; research and investigate the adaptation, competition and interdependence of organisms within specific habitats and communities.
- evaluate how humans can successfully conserve ecological biodiversity and contribute to global food production; appreciate the benefits that people obtain from ecosystems.

A **School Pollinator Plan** can be used to teach these aspects of the curriculum.

The **Leaving Certificate Biology** Syllabus states that students should:

- Show familiarisation with frequency and percentage cover techniques.
- Outline one conservation practice from either agriculture, fisheries, or forestry. (Could be used to explain Set-Aside)
- Be able to identify of local ecological issues related to the selected ecosystem.
- Be able to define and describe methods of “pollination”: self-pollination and cross-pollination, to include wind and animal.

A **School Pollinator Plan** can be used to teach these aspects of the curriculum.

Increasingly, Schools are teaching Development Education which focuses on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals agreed by world leaders in an attempt to, by 2030:

- End extreme poverty; Fight inequality & injustice; Tackle climate change.

A pollinator plan could be used in the teaching of any of the following goals:

- Zero hunger
- Sustainable cities & communities
- Responsible consumption and production
- Life on land

www.pollinators.ie