

Lesson Plan 8: Taking action for Pollinators



Objectives:

In this lesson, students will:

- learn to work together to come up with a plan for action
- learn how to follow a step-by-step guide and critically assess which actions are suitable for their school
- Work with caretaker and teachers to implement those actions
- Create signage for protected areas & posters to explain to other students the schools pollinator-friendly actions.

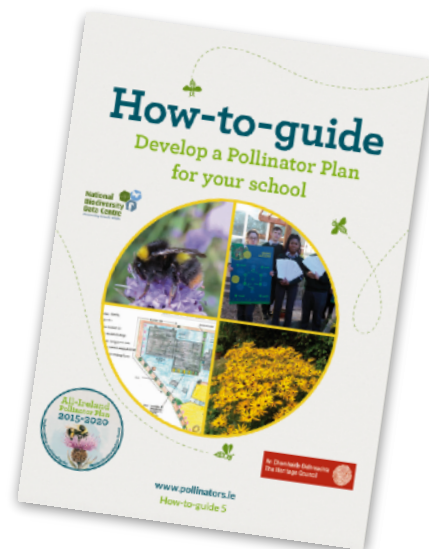
To begin, download the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan's guide to developing a Pollinator Plan for your School:

[Develop a Pollinator Plan for your School](#)

This guide provides detailed steps to create a pollinator-friendly school

Decide together which actions you would like to take to improve your school's pollinator score.

Once you have picked the actions you want to take, make a list and give copies to all teachers and care taking staff and arrange a meeting to discuss how to implement these actions.



Note To Teachers

Links to Curriculum: Developing a School Pollinator Plan will help students develop skills through observing and exploring the richness of the immediate environs of the school. This involves the children in recording, questioning, and experimenting with the features of their natural environment. It also helps to teach environmental awareness, living sustainably; what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts; and responsible consumption and production. The Pollinator Team will develop the following Key Skills: Staying Well; Being Creative; Communicating, Working with others; Managing information and thinking.

A School Pollinator Plan can be used to teach students how to conduct a habitat study; research and investigate the adaptation, competition and interdependence of organisms within specific habitats and communities. Through learning about pollination and the importance of pollinators, students can also learn to evaluate how humans can successfully conserve ecological biodiversity and contribute to global food production; and appreciate the benefits that people obtain from ecosystems.

Eco-Schools/Green Flag: Developing a school pollinator plan will go a long way towards helping your school apply for this internationally recognised Award.

Healthy walking route: Providing more flowers for pollinators will also make your school a more attractive place for everyone. You could create a 'Pollinator/Nature walking route' that passes all your different actions you've taken in your school grounds. Create a map and measure your route so everyone knows the distance they walked.

Sample Actions



1. Protect areas that are already good for pollinators

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 make 'Protected for pollinators' signs or print special Pollinator Plan 'Managed for Wildlife' signs from the 'Resources' section of our website, www.pollinators.ie



This pollinator mural was created at Lough Neagh Discovery Centre, Oxford Island, Northern Ireland

1. Protect areas that are already good for pollinators



Do you have native hedgerows that could be allowed to flower to provide food for pollinators?

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.

Are their corners with
bramble or Ivy you could
protect?



Are there corners of your school grounds
where there are wildflowers already growing?
Could you put up a sign to protect these
areas from mowing/spraying?

Sample Actions



Perhaps you have areas around the edges of your playing fields where you could reduce mowing and let the dandelions and clover bloom to feed pollinators?

2. Reduce mowing

Where a school has green space, It is very important of course to have areas of short grass for playing and for sports. However, there may be areas on the margins of playing fields where the grass could be mown less frequently to allow wildflowers to grow.

Walk around the school grounds again and see if there are areas that could be mown less frequently. You will have to liaise with ground staff/landscapers to make this happen. 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, and you might like to design your own signs that suit your school.



3. Let the Dandelions bloom

Don't mow grass until mid-April to allow Dandelions to bloom to provide food for bees waking up from hibernation.
A Queen Bumblebee has to feed on 6,000 flowers a day just to get enough energy to brood her first batch of eggs!



4. Plant some pollinator-friendly trees

Trees are very important sources of food for pollinators in spring. If you are planning to plant any new trees, why not choose a variety that is pollinator friendly?

The best native trees for pollinators include: Willow, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Wild Cherry, and Crab Apple.

You could also plant some fruit trees. The bees enjoy feeding on the flowers and then you can pick the fruit in autumn!



Apple blossom



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



Whitethorn tree

5. Plant some pollinator-friendly flowers or shrubs

How do you know if a plant is pollinator friendly?

- Do you see pollinators visiting? When choosing plants at a garden centre, you will quickly spot which flowers insects visit most.
- Choose **single-flowered** varieties or **perennials** (double-flowered or annuals are generally poor sources of pollen and nectar).

See our website for more actions you can take to help pollinators in your garden, business, farm, school or local community.

Daffodils, Tulips, and traditional bedding plants like Geraniums, Begonias, busy Lizzy, Petunias, Polyanthus or Salvia splendens have virtually no pollen and nectar and are of little value to pollinators.



Autumn

Winter

www.pollinators.ie

National Biodiversity Data Centre
documenting Ireland's Wildlife

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're pretty, but pollinators don't because Daffodils and Tulips produce hardly any pollen or nectar!



Spring

Summer

6. Make a herb garden

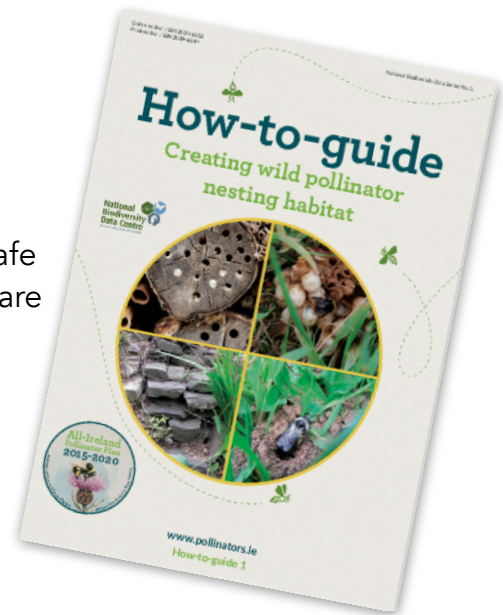
Project: Many herbs (e.g. Rosemary, Oregano, Thyme) are excellent sources of food for pollinators. Think about making a school herb bed or herb garden that can be used by bees and also by pupils, staff and the school canteen.



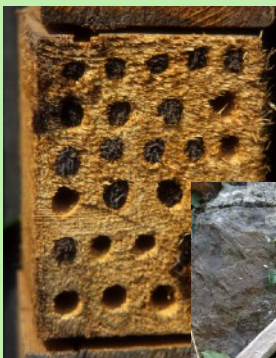
7. Make some nesting sites for bees

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.



Project: Make nest boxes for cavity-nesting solitary bees. This could be done in collaboration with your school caretaker.

Small nest boxes are recommended over very large bug hotels. See our how-to-guide 'Creating wild pollinator nesting habitat'.

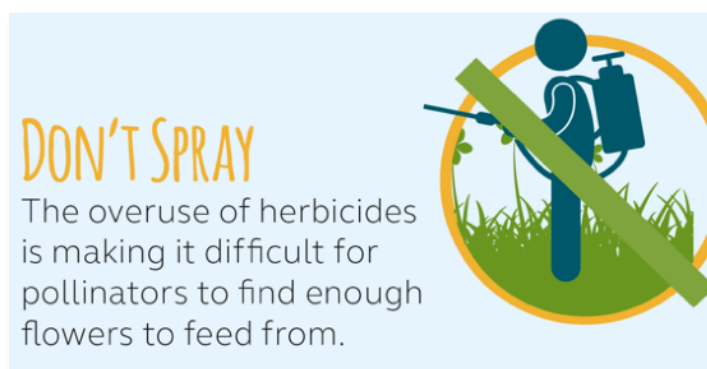
(<https://pollinators.ie/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/How-to-guide-Nesting-2018-WEB.pdf>)

Reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides



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.



Design some signs or posters to explain your school's pesticide policy

Create a Biodiversity Walking Trail



Many sports clubs have space around the perimeter of the site where people in the community come to walk or jog. These walking routes could be incorporated into a biodiversity trail along interesting existing habitats, such as hedgerow, as well as supplementing the trail with wildflower meadows; planting of native trees, a mini-woodland or orchard.

- Native trees can be planted along the route to create a 'Native Tree trail' and each tree could be identified using small signs.
- Create bee banks or erect bee hotels at points around the trail. Bird or bat boxes could also be placed on trees.
- Parts of the walking route can follow paths through meadows, created by reduced mowing.
- Foraging sites for blackberries (Bramble), elderberries (Elder trees) among others, could be marked on your biodiversity trail map.

