



Perennial planting schemes

Pollinator friendly perennial plants are excellent sources of pollen and nectar. They are much more attractive to bees when planted in blocks rather than as single plants. Having a pollinator friendly perennial bed is an excellent way to provide food for pollinators across their lifecycle.

Perennials can be used to great effect in traffic islands and public spaces, providing a strong visual impact and giving a good display of flowers over a long period. Pollinator friendly perennial planting should be designed to provide a food source from spring through to autumn. In addition they are:

- Low maintenance
- Easy to establish
- Have strong visual impact
- More cost effective than bedding schemes over the long term
- Less maintenance than lawn mowing
- Provides a natural style of planting
- Provides habitat and nesting materials for birds and insects

Costing: Pollinator friendly perennial planting versus annual bedding

Planting regime	Approximate costs per m ² (2016)	Typical replacement
Pollinator friendly perennials	€10-13 (9 x 9cm pots)	Life span of 10-12 years if well planted and well maintained. Small amount of annual replacement may be required depending on the site
	€17-19 (6 x 2L pots)	
Annual bedding	€10-29	Twice per year

Based on prices from a large Irish perennial plant nursery. Typical annual bedding costs were provided by a Council in ROI.

Key Points:

- Soil preparation before planting is essential
- Dense planting will reduce weeding
- Regular maintenance is important
- Use only good quality plants from a reliable source





Suggested plant lists:

These are examples of planting selections that have been used to create pollinator friendly perennial beds in Ireland. These mixes create an attractive and colourful display for the public while also providing food for pollinators. Grass is included to provide colour and structure in autumn/winter.

Option A

Little Experience with Perennials		Flowering
Aster 'Asran' / 'Stardust'	Pollinator	Aug - Sept
Crocsmia 'Babylon'	Pollinator	Aug - Sept
Geranium 'Cambridge'	Pollinator	May - Aug
Hemerocallis 'Stella d'or'	Pollinator	May - Aug
Nepeta 'Walkers Low'	Pollinator	May - July
Oregano 'Golden'	Pollinator	June - July
Rudbeckia 'Goldstrum'	Pollinator	July - Aug
Sedum 'Autumn Joy'	Pollinator	July - Aug
Stachys 'Byzantina'	Pollinator	July - Aug
Stipa arundinacea	Grass	

Plants from List A are easy to grow and maintain, ideal to start off with.

Option B

Some Experience with Perennials		Flowering
Achillea 'Moonshine'	Pollinator	May - Aug
Allium schoenoprasum	Pollinator	June - July
Anemone 'Splendens'	Pollinator	July - Aug
Aster 'Little Carlow'	Pollinator	Sept - Oct
Calamagrostis 'Karl Foerster'	Grass	
Calamintha	Pollinator	Aug - Sept
Fennel	Pollinator	July - Sept
Kniphofia	Pollinator	July - Sept
Lamium 'Pink Chablis'	Pollinator	April - Aug
Lavender	Pollinator	May - July
Leucanthemum	Pollinator	July - Aug
Monarda Jacob Cline	Pollinator	July - Aug
Osteospermum ecklonis	Pollinator	May - Aug
Salvia nemerosa	Pollinator	May - July
Stachys 'Hummelo'	Pollinator	July - Aug
Stipa 'Ponytails'	Grass	
Symphytum 'Wisley Blue'	Pollinator	April - May
Thyme	Pollinator	June - July

Plants from List B can be added to schemes to provide more interest in colour and form



Note: Spanish Bluebells are invasive. Only native, local provenance Bluebells should be planted.

Perennial planting schemes can be underplanted with spring bulbs to provide early food for bees	
Crocus	Pollinator
Snowdrop	Pollinator
Muscari	Pollinator
Bluebells - native	Pollinator
Stipa arundinacea	Grass

Maintenance:

Good ground preparation is essential to minimise maintenance in the future.

- Removal of all root weeds before planting such as scutch grass, bindweed etc. will reduce weeding later on. Sometimes it is best to leave the site fallow for a season to sort out any issues.
- The soil must be well drained and not compacted, and have good nutritional content. Organic material can be added. There is usually no need to add fertiliser.
- Plants ideally should contain a slow release fertiliser in the pot and should be watered well before planting.
- In the first few months after planting beds will have to be weeded by hand as hoeing can damage spreading plants. This should be done regularly, maybe three or four times in year one depending on the weed population. When the perennials have established and provided dense cover, the frequency of weeding can be reduced.
- In year two and onwards, weed the beds at the beginning of and end of the growing season, and spot check for the odd weed in between.
- Watering may have to be taken into consideration during dry spells.
- Leave dead stems on plants for the winter as they provide protection for the plants, offer food and habitat and nesting materials for wildlife, prevent weed seeds from germinating and increase the organic matter.
- The dead foliage can be removed in spring by mass pruning to approx. 10cm height when there is new growth appearing. Some plants like Grasses & Thymes will look good without pruning back.
- Organic matter like compost can be added to keep the soil in good condition.



Planting time:

March-April is the best time for planting as the plants will have plenty time to root in before summer. If planted in June then weeds will have already established and they will be easy to remove, but the plants have less time to root in and provide ground coverage.

Life span of perennial planting:

The life span of a well planted and well maintained perennial scheme is 10 to 12 years, maybe longer, which is about the same as a shrub bed. Small amount of replacements may be required depending on the site but in general the plants are trouble free.

Thanks to Young Nurseries who voluntarily provided suggested perennial plant lists and example costings.

