

All-Ireland Pollinator Plan Forever Calendar

**Creating a landscape
where pollinators can
survive and thrive**

**A calendar to keep forever; a place to store
special dates that never change, with tips on
how to help pollinators throughout the year.**



An tIonad Náisiúnta Sonraí Bithéagsúlachta
National Biodiversity Data Centre
ag Doiciméadú Fíadhlúka na hÉireann | Documenting Ireland's Wildlife

Join the buzz to save our bees

One third of wild bee species on the island of Ireland are threatened with extinction. This is mainly because we have drastically reduced the amount of food and safe nesting sites that support them. We need pollinators to maintain a nutritious food supply; to nourish our health and wellbeing; to support the livelihoods of our farmers; to continue growing our own food; and to protect biodiversity.

There are simple ways everyone can help protect these important insects, whether you have a farm, a business, a community group or a garden.

By mowing less, eliminating pesticides, protecting native trees and hedgerows and choosing pollinator-friendly plants for our pots and window boxes, we can all make a difference to these important insects.

On pollinators.ie you will find free resources to help you learn more about pollinators on the island of Ireland, and simple, evidence-based actions to help them.

In this calendar, you will find key actions you can take each month for pollinators, information about their life cycle, and illustrations of pollinators with some of the native plants they forage on.

The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is a shared plan of action. Together, we can create a landscape where pollinators can survive and thrive.



Buff-tailed Bumblebee queen (*Bombus terrestris*) on Goat Willow (*Salix caprea*)



Learn about pollinators

On the island of Ireland, most pollination is carried out by bees, but other insects like hoverflies and moths are also important pollinators. We have one 'managed' pollinator, the honey bee, and over 100 different types of wild bee. 20% of wild bees are bumblebees and 80% are solitary bees.

Bumblebees have fat, furry bodies. They are important pollinators of plants like strawberries and tomatoes. They make their nests on the ground, hidden in long grass often at the base of hedgerows. Solitary bees are our largest group of wild bees. They come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and some of them look like wasps or flies. Some nest in holes in wood or bee hotels (cavity-nesting bees) but most make their nests in bare soil (mining bees).



Garden Bumblebee (*Bombus hortorum*) on Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*)

January

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	Notes			





Make a plan for pollinators

Many pollinators are still in hibernation. They will be emerging soon and foraging on early-flowering plants like Willow. It's the perfect time to make a plan for how you can help them this year:

- 1 Map existing sources of food and shelter and make a plan for protecting them. They will already be providing valuable resources for pollinators.
- 2 Find out how you can improve and expand these areas. Visit pollinators.ie for ideas and resources.



Buff-tailed Bumblebee queen (*Bombus terrestris*) on Goat Willow (*Salix caprea*)

February

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
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Pollinators emerge from hibernation

As the days get lighter and warmer, pollinators will emerge from hibernation and start to look for somewhere to make a nest and lay their eggs. See if you can spot the first bumblebees, solitary bees, hoverflies and moths.

One of the best ways to help pollinators is to reduce mowing. Mowing less and removing grass clippings when you mow reduces soil fertility and helps wildflowers grow naturally. Choose one of the options below, or a combination:

- ✓ Short-flowering meadow: Cut and lift once every 4-6 weeks.
- ✓ Long-flowering meadow: Cut and lift once a year in September.
- ✓ Leave some areas uncut to grow wild.

This is a better choice for biodiversity than sowing wildflower seed mixes, which often contain non-native species and can inadvertently introduce invasive species.



Early Mining Bee (*Andrena haemorrhoa*)
on Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*)

March

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
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Let Dandelions Bee

Records from the National Biodiversity Data Centre show that Dandelions are the number one favourite food for Ireland's wild bees. In April, Dandelions are at their peak of blooming. Let them grow to feed hungry pollinators.

Do a Flower-Insect-Timed Count to help monitor pollinator populations.

- ✔ Pick a patch of flowers
- ✔ Set a timer for 10 minutes
- ✔ Make a note of the pollinators that visit
- ✔ Send in your records to the National Biodiversity Data Centre (biodiversityireland.ie/surveys/fit-counts/)

April



Ashy Mining Bee (*Andrena cineraria*) on Dandelion (*Taraxacum* agg.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
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No Mow May

In May, native plants are blooming – hedgerows are full of blossoming Hawthorn, and at ground level, wildflowers like Bush vetch, Red Clover, and Cuckooflower pop up in the grass. This is an important time of year for pollinators, as many are establishing their nests.

No Mow May is a chance to celebrate the benefits of reduced mowing for pollinators. Native wildflowers emerge naturally with less mowing. Celebrate wild bees on World Bee Day (20th May) and keep an eye out for these flowers in your No Mow May lawn:

- ✓ Dandelions
- ✓ Red Clovers
- ✓ White Clover
- ✓ Self-heal
- ✓ Birds-foot-trefoil

May

Bees on Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*)



1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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Let it Bloom June

Pollinators are busy this month laying eggs and foraging for nectar and pollen. Meadows are at their peak, bursting with native wildflowers.

In your garden or other managed spaces, choose pollen and nectar-rich ornamental plants for your flower beds, pots and hanging baskets. Herbs like Rosemary and Thyme and fruit and vegetables like apples, strawberries and beans will provide food for you and their flowers are an excellent source of nectar and pollen.

Don't use herbicides, which can harm pollinators and destroy valuable food plants like Dandelions.



Common Carder Bee (*Bombus pascorum*)
on Bush Vetch (*Vicia sepium*)

June

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
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Protect rare pollinators

Some pollinators on the island of Ireland are particularly rare or endangered, But communities, councils and businesses are working to protect them. Find out if rare pollinators have been spotted in your area using the Biodiversity Maps website: maps.biodiversityireland.ie

Guidelines for how to protect rare pollinators can be found on the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan website, including for these species:

- ✓ Great Yellow Bumblebee
- ✓ Large Carder Bee
- ✓ Shrill Carder Bee
- ✓ Northern Colletes
- ✓ Forester Moth

July

Endangered Great Yellow Bumblebee
(*Bombus distinguendus*) on Red Clover
(*Trifolium pratense*)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
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August's seeds feed next year's bees

At this time of year, your long-flowering meadow might start to look a bit tired. This is a normal and important part of its cycle. Over the coming weeks it will drop its seeds, which will grow into wildflowers for next year's meadow. Don't cut your meadow yet.

If your meadow is slow in becoming flower-rich, don't be tempted to buy wildflower seed mixes, which can harm local biodiversity. If necessary, you can collect local seeds and add them to your existing meadow as plug plants. Find out how to sustainably harvest local seeds with guidelines on the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan website.



Six-spot Burnet moth (*Zygaena filipendulae*) on Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*)

August

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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Time to mow your meadow

The bloom of summer is over, but there are still some native plants providing vital sources of nectar and pollen this month. Native plants are the best source of food for our pollinators as they have evolved alongside each other.

Most wildflowers will have dropped their seeds by now. If you have a long-flowering meadow, this is the time to cut it. Make sure you remove grass cuttings to reduce the fertility of the soil, helping more wildflowers grow for next year.



Shrill Carder Bee (*Bombus sylvarum*) on Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*)

September

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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Plant food for next year's pollinators

It's time to plant pollinator-friendly bulbs and native trees. Sustainably collect and sow local native tree seeds and plant pollinator-friendly ornamental bulbs in pots, parks and gardens. These bulbs will provide a great source of nectar and pollen early in the year when other food is scarce:

- ✓ Crocus
- ✓ Snowdrops
- ✓ Grape Hyacinth
- ✓ Winter Aconite
- ✓ Wood Anemone
- ✓ Snake's Head Fritillary



October

Early Mining Bee (*Andrena haemorrhoa*)
on Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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Protect pollinators in the winter

Most pollinators are now hibernating. Protect late sources of nectar like Ivy and check your bee box. You can tell it is occupied if the holes are plugged with mud or leaves. A new generation of cavity-nesting solitary bees will emerge in the spring.

If your bee box is not occupied for two years, move it to a different location close to a food source.



Native Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*)

November

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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Plant native pollinator-friendly trees

Now is the perfect time to plant native pollinator-friendly trees. Choose the right tree (of native provenance), right space (somewhere it can grow comfortably in the future) and right place (avoid habitats that are already good for biodiversity).

These native species are great for pollinators:

- ✓ Hawthorn
- ✓ Blackthorn
- ✓ Willow
- ✓ Rowan
- ✓ Wild Cherry
- ✓ Crab Apple



Red-tailed Bumblebee
(*Bombus lapidarius*) on
Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*)

December

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This calendar is part of a series of resources produced to help different sectors take actions under the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. For more information and other useful resources, please see www.pollinators.ie



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About the National Biodiversity Data Centre

The National Biodiversity Data Centre is a national organisation that collects and manages data to document Ireland's wildlife resource, and to track how it is changing. See <https://biodiversityireland.ie/>

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**An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara**
Department of Agriculture
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Comhairle Contae **Lú**
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