

BITESIZE BIODIVERSITY

Biodiversity Activity Calendar

You may not realise it, but your own garden provides you with thousands of opportunities to help the biodiversity of your local area! This calendar provides you with just 12 of these ideas - one for every month of the year. You can print off this calendar and staple the pages together, then rip a new page off every month - or just keep this as a digital document!

This calendar was developed under the Science Foundation Ireland funded TRYBE project, which is coordinated by the MaREI Research Centre in UCC in partnership with researchers from DCU. We worked with educators from the **Irish Schools Sustainability Network** to develop this resource!

On each page, you will find a bee icon  which you can click to learn more about one of the species that will benefit from that activity!

You will also find a video icon  on each page, which means you can click on it to find a YouTube tutorial for that activity!

Enjoy!



JANUARY

MONTHLY ACTION:

Make a seed fat ball

What is a fat seed ball?

- A fat seed ball is a ball of high-energy foods held together by solid fat which. Migrating birds love them as they give them an extra boost of energy for the winter!



How-to guide:

- Begin by mixing the ingredients together and scooping the mixture into a small empty yogurt pot (or form the shape by rolling it in your hands). Put a string into the fat mixture and let the mix set in the fridge. Once set, cut down the side of the yogurt pot to remove the solidified fat seed ball. Hang up the ball on a tree - or do without the string and put the fat seed balls into a bird feeder designed for fat seed balls.



What you need:

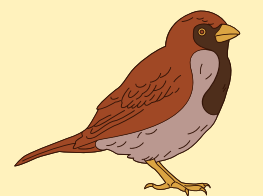
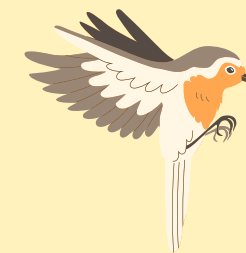
Fat: lard or suet

Nuts: unsalted peanuts, currants, sultanas, oats, breadcrumbs, cake crumbs, cheese

Yogurt pots

String

Species that will benefit



FEBRUARY

MONTHLY ACTION:

Build your own pond

Why build a pond?

- A pond is a lifeline for creatures such as frogs, dragonflies, hoverflies, and amphibians. Building one in your back garden is a fantastic way to support these creatures and encourage biodiversity in your area!



How to guide:

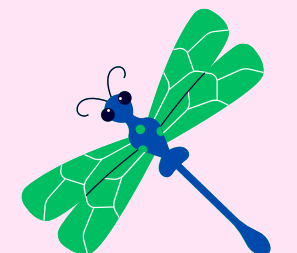
- Begin by digging into the ground to the area and depth matching your molded pond. To weigh down the plastic mold, line the bottom with sandy compost and plant some underwater plants. Fill up the pond with water and add some décor to the edges, such as wooden logs or large, flat stones. This helps frogs climb in and out of the water.



What you need:

- Shovel
- Molded pond (or thick plastic sheet)
- Wood or stones for décor
- Underwater plants
- Sandy compost

Species that will benefit



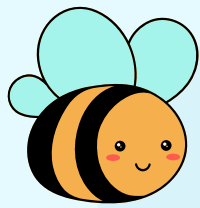
MARCH

MONTHLY ACTION:

Plant a native tree

Why plant a native tree?

- Trees directly contribute to improving the biodiversity of your area - they provide a home and a source of food for thousands of insects, birds, and small animals. It is a better idea to plant native trees instead of non-native trees because non-native trees may interfere with native varieties and have a smaller chance of survival.



How to guide:

- Buy your preferred native tree from a local tree nursery, then select a good area of your garden which is appropriate to the eventual size the tree will grow to. Depending on the size of the tree, protect it by tying it to a thick pole in the ground and wrap a protective wire cage around the tree to protect it from damage.



What you need:

- A native tree
- Chicken wire
- A thick wooden pole
- A watering can
- String or wire

Species that will benefit



APRIL

MONTHLY ACTION: Prepare for No Mow May

Why plan for No Mow May?

- It is important to make a plan of your garden for No Mow May so that you and your family understand where you plan to leave wildflowers grow!

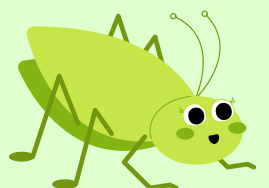
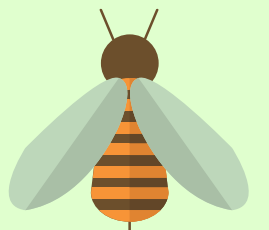
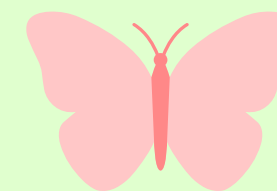
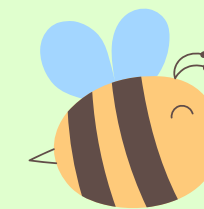


How to guide:

- Begin by drawing out a plan of your garden and label the areas you want to leave grow wild for No Mow May. Take note of the areas of your garden where you walk, play or eat, and consider only mowing these areas and leaving the rest grow wild.



Species that will benefit



MAY

MONTHLY ACTION:

Homemade herbal tea

Why make a herbal tea garden?

- Herbal tea can be a delicious and relaxing treat, and the plants needed to make your own herbal blend are fantastic additions to a biodiversity-friendly garden! They provide pollinators with vital food, and look lovely too!



How to guide:

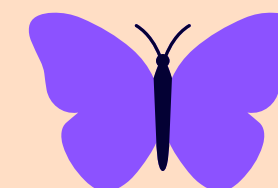
- Making your own herbal tea is as easy as picking a few leaves from your favourite herbs and mixing them with some hot water. You can also create your own blend by drying out leaves from different herbs and storing the blend in an airtight jar. Sweeten your tea with locally-bought honey or brown sugar!



What you need:

- Herb plant seeds (or live plants - try your local garden centre)
- A raised bed or small patch
- Gloves
- Trowel
- Watering can

Species that will benefit



JUNE

MONTHLY ACTION:

Make a log pile

Why make a log pile?

- A log pile is a great way to attract a wide range of wildlife to your garden - including insects, toads, newts, snails, and solitary bees. Fungi also grow on dead logs, providing food for smaller creatures.



How to guide:

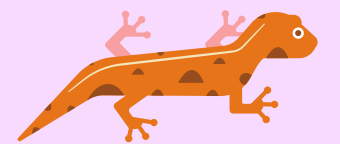
- Begin by sourcing your wooden logs - don't take them from a forest as you will be disturbing nature's home! It is better to use freshly cut wood from your own trees or from a tree surgeon. A friend might also have some on hand! Arrange your logs in a safe area in your garden and decorate with dead leaves and small twigs and cuttings to provide extra shelter.



What you need:

- Logs of dead wood
- A secluded garden spot
- Prunings or twigs

Species that will benefit



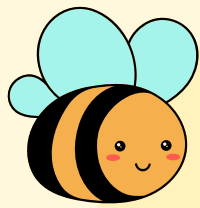
JULY

MONTHLY ACTION:

Avoid grass cutting

Why avoid cutting grass?

- In July, it is important to skip grass cutting to protect baby frogs and birds that might be hiding in the grass! Long grass provides a safe hiding spot for baby animals and they are most vulnerable in the summer months, particularly July. Leaving the grass grow will also allow native wildflowers to grow stronger, letting them come back faster after the next cut!

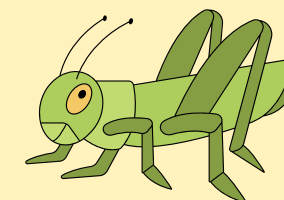


How to guide:

- Simply avoid cutting the grass! However, if you absolutely must cut an area of grass, try using a trimmer a few inches off the ground instead of a lawn mower. First, make sure to carefully check a small area for baby animals before cutting.



Species that will benefit



AUGUST

MONTHLY ACTION: Hedgehog feeding station

Why make a hedgehog feeding station?

- Hedgehogs are adorable and they are also brilliant creatures to have in your garden. They eat beetles and caterpillars, which you may not want in your garden if you are growing your own food. Irish hedgehogs populations are also dwindling, meaning that they need a bit of extra help from us!



How to guide:

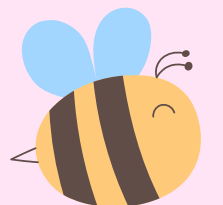
- Cut a hole in the side of your wooden or plastic box which is big enough for a hedgehog but too small for predators. Make sure to cover the edges of the cut with duct tape to protect hedgehogs from scratches. Place the food bowls inside and seal the box, then place the box in a sheltered corner of your garden.



What you need:

A sturdy wooden or plastic box, large enough for food and water bowls with an access hole in the side
Cat food/water bowls
Hedgehog food
Duct tape

Species that will benefit



SEPTEMBER

MONTHLY ACTION:

Sow wildflowers

Why sow wildflowers?

- Wildflowers are a fantastic biodiversity-friendly addition to your garden - they look fantastic and will flower earlier the following year when sown in autumn. They will provide vital food to queen bees in the spring!



How to guide:

- Prepare an area of your garden where you wish to have a wildflower patch by getting rid of any weeds and grass and gently raking the soil to loosen it up. Scatter the seeds onto the soil using a sieve or empty plant pot and rake the soil again to mix the seeds into the soil. Gently step on the soil to secure the seeds in place.



What you need:

- A bag of native wildflower seeds
- A rake
- A sieve or plant pot (with holes in the bottom)

Species that will benefit



OCTOBER

MONTHLY ACTION:

Don't tidy the garden!

Why not tidy the garden?

- It can be tempting to tidy up your garden in autumn as the leaves begin to fall and your garden might start to look "messy". In reality, this messiness is great for biodiversity. Dead leaves provide fertiliser for plants, food for worms and bugs, and shelter for snails, slugs and beetles. Dead twigs provide valuable food for fungi and worms, as well as scavenging for birds looking for winter food.



How to guide:

- Simply leave the garden alone! Try to only clear paths and walkways which may become slippery due to dead leaves and moss. Try taking some pics of interesting fungi or getting a video of scavenging birds!



Species that will benefit



NOVEMBER

MONTHLY ACTION:

Plant bulbs

Why plant bulbs?

- Planting bulbs in the winter is a brilliant way to keep in touch with nature even when the days are shorter and colder. To flower the following spring, bulbs need to be planted a few months beforehand. In the spring, bulbs are the first flowers to blossom and will provide an essential source of nectar to queen bees.



How to guide:

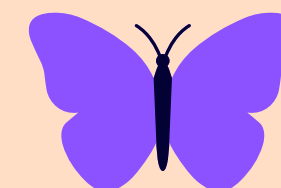
- Begin by deciding what kind of bulbs you want in your garden and where you want to put them - best stick to native bulbs, like bluebells! Dig a small hole in the ground and plant the bulb with the green bit facing upwards to the depth of the bulb itself. This will make it as easy as possible for the bulb to flower in the spring!



What you need:

- A selection of native bulbs
- A trowel
- Gloves

Species that will benefit



DECEMBER

MONTHLY ACTION:

Plant cuttings

Why plant cuttings?

- Planting cuttings in the winter will give them a head start in the spring! You can propagate tree cuttings, such as willow or ash, and then plant the tree outdoors in spring. It is best to propagate indoors or inside a polytunnel to protect the cuttings from the elements.



How to guide:

- Begin by sanitising your clippers and any other equipment you use to cut the tree. Take a cutting of a branch about the thickness of a pencil, and then immediately place it into sterile water or damp compost. Remove any leaves, as this will drain nutrients from the cutting. Keep in a warm location and water regularly (but do not over-water!) until you see new growth begin.



What you need:

Clippers
Gloves
Sanitiser
Compost
Water
A pot or jar

Species that will benefit

