

Faith Communities

Actions to help pollinators





Honeybee (1 species)



Bumblebees (21 species)



Solitary bees (77 species)

WHO are our pollinators?

On the island of Ireland, some plants are pollinated by the wind, but many are pollinated by insects. Most insect pollination is carried out by bees. We have one type (species) of managed honeybee and 98 different wild bees. That includes 21 different types of bumblebee and 77 different solitary bee species. If we want to protect pollination service we need healthy honeybees but we also need to have an abundance and diversity of wild bees as well as other insects like flies, moths and butterflies.

Unfortunately, our pollinators are in decline, and the problem is serious. **One third of our 98 wild bee species are threatened with extinction from the island of Ireland.** If we want them to be there to pollinate crops and wild plants for future generations, we need to manage the landscape in a more pollinator-friendly way.

WHAT do our pollinators need to survive?

Like us, pollinators need food and a safe place to live. It is lack of food (hunger) that is the main cause of declines. Bees rely solely on pollen and nectar from flowers. Wild bees don't make honey so they have no way of storing food. This means that they are never more than a few days away from starvation – so it's very important that there is a continual supply of flowers for them to feed on. To have a healthy balanced diet, pollinators need to be able to forage from a range of different flowers from MARCH right through to OCTOBER. Spring is when they are most at risk of starvation. It is important

to prioritise increasing native plants (trees, shrubs, wildflowers) across the landscape to provide food for pollinators. Pollinators also need plenty of safe nesting habitats - long grass, bare earth, crevices in dry stone walls or wood - that are free from pesticides.

WHY do we need to help our pollinators?

Pollinators are important to farmers that grow pollinator dependent crops, to gardeners that want to grow their own fruits and vegetables and for the health of our environment. 78% of our wild plants require insect pollination. Without pollinators, these flowers would disappear, and our countryside would be a very different and less beautiful place.

All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020

The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is supported by over 80 governmental and non-governmental organisations who have pledged to deliver 81 actions to make Ireland, North and South, more pollinator friendly. It is a shared plan of action. Everyone, from farmers to councils, local communities, businesses, schools, faith communities, gardens and transport authorities have a role to play in the Pollinator Plan. See the website for how each different sector can help through evidence-based actions.

www.pollinators.ie



Fr. Lyons, Glenravel parish meadow, Co. Antrim

Why should faith communities support the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan?

Protecting God's Creation

In recent times, we have become more aware of our need to protect the earth. Since the Climate Change Agreement in Paris in December 2015, we realise that we must reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to protect our environment.

But the situation in terms of biodiversity is even more challenging. Right now, we are experiencing the 6th largest extinction of life since life began 3.8 billion years ago. The tragedy today is that this extinction is not being caused by meteorites, but by human activity. In 2010, Edward Wilson, emeritus professor of biology at Harvard University wrote that ***“the quenching of life's exuberance will be more consequential to humanity than all present-day warming, ozone depletion and pollution combined.”***

Religion has great potential to change our way of relating to the earth and all its creatures. In the past, certain elements of the Judeo-Christian tradition believed that the biblical passage *“increase and multiply and conquer the earth,”* (Gen. 1:26-28) gave humans a licence to dominate the earth. In Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, *On Care of Our Common Home* this interpretation of the bible has been repudiated.

But there have been many Christians down through the ages who have loved the earth and all its creatures. In his *Sermon on Faith*, the Irish

Saint Columban (545 – 615 AD), tells us that if we want to know God, we must study Creation. St. Francis of Assisi has a similar approach to creation. In his *Canticle of the Creatures* he blesses and thanks God for all creation. *Laudato Si'* tells us that “every creature is the object of the Father's tenderness, who gives it its place in the world,” Pope Francis goes even further and says that “all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God. (Ls 83).

As religious people, our faith should encourage us to get to know the natural world more thoroughly, understand what is threatening biodiversity more fully and do all we can to create a friendly world for every creature. The suggestions in this Guide are excellent and, if implemented, will help save biodiversity and our pollinators as well.

**Fr. Seán McDonagh,
The Columban Ecological Institute**



“ God spoke: *“Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so they can be responsible for the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, the cattle, and, yes, Earth itself, and every animal that moves on the face of Earth”* **Genesis 1:26**

Faith communities have a special calling to specifically support and enhance all nature and creation. Faith communities own large areas of land which need management. Manicured, pristine properties do not benefit pollinators and management committees should adopt a reappraisal of work to encourage and enhance these areas for wildlife. They should in the process, encourage membership to also adopt more pollinator-friendly personal properties.

Excessive weeding, mowing and spraying might look tidy to us, but it means that we are squeezing nature out and risk losing its important free services, like pollination.

When

Environmental issues could be considered when pronouncements are made in worship, in building plans and renovations, in administration and in management decisions.

“ *As far as the individual is concerned, the problems resulting from our neglect of our natural environment are a powerful reminder that we all have a contribution to make. And while one person's actions may not have a significant impact, the combined effect of millions of individuals' actions certainly does”* **Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama**

Where

There will be many different areas of land managed by faith communities where small actions can be taken to help pollinators and other biodiversity: grounds around the Centre of Worship (church/chapel, meeting house, temple, synagogue, mosque), parish centre, rectory grounds, presbyteries, convent, abbey, modern graveyard, historic graveyard, gardens of those in the congregation, local schools, farm land etc. It will also include retreat or spirituality centres.

Historical graveyards require careful management but can be a vital refuge for wildlife in a much-changed landscape. See page 23 for suggestions to make these areas more pollinator-friendly.

“ *See to it that you do not spoil and destroy My world; for it you do, there will be no one else to repair it”* **Midrash Kohelet Rabbah, 1 on Ecclesiastes 7:13**

Laudato Si’: *“Laudato Si’ – on care for our common home”*, published by Pope Francis in 2015, emphasises that this planet is a home that we share with all other creatures. It calls us to **“hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor”**.

“We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combatting poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature”. LS 139

“Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it.” LS 139. Laudato Si asks all of us to make an ecological conversion both at a personal and at a social and community level to protect the whole of creation. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan offers a practical and realistic way in which faith communities can embrace the ethos of Laudato Si’.

Laudato Si’ closing **prayer for our earth:**

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.

“*What better or stronger call could we have to take up the invitation to become active partners in the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan*” Sylvia Thompson, Laudato Si’ working group, Ireland

Summary table of possible **ACTIONS** *to help pollinators*

(these are options – you don't have to do all!)

- Action 1:** Elect and mandate an ecological or environmental group within your congregation to take responsibility for implementing pollinator-friendly actions.
- Action 2:** Identify & protect existing sources of food and shelter for pollinators on land managed by your faith community
- Action 3:** Protect any native hedgerows and allow them to flower in spring
- Action 4:** Cut grass as normal but let the Dandelions bloom!
- Action 5:** Create a short-flowering '6-week meadow' (wildflower lawn)
- Action 6:** Create a long-flowering wildflower meadow
- Action 7:** Plant pollinator-friendly trees and shrubs
- Action 8:** Plant perennial flowers for pollinators
- Action 9:** Plant bulbs for pollinators
- Action 10:** Provide nesting areas for Bumblebees
- Action 11:** Provide nesting areas for mining solitary bees
- Action 12:** Provide nesting areas for cavity-nesting solitary bees
- Action 13:** Eliminate the use of herbicides in as many areas as possible
- Action 14:** Ensure best practise where the use of herbicides cannot be avoided
- Action 15:** Promote the Junior Pollinator Plan
- Action 16:** Integrate the need to safeguard the earth into prayer/worship
- Action 17:** Have a congregation action day
- Action 18:** Distribute pollinator-friendly garden guidelines to homes in the congregation
- Action 19:** Put up All-Ireland Pollinator Plan signage
- Action 20:** Help spread the message to your faith community and beyond
- Action 21:** Support pollinators in areas of the developing world
- Action 22:** Apply to any relevant Eco Awards
- Action 23:** Log your 'Actions for Pollinators' on the mapping system
- Action 24:** Do a survey to record and identify the pollinators found on land managed by your faith community

Actions to protect pollinators will help all biodiversity

While some of these actions do have a public focus, we also call on members of more private or closed faith communities to consider actions that could be taken on their land.

POLLINATOR ACTION

1

Elect and mandate an ecological or environmental group within your congregation to take responsibility for implementing pollinator-friendly actions.

Make sure that the group includes the people who look after the grounds. Read this guide and decide what actions could be taken in your faith community. Over time it may be possible to inform and involve the wider congregation. In some instances, it may be parish councils or equivalent who take the lead.

“ We decided to start with the urban church; to ensure that the most challenging surroundings, from an environmental point of view, became our initial focus and to then build on our successes and to replicate the same in our rural settings” - Rev David White, Carlow

“ In renovating an urban derelict site to provide for the Ministry of Healing, we rejected the architect's suggestions to build flats to offset costs, and instead created a prayer garden filled with beautiful plants and opportunities for pollinators. It is a haven of bees and butterflies which enhance the peace and awareness of God's creation and presence” - Rev Dr Patricia Mollan, Belfast

Other ideas: You may have youth groups associated with your faith community who can also be encouraged to get involved

Identify and protect existing areas that are good for pollinators

2

Identify & protect existing sources of food and shelter for pollinators

Most faith communities will already have some areas that are very good for pollinators. The most important thing you can do is to recognise and protect these. You should avoid spending time and money replacing something that is already good.

Areas where it might apply: across lands managed by faith communities.

Examples of existing areas that are already important to pollinators might be:

- Graveyards that are not highly manicured (food & shelter)
- Walls with cavities (shelter)
- Small wild areas with bramble/ivy (food)
- Grassy meadows (food & shelter)
- Existing areas of bare soil (shelter)
- Pollinator-friendly flower beds (food)
- Native hedgerows, flowering trees and shrubs (food & shelter)



Signage can be used to identify to the faith community areas that are important for pollinators.

“ Surat Al-Nahl: “Eat of all the fruits and walk in the ways of your Lord submissively. There comes forth from within it a beverage of many colours, in which there is healing for men; most surely there is a sign in this (life of bees) for a people who reflect” Quran 16:69

Native flowering hedgerow plants that are good for pollinators:



Spring

Protect any native hedgerows and allow them to flower in spring

Hedgerows that are managed to promote mature flowering growth are a vital source of pollen and nectar for pollinators. This is low maintenance and can save time/money on annual cutting/flailing

Areas where it might apply: across lands managed by faith communities, particularly in rural areas

What does a pollinator-friendly hedgerow look like?

- Contains a mix of native pollinator-friendly trees/shrubs that provide food.
- Managed so that as much as possible can flower each year – cutting annually stops the hedgerow flowering and fruiting. If not on a roadside, consider cutting on 3-5 year cycle.
- Allows some Bramble, Wild Rose, Honeysuckle and Ivy to grow - they are key nectar and pollen sources in summer and autumn.
- Should be as high as possible, but at least 2.5m above the ground and trimmed in an A-shape rather than in a box-shape.
- Has a 1.5-2m border at the base that is not sprayed. This allows wildflowers to grow and provide food. This long grass will also provide nesting habitat for bumblebees.
- It may have small areas of south or east facing exposed bare earth at the base to provide areas for mining solitary bees to nest.



The ideal native hedge is made up of 75% Whitethorn and 25% of at least 4 other species.



Intensively managed hedgerows don't offer flowers for bees or shelter for livestock.

Elder (May-Jun)



Spindle (May-Jun)



Wild roses (Jun-Aug)



Crab apple (May-Jun)



Rowan (May-Jun)



Bramble/Blackberry (May-Sept)



Ivy (Sept-Nov)

Reduce the frequency of mowing of grassy areas

If you have areas of grass, reducing the frequency of mowing allows common wildflowers like Clover, Knapweed and Bird's-foot-trefoil to naturally grow amongst the longer grass. This is the most cost-effective way to provide food for pollinators and other insects. Cutting grass less often might take a little getting used to for some of the congregation, but erecting signage will help explain these areas. This action can save both time and money.

The following suggested actions can be carried out side-by-side, transforming a large expanse of green grass into a mosaic of flowering areas of different heights.

Areas where it might apply: grounds around the Centre of Worship, parish centre, rectory grounds, presbyteries, convents, abbey, unused areas of graveyards.

Don't Mow Let it Grow
dontmowletitgrow.com

“There is only one time that is important - NOW! It is the most important time because it is the only time that we have any power” Leo Tolstoy

Long-flowering meadow

Short grass, short-flowering
6 week meadow

Cut grass as normal but let the Dandelions bloom!



Identify areas that will be mown under existing regimes, but aim to carry out the first grass cut of the year in April after the first flush of Dandelions, but before they set seed. While perhaps not the most loved of God's creatures, Dandelions are a vital food source for bees in spring!

“

Dandelions are orange star bursts and the only plant that represent the sun, moon and stars! The yellow flower represents the sun, the puff ball of seeds resembles the moon and the disappearing seeds are the stars. Up until the 1800's people would pull grass out of their lawns to make room for dandelions and other useful 'so called weeds'! Fr Simon's Bee Blog 2018; Fr Simon Sleeman OSB, Glenstal Abbey

Create a short-flowering '6-week meadow' (wildflower lawn)

Identify areas of grass that could be cut on a 6-weekly rotation to allow Clovers and Bird's-foot-trefoil to flower. This will provide food for pollinators where short-mown grass does not. Such areas could be beside areas of short-mown grass. Avoid the use of weed killers or fertiliser on these areas.

“

When the eyes and the ears are open, even the leaves on the trees teach like pages from the scripture” Kabir



Grass cut in a spiral,
Carlow Church

Mow once a year and aim to create a wildflower meadow

Meadows managed in the following way will allow wildflowers to bloom throughout the pollinator season. A further benefit is that bumblebees are provided with an undisturbed area for nesting. Over a number of years, the area will become more and more flower-rich with local species that are adapted to the site's conditions – all without spending money on wildflower seed!

- 1 Identify an area where it may be possible to allow a grassy meadow to grow
- 2 Wait until April to do the first grass cut - this allows the first flush of Dandelions
- 3 During the summer, let the grass grow long, perhaps cutting paths through the middle or keeping a short border at its edge to make it look tidier and allow everyone to enjoy the resource
- 4 Cut again in early September. However, if grass growth is very strong and the vegetation is falling over under its own weight, cut sooner e.g. July and again in September. After a few years, as soil fertility is lowered, this earlier cut will no longer be necessary and one cut at the end of the summer will be enough
- 5 The grass cuttings should be removed after each cut to reduce soil fertility over time. If the area is large and accessible to a tractor, it can be baled for hay or haylage. Otherwise rake it off the meadow area and compost it or use it as mulch or dispose of it as green waste [raking the small meadow could be a congregation event – Action 17].

Info box: Grassy meadows (Action 6) can be made more flower-rich at little cost by adding locally collected wildflower seed like Knapweed or Scabious. This seed can be grown in little pots and added as plugs to the grassy meadow in spring or autumn. Collecting and growing pollinator-friendly wildflower seed might be something in which local schools, youth groups or other groups within the congregation could get involved. See website: How-to-guide on collecting and using pollinator friendly wildflower seed.

Note: If you decide you want to immediately create a wildflower meadow by purchasing wildflower seed we strongly encourage you to consult this document which is available at www.pollinators.ie - How-to-guide on creating and managing a native wildflower meadow. This action requires significant preparatory work and can be costly. Please ensure you buy native seed collected and grown on the island of Ireland.

Important: Carefully select areas where you have long grass and use signage so everyone realises it is a deliberate action. School groups, youth groups or other groups within the faith community (e.g. Men's Sheds) could get involved in making signage.



Meadow year 1

Same meadow
by year 4

Your meadow may start out quite grassy but if you remove the cuttings each year it will gradually become more flower-rich

Pollinator-friendly planting

Traditionally garden planting has been with trees, shrubs or flowers that don't happen to be good sources of pollen or nectar and do not provide food for bees and other insects (e.g., Beech, Begonia, Daffodil, Primula). There are many other plants that are equivalent in cost and can look similarly attractive but will also support our pollinators.

Areas where it might apply: grounds around the Centre of Worship, parish centre, rectory grounds, presbyteries, convents, abbey, modern graveyards.

POLLINATOR
ACTION

7

Plant pollinator-friendly trees and shrubs

Planting pollinator-friendly trees provides a vital source of food, particularly in spring. Low maintenance once planted

Willow is a very important food source in early spring when bumblebee queens emerge from hibernation. Having Grey/Goat Willow or other native species, like Blackthorn, Whitethorn, Rowan, Crab apple or Wild Cherry as individual mature trees will provide important food for pollinators.

Other ideas: A small orchard (apples, pears, plums) can be a wonderful addition for both pollinators and the faith community.

Info box: Some non-native trees/shrubs are also good sources of pollen and nectar. Sycamore and Horse Chestnut will provide food but are large trees that require space. The following are low-growing options that are easy to maintain – can be cut after flowering if necessary, without specialised equipment.

Dwarf Crab Apple, Damson Plum, American currant, Laurustinus, Orange ball tree, Weeping cotoneaster, Weeping willow, Juneberry Tree, Oregon grape, Hebe, Darwin's barberry, Firethorn.



Plant perennial flowers for pollinators

Incorporate some pollinator-friendly perennial plants into future planting schemes to provide food for pollinators from spring through to autumn. Continuously planting and replacing annuals is not sustainable and these species generally do not provide food for pollinators.

The following ornamental plants are very low maintenance. Once the plants are established, they require only occasional weeding and mass pruning to approx. 10cm height when there is new growth appearing in spring.

Spring flowering	Early summer flowering	Late summer flowering
Helleborus	Calamint	Salvia
Comfrey	Comfrey	Stachys
Pulmonaria	Wallflower	Aster
Catmint	Thyme	Rudbeckia
Heathers	Oregano	Lavender

Natural rhythms - perennial flower beds will look dead in autumn and winter, coming back to life again in spring and coinciding with the emergence of pollinators from hibernation. This is nature in its natural rhythm, and is an opportunity to appreciate spring as a time of renewal. Winter-flowering heathers can be planted outside this to provide colour if it is felt necessary.

Other ideas: Areas can be regenerated for bees at very little cost by growing your own pollinator-friendly plants from seeds, cuttings and root divisions. You could ask community members to donate pollinator-friendly plants from their own gardens.

Other ideas: Plant a kitchen garden that can be used by the congregation, perhaps in collaboration with a local GIY (Grow it Yourself) group. Herbs are excellent sources of food for pollinators as well as people (e.g. Rosemary, Oregano, Thyme).

Other ideas: Construct an outdoor natural area for prayer/contemplation/relaxation/worship that is pollinator-friendly.



www.pollinators.ie

“ The Ministry of Healing in Belfast engaged a horticulturalist to advise on the prayer garden and this has led to her becoming a staff member and giving talks and demonstrations combining the themes of healing and flowers. Frequent plant sales to support the Ministry are a wonderful opportunity to talk to people about the benefits of pollinators and careful planning of their surroundings, and to highlight the healing ministry. –

Rev Dr Patricia Mollan, Belfast

Plant bulbs for pollinators

Tulips and Daffodils look attractive and are much loved by humans, but they are not a good food source for pollinators. Consider combining them with some other bulbs that are pollinator-friendly (e.g. Snowdrop, Crocus, Muscari, Allium).



Crocus



Muscari



Snowdrops

“ On this, your night of grace, O holy Father, accept this candle, a solemn offering, the work of bees and of your servants' hand, an evening sacrifice of praise, this gift from your most holy Church.” Imagine my delight when I truly heard this for the first time during the Easter Vigil, the most important liturgy in the whole year. An ancient prayer, prayed by the Church for 1500 years, that recognises the labour of bees equally with that of humans. **Sr. Enda Mullen, Ecologist and Holy Faith Sister**

Bee-friendly clover



Provide nesting places for wild bees

Nesting habitat for wild bees (bumblebees and solitary bees) is unobtrusive and easy to create. Wild bees live in small colonies and are entirely focussed on finding enough pollen and nectar to feed themselves and their offspring. They are not aggressive, have no interest in interacting with humans, and do not present any risk to the public.

Bumblebees nest in long grass, often at the base of a hedgerow. We have 62 species (types) of solitary bees who are mining bees. They nest by burrowing into bare ground or south/east-facing banks of bare earth (soil, sand, clay, peat). The remaining 15 solitary bee species are cavity-nesting bees, who nest in south/east-facing stone walls, masonry, wooden structures or commercially available bee nest boxes.

Areas where it might apply: grounds around the Centre of Worship, parish centre, rectory grounds, presbyteries, convents, abbey, graveyards.

POLLINATOR
ACTION

10

Provide nesting areas for Bumblebees

Bumblebees nest in long or tussocky grass.

- Leave small areas of long grass uncut until late autumn.
- Bumblebee colonies die off in October/November (when mated queens go into hibernation to overwinter) so it is okay to cut or manage these areas in late autumn/winter.



Leave small areas of long grass uncut until late autumn

POLLINATOR
ACTION

11

Provide nesting areas for mining solitary bees

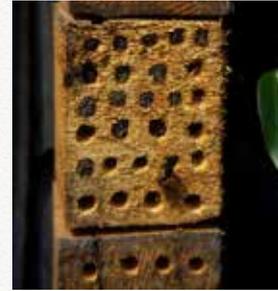
Our 62 species of mining solitary bees nest by making tiny burrows in bare earth (soil, sand, clay and peat). They will nest in flat well-drained areas, but generally prefer south/east-facing sheltered banks.

- Where earth banks exist, visit them on sunny evenings in May–September to see if they are being used by nesting solitary bees. You will see small bees returning, laden with yellow pollen. If you are lucky enough to find such nesting areas, protect these. Make sure no chemical sprays are used here. Consider identifying the site as special and under protection from sprays with a small sign or plaque.
- Using just a spade, you can create and maintain earth banks for mining solitary bees where natural ridges/banks occur. This is the best and most cost-effective way to create nesting habitat for solitary bees. Once established, they should be maintained by manual scraping back to bare soil on an annual basis. See website: How-to-guide for creating wild pollinator nesting habitat.

Action 12: Provide nesting areas for cavity-nesting solitary bees

Our 15 species of cavity-nesting solitary bees make their nests in existing cavities in south-facing stone walls, masonry, wooden structures or commercially available bee nest boxes.

- Drill small south or east-facing holes in wooden fences or concrete structures.
- Alternatively, create your own bee box by drilling holes in untreated wooden blocks and attaching them to an outdoor structure at a height of 1.5-2m. Installing a number of small boxes is better than one large one because it minimises the risk of disease and predation.
- Holes should be 10cm in depth and 4-8mm in diameter. It is important to have holes of different sizes for different bees.
- For more information on making bee boxes, see website: [How-to-guide for creating wild pollinator nesting habitat.](#)



Other ideas: School groups, youth groups or other groups within the faith community (e.g. Men's Sheds) could help with creating areas of bare soil or making bee boxes.

Other ideas: If you have sufficient space, consider working with local beekeepers to host a honeybee hive. Perhaps some of the honey could be sold to raise money for other activities in your faith community or for charity.



Grey mining bee in her nest



Bare soil for mining solitary bees

“The worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them: that's the essence of inhumanity” George Bernard Shaw

Reduce the use of herbicides

In some cases, the use of pesticides (insecticides, fungicides, herbicides) is necessary, e.g. the use of herbicides along railway tracks to ensure the health and safety of train passengers. In other cases, we have fallen into a pattern of using them as a way of tidying or sanitising our local areas.

Insecticides harm pollinators directly, but equally importantly, the use of herbicides can greatly reduce the wildflowers that pollinators depend on for food, making it hard for them to survive. Given how detrimental these chemicals are to pollinators and other wildlife, it is hard to justify their use on faith properties, except for public safety where it is the only option.

Areas where it might apply: grounds around the Centre of Worship, parish centre, rectory grounds, presbyteries, convents, abbey, graveyards.

POLLINATOR
ACTION

13

Eliminate the use of herbicides in as many areas as possible

Identify some areas where the use of herbicides could be eliminated. This could be graveyards, pollinator-friendly garden areas or other areas around places of Worship.

Manually removing weeds is more time consuming and will take greater effort. It may be necessary to identify a church group to share responsibility for this. You could try using a pressure cleaner to remove slippery moss instead of chemicals

Most herbicide use is along edging or tree bases that mowers can't access. Take stock and decide if this is really necessary. If you cannot eliminate their use, try to identify areas of south-facing edging that could not be sprayed to provide solitary bee nesting habitat.

Important exception: if you have a problem with invasive species like Japanese Knotweed these **must** be treated with herbicide as other methods of control will contribute to their spread. For more information see invasivespeciesireland.com



Ensure best practise where the use of herbicides cannot be avoided

If you cannot avoid using herbicides, identify areas that could be spot-treated rather than treating with blanket sprays.

Spray in dry conditions, with low wind speed, to prevent drifting. Spray after sunset to avoid direct contact of pollinators with chemicals.

“Some adults helped as part of our regular ‘Clean Up’ days to be more environmentally aware when cleaning, weeding, gardening, etc. in the church grounds. Following discussion, dangerous slippery moss was removed using a pressure cleaner, not chemicals” - Rev David White, Carlow

Info box: If we could learn to love Dandelions and see them as a welcome splash of colour, many more of our pollinators would survive spring.

Raise awareness of pollinators within your faith community

For the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan to be successful, we need to raise public awareness so that people know the importance of pollinators and understand why we all need to act. Faith communities can play a vital role in this regard.

“What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” - Laudato Si’

Promote the Junior Pollinator Plan

Promote the junior version of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan through Sunday Schools and children’s talks in worship; as well as to local schools and youth groups. This can be downloaded from the website www.pollinators.ie You can also download our How-to-guide for developing a school pollinator plan.

Other ideas: Perhaps the children could be encouraged to create displays to help inform adults in the faith community

“In Carlow, our Sunday school decided how to help pollinators. Their work culminated in a ‘Wear your Wellies to Church Day’ when the children completed their tasks.” - Ms. Carolyn Good, Sunday School Leader



‘Wear your wellies to Church Day’, Carlow

Celebrate Creation in the Liturgy and integrate the need to safeguard the earth into prayer/worship

“All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents.” - *Laudato Si'*

Depending on your faith, there are different events throughout the year that might provide a special focus for prayer/reflection. For example - Earth Hour, Earth Day (22nd April), World Bee Day (20th May), National Meadow Day (last Saturday in July), World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation (1st September), Harvest, feast of St. Francis of Assisi (4th October).

“Liturgy and all times of worship are always connected, and never isolated, from life beyond the walls of the worship-space. Through participation in this sacred time, the world and all that is in it is potentially transformed. Harvest thanksgiving services, Plough Sunday celebrations, using the Creation options in the Lectionary, World Day of Creation and themed homilies and children's talks are just some ways that awareness of environmental matters may be raised and action inspired” Rev David White, Carlow

Have a congregation action day

Once you've decided what pollinator-friendly actions you will take, you could hold a few 'Volunteer/Work Days' for both adults and children. This can also be an opportunity to bring people together and increase camaraderie. It could also apply to closed communities or more private religious properties, where it might involve bringing together members.

Other ideas: Encourage community members to make their own gardens pollinator-friendly.

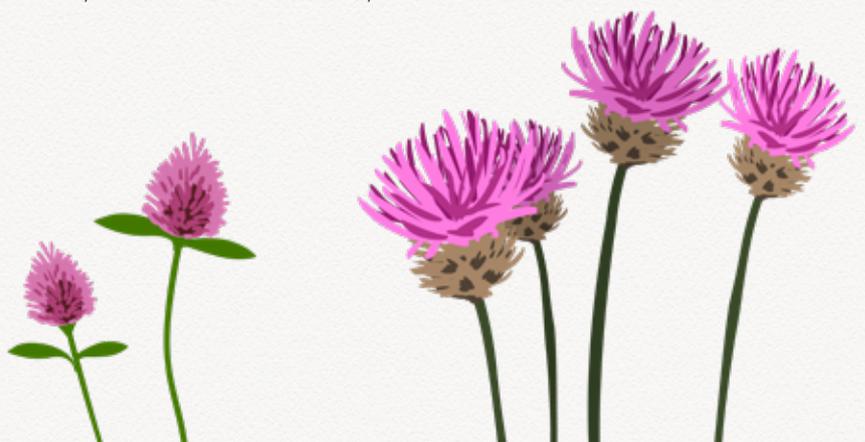
Distribute guidelines to homes in the faith community

Distributing the guidelines on how to make your garden pollinator-friendly, or the Junior Plan for children, can involve the wider community and help spread the word. All guidelines can be freely downloaded from the website in print-ready format.

Put up All-Ireland Pollinator Plan signage

Use signage to indicate to the wider community what actions are being taken to help pollinators. Basic templates can be freely downloaded from www.pollinators.ie and you can add text to personalise to your own faith community.

“If Ireland was truly green, it would be such a beacon of hope” Rev. Elaine Murray



Spread the message to your faith community and beyond

Faith communities can lead the way in encouraging a new way of managing our entire landscape that is more welcoming to all God's creatures.

Including details on pollinators and how you are helping on your website or Facebook page will help raise public awareness. We are very grateful to those who can help promote www.pollinators.ie as this site provides information on how everyone across society can help. Parish newsletters or equivalent could include news/updates or educational material about pollinators at different times of year.

Support pollinators in areas of the developing world

Consider supporting charities that encourage communities in developing countries to learn beekeeping as a way of alleviating poverty through honey or beeswax trade.



"As part of a greater awareness of the importance of pollinators in the developing world, three beehives were donated through the charity Bóthar following a recent church fundraising event" - Rev David White, Carlow

Apply to any relevant Eco Awards

Examples include:

Eco-Congregation Ireland Awards

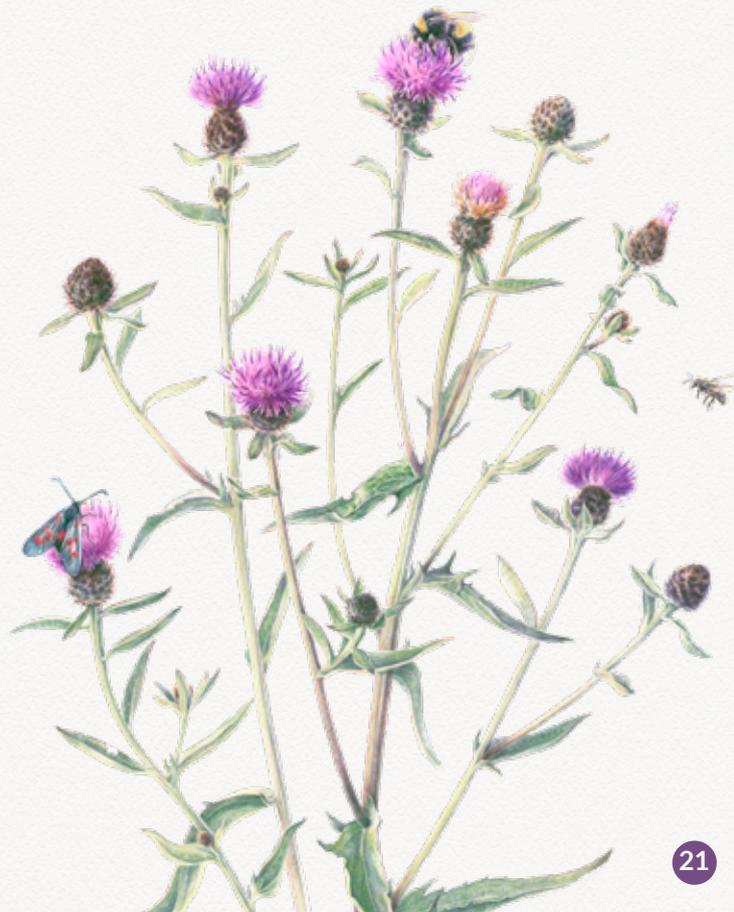
Faith groups can work towards receiving awards for environmental measures incorporated into all aspects of the community life. The aim is to help groups be more environmentally aware in four areas – the Spiritual, Practical, Community and Global aspects of faith life. They provide resources for all these areas and give awards for achievements under these headings.

<http://ecocongregationireland.com/>

COI Diocese of Cashel, Ferns & Ossory Eco Awards

- Motivation of the Young**
 The development of educational projects and the motivation of the under 18s.
 Eligibility: Parishes that have created an innovative method of involving young people in the care of the environment.
- Church Environs**
 The development and maintenance of church environs.
 Eligibility: Parishes that maintain or have developed their church environs with a particular awareness of the environment in their local area.

Other ideas: If your Diocese doesn't currently have an Eco Award, perhaps it is something worth suggesting to the relevant authorities.



Tracking progress and recognition for efforts

Progress in the implementation of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020 will be carefully tracked. Success is not measured in having the Plan, but by knowing that it is working.

A publicly available online mapping system will track pollinator-friendly actions taken across the island and provide recognition to those who are helping.

The All-Ireland Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme is a citizen science initiative managed by the National Biodiversity Data Centre. It will be used to track changes in wild pollinators as the Plan is implemented.

POLLINATOR
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Log your 'Actions for Pollinators' on the mapping system

A publicly available online mapping system (Actions for Pollinators) allows all those who take pollinator-friendly actions to log their location and the action(s) taken. This will track the build-up of food, shelter and safety for pollinators in the landscape. It is hoped that faith communities will use the system to log what they are doing and show the creation of pollinator resources in their area. Once established, the system will help coordinate efforts locally as well as provide recognition to all those helping.



See: pollinators.biodiversityireland.ie

POLLINATOR
ACTION

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Do a survey to record and identify the pollinators that can be seen on land managed by your faith community

See www.pollinators.ie for resources to help.

Perhaps you can even take part in the Bumblebee Monitoring Scheme. Identify interested people and set up at least one bumblebee monitoring scheme walk within the local area. In this scheme volunteers walk a fixed 1-2km route once a month between March and October and record the diversity and abundance of bumblebees that they see. The scheme is run by the National Biodiversity Data Centre who provide full support and training. The scheme is vital in tracking what is happening with wild pollinators in the landscape, and can be used to assess the effectiveness of any pollinator-friendly actions that are being taken locally. If interested in taking part, contact: info@biodiversityireland.ie

“

Our goals can only be reached through a vehicle of a plan, in which we must fervently believe, and upon which we must vigorously act. There is no other route to success” Pablo Picasso

Managing historic graveyards for pollinators

The normally low levels of human activity in historic graveyards makes them ideal refuges for wildlife. An old graveyard should be recognised as an oasis and a place where flora and fauna should be encouraged by undertaking a maintenance regime that welcomes nature into the graveyard. In many instances such maintenance regimes will be cheaper and will require less time than implementing a maintenance programme that is labour intensive and expensive.

You should consult with your local Heritage or Biodiversity Officer on the ecological value of the site before carrying out any works on the natural heritage of the graveyard.

- ✓ Historic graveyards are typically bounded by dry stone walls or walls bound with lime mortar. These walls provide an excellent place for cavity-nesting solitary bees to make their homes.
- ✓ Flowering hedgerows and old boundary banks provide an important habitat for pollinators. Hedges and trees should be allowed to flower. If trimming is necessary, it must be carried out between September and March. Pruning should only be done to remove dead or diseased branches, or to ensure the safety of monuments and visitors.
- ✓ Do not spray herbicides to control weeds or grass as it kills native plants and the insects that depend on them. This has follow-on effects as it reduces available food for bats, birds and other animals. As most historic graveyards are relatively small in area, it is usually feasible to use more environmentally-friendly plant control methods such as hoeing or digging or pouring on boiling water. Boiling water should not be used on or very close to graves or headstones.
- ✓ Application of fertiliser to graveyard grasslands is not necessary or desirable. Fertiliser causes certain grass and weed species such as docks and nettles to grow very strongly. Other native grasses and wildflowers cannot compete and eventually die out. This reduces the value of the graveyard grassland for pollinators.

- ✓ Unless vegetation is causing structural damage to buildings or walls, it is better to trim it back than to cut it down altogether. This helps maintain its value for insects and for birds.
- ✓ The introduction of new plants into a graveyard should not be necessary. Only shallow rooting plants, preferably of native origin, should ever be considered.
- ✓ The existing grassy undulating surface of the graveyard should be maintained as this feature is part of the character of an historic graveyard. The ideal way to manage it for pollinators is to allow the grass to grow into a meadow. This will encourage the growth of wildflowers to provide food and will also allow bumblebees to nest in the longer grass. Mowing narrow pathways through the meadow can create a natural and visually attractive pathway. These pathways have the added benefit of not causing any ground disturbance and therefore require no notification to the local authority or the National Monuments Service.
- ✓ Do not dispose of grass-cuttings and hedge-trimmings at the base of hedges, in ditches or in wildlife areas, as they suppress the natural flora. Neat and unobtrusive composting areas can be kept in the graveyard. Fresh or composted grass cuttings can be used to keep down weeds e.g. around the base of single trees.
- ✓ Where possible, old pathways should be maintained and kept clear of vegetation. These areas of bare ground can be extremely important for solitary bee nesting.

Killane historic graveyard has thousands of solitary bees nesting in the bare soil, Co. Wexford





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. Find out what biodiversity has already been recorded in your local area: maps.biodiversityireland.ie

Help us to build up the knowledge of biodiversity in your local area by submitting sightings to: records.biodiversityireland.ie

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