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National Biodiversity Data Series No. 23

Pollinator-friendly management of Sports Clubs

All-Ireland Pollinator Plan
www.pollinators.ie

Implementation coordinated by the National Biodiversity Data Centre

National Biodiversity Data Centre
A Heritage Council Programme

pollinators.ie
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WHO are our pollinators?

In Ireland, some plants are pollinated by the wind, but most are pollinated by insects. Most insect pollination is carried out by bees, while the rest is done by a variety of insect pollinators, including hoverflies, moths and butterflies. We have one type (species) of managed honeybee and 98 different wild bees. Our wild bees include 21 bumblebee and 77 solitary bee species. If we want to protect pollination services to both our wild plants and fruit and vegetable crops, we need to have an abundance and diversity of wild bees, as well as other insects.

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 for food. 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.

Pollinators also need plenty of safe nesting habitats. Bumblebees nest in long grass (often at the base of hedgerows). Most solitary bees nest by making little tunnels in bare soil, while a small number nest in existing cavities in dry stone walls, masonry or wood. It is important that we protect pollinators from chemicals that can be harmful to them. Insecticides harm them directly, but equally importantly, the use of herbicides greatly reduces the wildflowers that pollinators depend on for food, making it hard for them to survive.

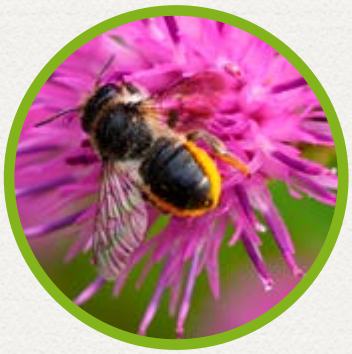
Cutting, mowing and spraying so that the countryside looks tidy - to us - means that we are squeezing nature out and risk losing its important free services, like pollination.

Image on Cover: NUI Galway sports fields

There are 99 different types of bee in Ireland:

Honeybee (1)

Bumblebees (21)

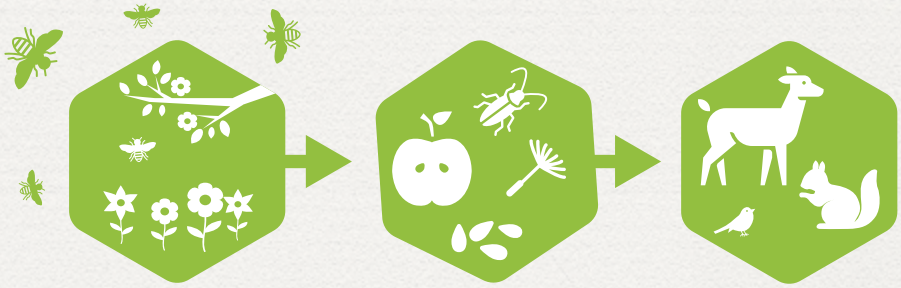


Solitary bees (77)

WHY do we need to help our pollinators?

- Pollinators are important to farmers who grow pollinator-dependent crops and to those of us who want to grow our own fruits and vegetables. Even if we don't currently grow these crops, we should aim to retain the ability to do so for future generations.
- Without bees, we will lose the colourful and distinct natural beauty of our landscape. Three quarters of our wildflowers also benefit from being pollinated by insects. These plants in turn provide important food, including fruits and seeds, for our wild mammals and birds, while also providing them with shelter.

78% of our wild plants benefit from insect pollination



More wild bees = more wild plants

more insects invertebrates, fruits & seeds

supports more birds and mammals

Actions you take to help pollinators will also benefit all types of biodiversity, including birds, bats and bugs in Ireland

All-Ireland Pollinator Plan

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. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is supported by over 100 governmental and nongovernmental organisations who have pledged to deliver actions to achieve this goal and make the island of Ireland more pollinator friendly. It is a shared plan of action.

Everyone, from farmers to councils, local communities, businesses, schools, gardens and transport authorities have a role to play in the Pollinator Plan. See www.pollinators.ie for how each sector can help through evidence-based actions.

"Making a site more biodiversity friendly produces human health benefits by creating opportunities for interactions with nature"

Sports Clubs

With approximately 15,000 sports clubs across the island, clubs can play a vital role in conservation of our biodiversity if managed in a pollinator-friendly way. Introducing pollinator-friendly management across sports clubs would create an entire network of safe places for bees and other insects across the landscape. The positive impact this could have is enormous.

This guide is aimed at those who have responsibility for managing Sports Clubs and their surroundings. It explains 5 ways to help pollinators. All these actions are evidence-based, i.e. scientific studies show these actions have a positive impact on pollinators.

Pollinators need food, shelter and safety and fortunately many of the actions we can take to help provide this are simple. They are also often 'do-not' actions rather than 'do', so that nature itself does the hard work.

Semi-natural habitats, such as heather-rich upland areas, native woodland and features like natural streams or ponds are extremely important general biodiversity habitats. Some pitches will be close to important coastal grassland habitats. Where sports clubs exist in these locations, these habitats should always be maintained as a priority.

Reduced mowing on banks beside pitches at Roger Casements GAC, Co. Antrim

Protecting Water Sources:

Many clubs have wetlands and waterways surrounding their sites, or small streams and drainage ditches running through the grounds. How we manage land around such waterways can have impacts on downstream drinking water sources, fish, and flooding mitigation.

- Wetlands, waterways and coastal areas provide a variety of biodiverse habitats and are a valuable natural resource.
- Wetlands help regulate flooding, while rivers and lakes provide us with much of our drinking water sources.
- Our waterways are vital for angling, tourism, recreation and amenity.
- How we manage natural areas (and protect them from pollution and pesticide run-off) and make room for nature in our daily lives, supports human health and community wellbeing.
- If a sports club has a well, an area of natural vegetation around the wellhead helps to protect water quality.

Human health benefits of pollinators and other biodiversity:

In addition to the Ecosystem Services provided by Biodiversity – including food, clothing, medicines, clean air, food, water, soils, flood mitigation, and carbon sequestration – it has been shown that exposure to nature in our daily lives is important to human health.

There is a growing number of studies showing the health benefits of spending time in nature. Walking in biodiversity-rich areas, such as woodlands or meadows, where people can see butterflies, bees and birds, has been shown to lower blood pressure, reduces stress, and help with concentration, depression and anxiety. Green prescriptions UK: Local natural outdoor spaces close to where people live provide huge untapped opportunities for improving health and wellbeing. The evidence for this is strong. Increasingly clinicians are referring patients to nature-based interventions for a variety of long-term conditions. There is emerging best practice in the UK, including the widely-acclaimed Branching Out programme, involving NHS Scotland. Green prescriptions can form a core part of achieving sustainability in the health system. (https://ecosystemsknowledge.net/events/green-prescriptions)

Wider Biodiversity Benefits

Climate Action

Health & Wellbeing Benefits

Benefits to Local Water Sources

Note: While all the actions in this booklet will benefit pollinators, positive water and climate actions, and those that especially benefit wider biodiversity or human health and wellbeing, are highlighted with these icons on the five action sections, A-E.

5 ways to make Sports Clubs biodiversity-friendly:

A Manage some off-pitch grass for pollinators

Following a pollinator-friendly grass management plan on some off-pitch areas will create a mosaic of grass heights to encourage the growth of wildflowers, including natural short-flowering meadows and long-flowering meadow areas.

ACTION 1. Create short-flowering meadows by mowing every 4 to 6 weeks.

ACTION 2: Manage some areas as natural long-flowering meadows

B Manage existing native hedgerows for biodiversity

Many sports clubs are surrounded by native hedgerows, which can be managed so that they flower to provide food for pollinators. This management means less maintenance and makes these hedgerows vital to the survival of pollinators, providing food, shelter and ecological corridors.

ACTION 3: Manage native hedgerows around club so that they flower each year

C Plant biodiversity-friendly trees, shrubs and flowers

Planting additional pollinator-friendly trees, shrubs, perennials and bulbs around the grounds provides vital sources of food, particularly in spring and autumn.

ACTION 4: Plant biodiversity-friendly trees around the club grounds

ACTION 5: Plant a new native hedgerow

ACTION 6: Make flower beds and containers pollinator friendly

D Reduce use of herbicides

Adopt a pollinator-friendly pesticide code. Reducing the use of herbicides will mean more wildflowers for pollinators to feed on.

ACTION 7: Consider strimming instead of spraying around fencing, goals and lights. Avoid spraying the base of trees or hedgerows.

E Provide nesting places for wild bees

Wild pollinators need safe places where they can breed: such as the base of hedgerows, bare earth banks, drilled wood and bee hotels.

ACTION 8: Provide safe nesting sites for Bumblebees

ACTION 9: Provide safe nesting sites for mining solitary bees

ACTION 10: Provide safe nesting sites for cavity-nesting solitary bees

You can register what actions you have taken at your club on our online mapping system: **pollinators.biodiversityireland.ie**

A Manage some off-pitch grass for pollinators

On areas outside of playing pitches, changing the frequency of mowing allows common wildflowers such as Clovers, 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. This is not a reduction in management effort, but a reallocation to provide additional benefits.

POLLINATOR ACTION 1

Create short-flowering '4 to 6-week meadows'

- Identify areas of grass where you can reduce mowing to cut on a 4 to 6-weekly rotation.
- If possible, don't mow until mid-April to allow Dandelions to flower.
- Cuttings should always be removed to reduce soil fertility.
- This regime keeps grass at a manageable level, while increasing the growth of wildflowers as a food source for pollinators. Such areas could be beside pitches, paths or edging an annual meadow. Signage can be used to identify these areas as deliberate.

If necessary, cutting can be increased or decreased depending on the use of the area, but if at all possible, grass should not be cut from the beginning of March until mid-April (Dandelion peak) or from the end of May until mid-July (Clover peak). A path could also be cut through short-flowering meadows for jogging/ walking or as part of a nature trail for local schools.

Reduced mowing provides free superfoods for pollinators:

Dandelion
Mar-April*

Clovers
May-July

Bird's-foot-trefoil
Jul-Aug

*Peak flowering season

4-6-week meadow

We may not recognise this as a wildflower meadow but this type of growth, with clovers and Bird's-foot-trefoil provides lots of food for pollinators. Where you are reducing mowing, the diversity of wildflowers will increase with time. It's very important to always remove cuttings to reduce soil fertility.

Note:
Fertilisers promote grass and weed growth. Do not use them on a site where you want wildflowers to grow (wildflowers grow best in infertile soils). Bear in mind that your site may also be experiencing fertiliser run-off from adjacent areas.

Unmown areas left for nature, near wetlands/waterways can act as buffers against overland run-off.

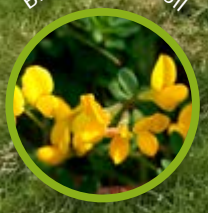
Vetches

Oxeye Daisy

Knapweed

Dandelion

Bird's-foot-trefoil

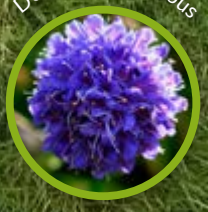


Hogweed

Selfheal

Clover

Devil's-Bit-Scabious



Look around your club grounds to see if there are areas suitable for reducing mowing, such as here, behind pitches and in unused corners.

There may be large areas behind goalposts or along fence lines that could be mowed every four to six weeks to maintain short-flowering meadows.

During lockdown due to COVID19, reduced mowing at St. Ita's GAA in Youghal, Co. Cork, resulted in a profusion of thousands of pyramidal orchids, showing the potential for rare plants to grow if we simply reduce mowing.

POLLINATOR ACTION 2

Manage some areas as natural long-flowering meadows

Identify areas of grass that could be left uncut until September - one cut and lift per year.

- Larger land areas around edges of site, such as behind goals, may be suitable for these long-flowering wildflower meadows. Meadows managed in this way will allow wildflowers to bloom throughout the pollinator season and provide undisturbed areas for nesting.
- The annual cut in September should always be removed to reduce soil fertility over time, as wildflowers grow best in less fertile soils. Local farmers may be willing to cut and bale grass to use as fodder for livestock.
- Under this management, over a number of years, the meadow will naturally become more flower-rich with local species that are adapted to the site's conditions – all without spending money on wildflower seed. (note: if necessary on your site, you can also mow in March to remove heavy winter growth)
- Consulting with club members and keeping them informed of plans can allay fears that changed mowing regimes are due to lack of management. Signage can also be used to identify areas as deliberate.
- Cutting paths through the middle or keeping a short border at the edge will demonstrate that these meadows are being managed and allow club members and walkers to enjoy the resource.

Portlaoise GAA are working with nature to deliver multiple benefits for their new club grounds. Native trees and hedgerows were planted strategically around the grounds to create shelter for the pitches. These trees have had the added bonus of enhancing the visual appearance of the grounds and creating great habitat for wildlife. Strips of wildflower meadow around the trees add colour and define the walking trail around the perimeter of the grounds. Swift boxes have also been installed on club buildings as part of the wider effort in the town to protect this native bird.

Pathways are mown through meadows to allow walkers to enjoy this biodiversity corridor at Portlaoise GAA.

B Maintain native flowering hedgerows

POLLINATOR ACTION 3

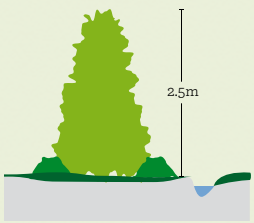
Manage native hedgerows around the club so that they flower each year

Native hedgerows line the perimeter of many sport clubs and are important corridors for pollinators and other wildlife and help maintain linkages within the landscape. Flowering hedgerows that contain Willow, Whitethorn, Blackthorn and Hazel, provide vital food in spring when bees emerge from hibernation. Bramble is a good source of food in summer, and Ivy in autumn. Bumblebees often nest in long grass at the base of hedgerows.

Native hedgerow provides both biodiversity benefits and also shelter from wind for players and spectators.

Hedgerow management to encourage flowering:

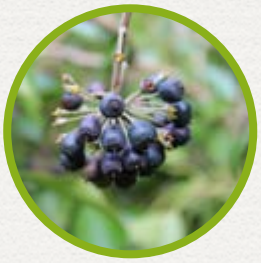
- Where possible, cut hedgerows on a minimum 3-year cycle. Cutting annually stops the hedgerow flowering and fruiting.
- Where hedgerows must be cut for road safety, allow the inside to flower.
- Let some hedgerows grow wild, side-trimming only.
- Where possible, cut in rotation rather than all at once - this will ensure some areas of hedgerow will always flower (Blackthorn flowers in March, while Whitethorn will appear white in May).
- Hedges managed for pollinators should ideally be cut between November and January. If they must be cut outside of this, cut sections in rotation, so some areas remain undisturbed.
- Let some Bramble and Ivy grow in hedgerows, as key food sources in summer and autumn.
- Having a 1.5-2m grass border at the base (that is not cut or sprayed) will provide nesting habitat for bumblebees, as well as allowing wildflowers to grow and provide additional food.



A pollinator-friendly hedgerow should be flowering, at least 2.5m in height, and should be trimmed in an A-shape.

- If your club grounds are adjacent to a water course (even a drain) maintaining a hedgerow has co-benefits for water quality by providing a buffer that reduces overland run-off of pesticides (in the case of sports clubs, most often herbicides), sediment and fertilisers.
- This buffering effect is further enhanced by leaving 1.5 to 2m of vegetation uncut at the base of the hedge.
- Hedgerows also provide welcome shade for fish and insect life and help to control water temperatures in hot weather. Hedgerows can also provide some woody debris that allows smaller fish to hide from predators.
- If there happens to be a river adjacent to the grounds, natural hedges and bordering scrub and vegetation help to stabilise the riverbank and reduce bank erosion, which can result in damage to instream habitat.

The hedgerow on the left of stream acts as a buffer that reduces chemical run-off. The land on right has been sprayed along the bank.
You should always avoid spraying chemicals close to drains and watercourses.



Bramble and Ivy offer lots of pollen-rich flowers for bees, and then fruit for birds in autumn and winter

Native Biodiversity-friendly Trees

All native tree planting is a climate action, and will benefit biodiversity, as well as human health and wellbeing.

Those trees that are specifically good for pollinators are highlighted with the bee icon.

Hawthorn/ Whitethorn

Hawthorn/ Whitethorn is also called the 'Maybush' because of its beautiful display of blossoms each May. It is a common hedgerow species, but can also be grown as a standalone tree - a very wildlife-friendly option, producing lots of flowers for pollinators and red haws in autumn for birds to enjoy. Hawthorn supports c.149 insect species.

Blackthorn

Blackthorn provides a home for 109 insect species. Related to cherries and plums, the fruit of the blackthorn resemble small plums and are enjoyed by lots of animals, including wood mice, finches and foxes.

Oak

Oak is Ireland's national tree and its ability to sustain biodiversity makes it hugely important to our wildlife. Oak supports 284 different insect species, 324 lichens, and can live for 1,000 years. While Oak is a large tree when fully grown - growing up to 40m in height - perhaps there is room in a club with large grounds for such an important tree.

Willow

Willow supports 266 insect species and 160 lichens. Goat or Grey willows are wonderful plants for pollinators as they provide lots of pollen and nectar in their tiny flowers in early spring when there is little else in flower. Willows can be grown easily from cuttings.

Ash

Ash is a common native Irish tree, which supports 41 native insects and 255 lichens. The wood from ash trees has been used to make hurleys for thousands of years.

Rowan

Rowan is also known as 'Mountain Ash' as it has similar leaves to the ash tree. Rowan supports 28 insects and 125 lichens. It is a very attractive tree, with white flower clusters in spring for pollinators, and red berries in autumn.

Birch

Birch can be recognised by its silver-white peeling bark. Birch supports 229 insect species and 126 lichens. In spring, its growth of seed-rich yellow-brown catkins attracts birds.

Hazel

Hazel is a small native tree or shrub that produces edible hazelnuts in autumn for mammals and birds. Hazel also supports 73 insect species and 160 lichens.

Wild Cherry

Wild Cherry is a pretty native tree that will provide food for pollinators as well as fruit for birds.

Crab Apple

Crab Apple can be found in many of our old native hedgerows. It supports 93 insect species, including pollinators, and crab apples provide food for birds and mammals in autumn.

*Insect & lichen diversity based on UK Research and refers to Britain. It is included here to demonstrate how important different native trees are to biodiversity. Ref. Southwood, T.R.E (1961) The number of species of insect associated with various trees. *J. Animal Ecology* 30:1-8. Rose F. and Harding, P.T. (1978) Pasture and woodlands in Lowland Britain and their importance for the conservation of the epiphytes and invertebrates associated with old trees. Nature Conservancy Council & The Institute of Terrestrial Ecology.

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C Plant biodiversity-friendly trees, shrubs and flowers.

In order to survive, pollinators need flowers that produce lots of nectar (for energy) and pollen (for protein).

If you want to make your sport club pollinator-friendly, the key is to avoid 'hunger gaps,' or times when there are no nectar or pollen-rich flowers in bloom. There are a huge variety of flowering plants to choose from that are colourful, attractive, and can provide pollinators with the food they need.

Planting additional pollinator-friendly trees, shrubs, perennials and bulbs around the grounds provides vital sources of food, particularly in Spring.

POLLINATOR ACTION 4

Plant biodiversity-friendly trees around the club grounds

Planting additional pollinator-friendly trees provides a vital source of food, particularly in spring, and are 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 around the grounds will provide important food for pollinators.

Trees can be planted as a biodiversity-friendly mini-woodland or linear strip of native trees along a biodiversity walking trail. See page 27

Kilmeen/Kilbree GAA, Co. Cork, devoted some of the club's land to planting pollinator-friendly plants and 1,000 native trees (a mix of oak, birch, rowan, alder and hawthorn), with help from children in Kilmeen National School and Kilmeen and Castleventry Community Development Association (KCCDA). "This is a win-win for our community, our club, our climate and our biodiversity." - Orla Harrington, KCCDA.

Plant a Community Orchard:

Planting a community orchard is an excellent climate action that also helps local biodiversity. The apple blossoms provide food for pollinating insects, while club members will reap the rewards, with fruit to enjoy each autumn. By sourcing heritage variety trees from the Irish Seed Savers Association, you are also preserving local genetic stock.

See http://irishseedsavers.ie/

Plant Pollinator-Friendly Shrubs

There are a range of pollinator-friendly native and non-native shrubs that are very low maintenance and can create beds that offer lots of food for pollinators throughout the year.

POLLINATOR ACTION 5

Plant a new native hedgerow

On new sites or where you are considering replacing fencing, or an old non-native hedge, it is worth considering planting a new native hedgerow.

The ideal native hedgerow is made up of 75% Whitethorn and 25% of at least four other species, for instance: Blackthorn, Hazel, native Willows, Wild Cherry, White beam, Spindle, Rowan, Wild Roses, or Elder.

To be pollinator-friendly, a native hedgerow must be managed so that as much as possible is allowed to flower each year. See Action 3 for information on pollinator-friendly hedgerow *management*.

Native flowering hedgerow plants that are good for pollinators:

Spring — Autumn

Planting a native hedgerow also creates a resource for foraging for fruits such as rosehips, blackberries, haws, sloes, elderberries, and hazelnuts.

Whitethorn flowers in May, bringing spring colour to sport clubs with native hedgerows.

POLLINATOR ACTION 6

Make flower beds and containers pollinator friendly

Perennial flower beds placed at the club entrance or around club buildings will grow back year after year and provide a vital pollinator food source. Incorporating some pollinator-friendly plants in window boxes, hanging baskets or other containers can be very colourful and brighten up any community building.

Perennial flower beds are more sustainable as they will last for over a decade, unlike traditional bedding plants, such as begonias and busy lizzies, which are also not pollinator friendly.

For more extensive pollinator-friendly plant lists – for trees, shrubs, perennials and bulbs – please see our Planting Code: **https://pollinators.ie/resources**

Grow Your Club Colours!

Plant a pollinator-friendly flower bed in your club colours. A bed of Rudbeckia, a pollinator-friendly perennial, could be a good option for Roger Casements GAA, Co Antrim, or a Kilkenny club, for example.

Examples of pollinator-friendly perennials:

BLUE	WHITE	GREEN
Catmint (*Nepeta species*)	Perennial Candytuft (*Iberis sempervirens*)	Spurge (*Euphorbia species*)
Bellflowers (Campanula species)	Perennial Phlox (*Phlox paniculate*)	Green hellebore (*Helleborus viridis*)
Comfrey (*Symphytum 'Hidcote Blue'*)	Common Star of Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum umbellatum*)	Common asparagus (*Asparagus officinalis*)
Globe Thistle (*Echinops species*)	Baneberry (*Actaea japonica*)	Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*)
Viper's Bugloss (*Echium vulgare*)	Sweet Alyssum (*Lobularia maritima*)	Stipa 'Ponytails ' (*Stipa tenuissima*): grass to provide structure

PURPLE	YELLOW	RED
Lavender (Lavandula species)	Yellow Wallflower (*Erysium 'Bredon'*)	Oriental Poppy (*Papaver orientale*)
Wallflower 'Bowles's Mauve' (*Erysimum 'Bowles's Mauve'*)	Goldenrod (*Solidago species*)	Helen's Flower (*Helenium species*)
Lamb's Ear (*Stachys byzantine*)	Coneflower (*Rudbeckia species*)	Dahlias (*'Bishop of Llandaff'*)
Lungwort (*Pulmonaria species*)	Tickseed (*Coreopsis species*)	Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)
Michaelmas daisy (*Aster 'Little Carlow'*)	Mullein (*Verbascum species*)	Gladiolus Variety (*Gladiolus species*)

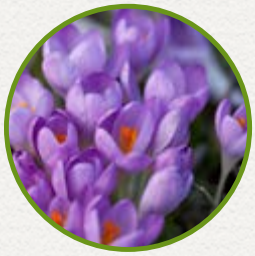
Plant pollinator-friendly bulbs

While native plants are always best for biodiversity, you can also add horticultural or non-native planting to provide food for pollinators throughout the year.

Traditionally, deliberate planting has been with annuals such as Begonia, Primula or Busy Lizzie; or with bulbs such as Daffodil or Tulip. Unfortunately, these are not good sources of pollen or nectar (as they have been bred to be very 'showy') and do not provide food for bees and other insects. Where used, it is recommended they be combined with more pollinator-friendly bulb planting. Bulbs can be planted at club entrance, around the base of trees and/or in long grass areas.

The following bulbs are pollinator-friendly:

- Snowdrop (Jan-Feb), e.g. *Galanthus nivalis*, *Galanthus elwesii*
- Crocus (Feb-March)
- *Muscari armeniacum* (March-May)
- Allium (June-July)
- Single flowered Dahlia, especially Bishop series (July-November)
- *Colchium* (September-October)



Make planters pollinator-friendly

There are plenty of actions suitable for urban clubs with little green space, for instance using pollinator-friendly planters.

Tubs and window boxes can be planted with pollinator-friendly varieties.

You can also make hanging baskets pollinator-friendly by adding in pollinator-friendly flowers such as Bidens and Bacopa.

Grow Your Club Colours!

There are a range of pollinator-friendly bulbs which could be chosen to represent your club colours. For example, Alliums could be used for Wexford.

D Reduce use of herbicides

Insecticides can harm pollinators directly, killing them outright or affecting their behaviour and ability to complete their life cycle. Fungicides and herbicides harm pollinators indirectly: herbicides can greatly reduce the wildflowers pollinators depend on for food, while fungicides can increase the toxicity of some insecticides.

Herbicides play a role in many sports clubs, but can be used sustainably under the relevant policies across the island of Ireland. Even if you do use herbicides, there may be small actions that could be taken to reduce their use and help pollinators.

A note on risks to local water:

- Where sports clubs are near rivers or streams, it is worth reconsidering pesticide use. A single drop of pesticide can breach the drinking water limit in a small stream for 30km.
- Avoid spraying chemicals close to drains and watercourses.

POLLINATOR ACTION 7

Consider strimming instead of spraying around fencing, goals and lights. Do not spray the base of trees or hedgerows.

- Around the base of goal posts, fencing or lights, can these areas be mowed or strimmed as an alternative to using pesticides?
- Always follow pesticide instructions and follow the pollinator-friendly pesticide code.
- Avoid spraying non-mowed areas where wildflowers are or could grow.
- Where weed control is necessary, pull or use selective spot treatment where possible.
- Avoid spraying pollinator nesting sites such as soil banks or stone walls

Where pesticide is currently being used, it is worth asking if it is necessary to control growth in these areas.

E Provide nesting places for wild bees

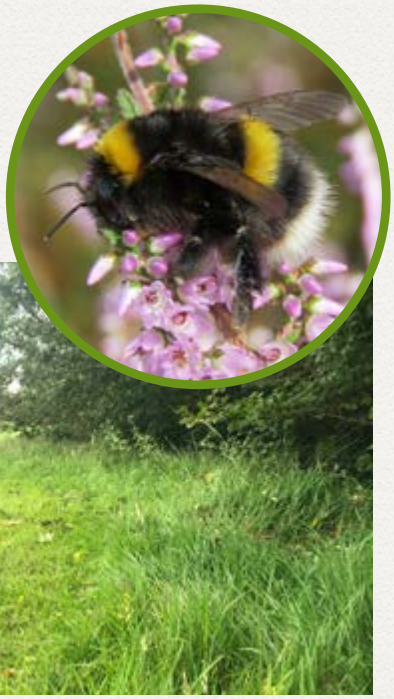
Creating good nesting habitat for wild bees is simple and inexpensive.

POLLINATOR ACTION 8

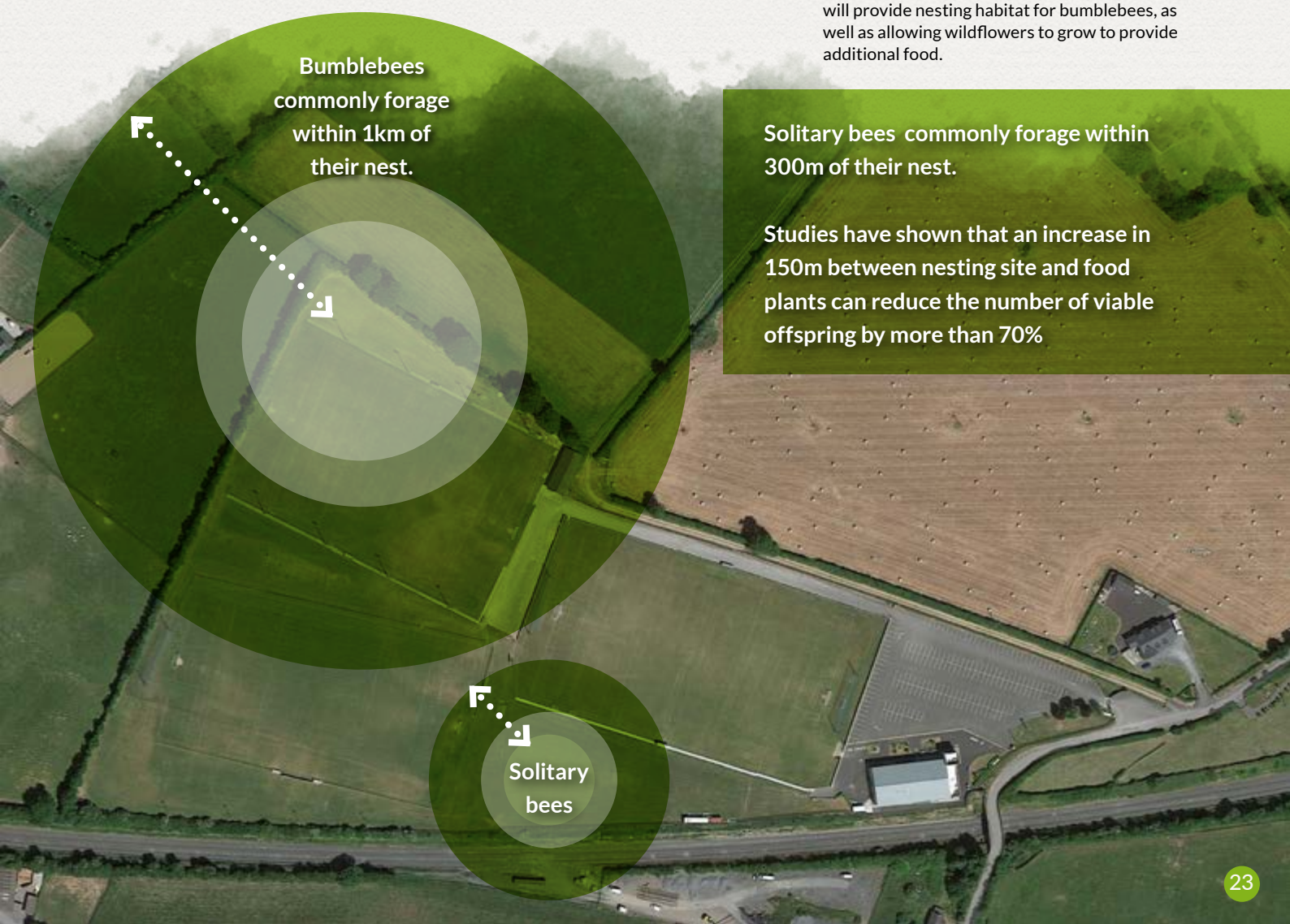
Provide safe nesting sites for Bumblebees

Bumblebees nest in long or tussocky grass.

- Leave long grass along the base of hedgerows uncut from March until October.
- Bumblebee colonies die off in October/ November (while mated queens go into hibernation for winter), so it is okay to cut or manage these areas in late autumn/winter.



Leave at least a 1.5-2m grass border at the base of hedgerows (that is not sprayed). This longer grass will provide nesting habitat for bumblebees, as well as allowing wildflowers to grow to provide additional food.



POLLINATOR ACTION 9

Provide safe nesting sites 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 there is south or east-facing exposed bare earth, allow these areas to remain, and remove vegetation that appears in future.
- In winter, create new earth banks elsewhere by scraping away top layer of soil – suitable bee banks just need to be stable and free draining. (avoid creating these areas anywhere that is vulnerable to soil erosion).

At Roger Casements GFC in Portglenone, Co. Antrim, volunteers have created extensive bee banks, removing vegetation from south or east-facing banks around the pitches to keep soil exposed for mining bees.

POLLINATOR ACTION 10

Provide safe nesting sites for Cavity-nesting Solitary bees

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

- Drill small holes in south or east-facing 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.
- Installing a number of small boxes at various points around the grounds 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, and should be placed at a height of at least 1.5-2 metres. It is important to have holes of different sizes for different bee species.

Keep a corner of nettles for butterflies

A patch of nettles could be allowed to grow in safe corners of sports grounds to provide a habitat for breeding butterflies. The common nettle is the food plant for caterpillars of the Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Comma and Peacock Butterfly (seen here).

Raising awareness:

To help spread the word about pollinators and the actions we can take to help them, we've published guidelines for a number of different sectors including local communities, schools, gardeners, farmers, businesses, and more. Your club can support the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan by raising awareness in these sectors.

By using signage or information panels to let club members and visitors know what you are doing, and why, you will be helping to contribute to the conservation of pollinators and biodiversity beyond the club's property.

Printable sign templates are available for download as www.pollinators.ie/resources

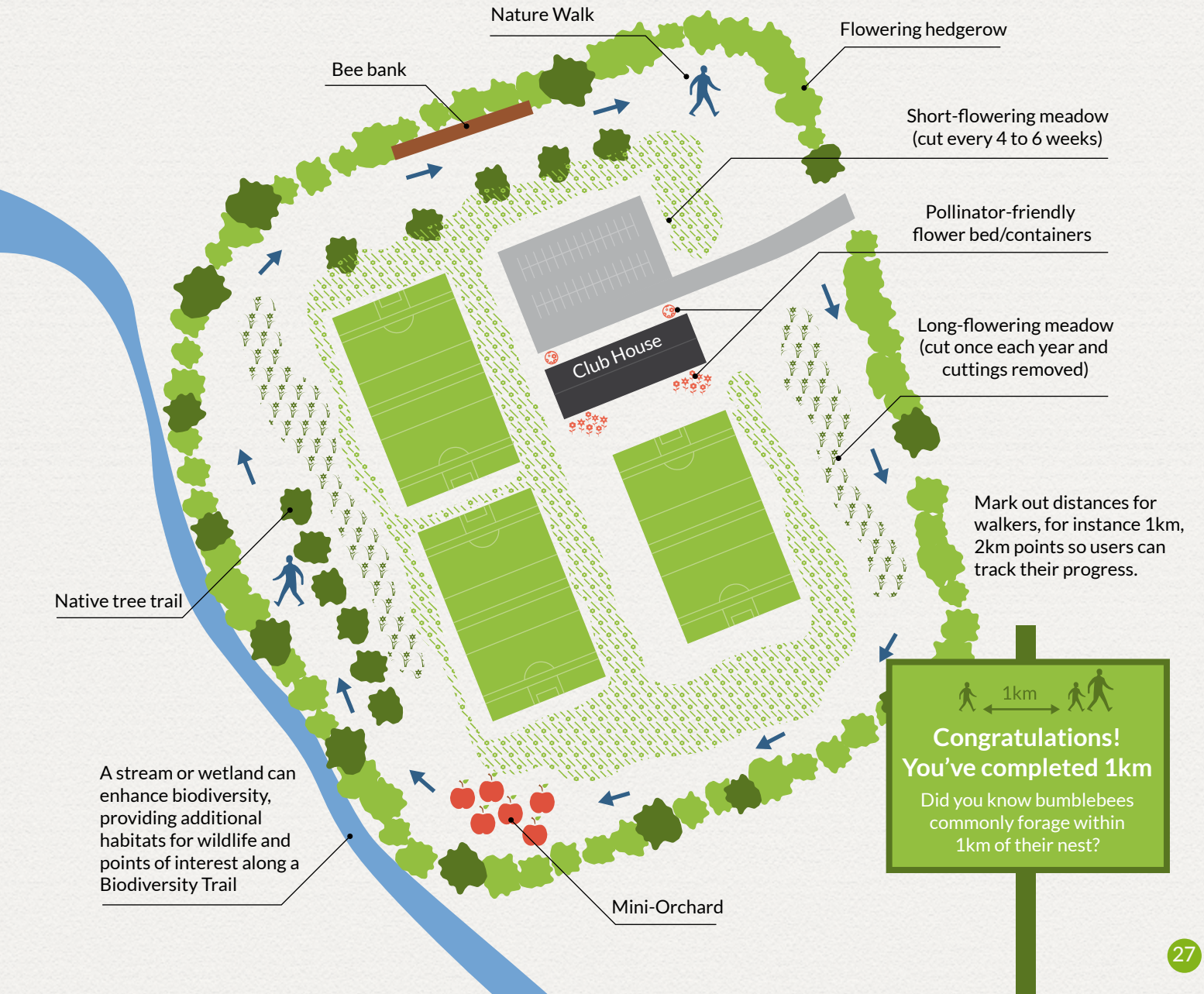
Pollinator mural at Moore Park, Co. Laois

Roger Casements GFC, Co. Antrim, run inter-generational biodiversity workshops.

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.



This booklet is one of a series of Guidelines 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*

National Biodiversity Data Centre
A Heritage Council Programme

Safety Note: It is safe to encourage bumblebees and solitary bees on sports grounds. Wild bees do not live in large colonies that need to be defended as honeybees might. Wild bees have no interest in humans, are not aggressive and pose no threat.

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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. 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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