

# All-Ireland Pollinator Plan

[www.pollinators.ie](http://www.pollinators.ie)



Implementation coordinated by the

National Biodiversity



## What can you do to help pollinators?

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[www.pollinators.ie](http://www.pollinators.ie)



Tawny Mining Bee  
(Pic: Steven Falk)



White-tailed Bumblebee  
(Pic: Steven Falk)



Irish Black Bee  
(Pic: Jane Sellars)



## What are pollinators?

Insects that transfer pollen between plants, leading to fertilization.

There are 99 wild bee species on the island of Ireland

- **1 honeybee**
- **21 bumblebees**
- **77 solitary bees**



# What's the problem?

- One third of bee species in Ireland is threatened with extinction
  - Habitat loss
  - Decline in wildflowers
  - Pests and disease
  - Pesticides
  - Climate change
- 78% of our wild plants are pollinated by insects
- 100 crops provide 90% of the world's food. 71 of these are pollinated by bees.



# 1. Don't mow let it grow

- Pollinators need species-rich grasslands.
- Reducing mowing allows native wildflowers to return naturally over time.
- Short-flowering meadow:
  - Cut every 6 weeks starting mid-April
- Long-flowering meadow:
  - Cut once a year in September providing food and shelter.



Pic: Dara Stanley



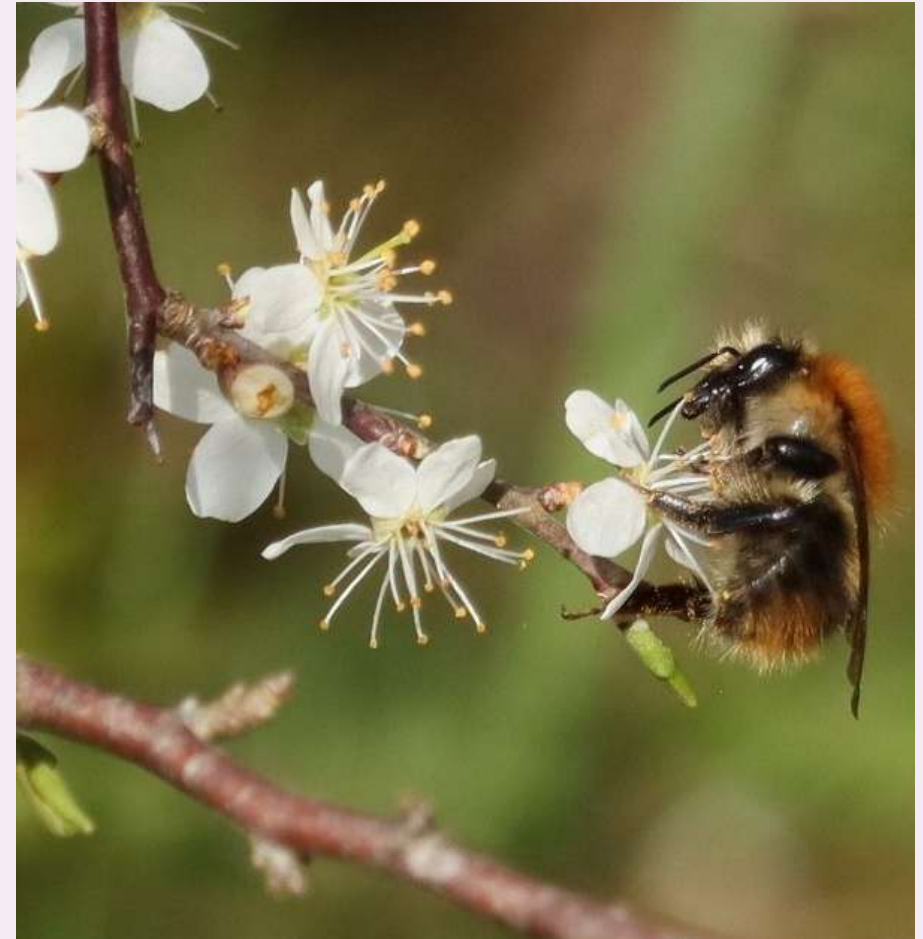
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## 2. Manage native hedgerows for biodiversity

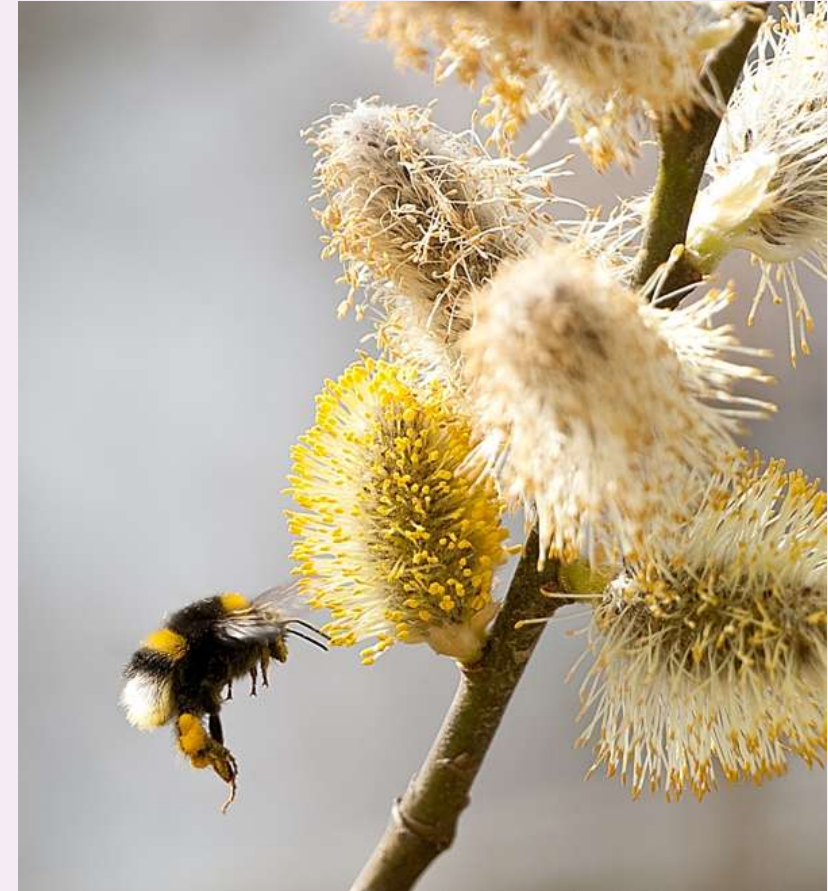
- Native hedgerow such as Hawthorn and Blackthorn flower in spring, providing important food for pollinators emerging from hibernation.
- Flowers grow on older wood, so avoid cutting annually
- Cut on a three-year rotation in a natural A shape



Common Carder Bee on Blackthorn Pic: Lill Dunne

### 3. Plant pollinator-friendly trees

- Native trees and shrubs such as Willow, Rowan, Crab Apple and Holly support huge numbers of pollinators.
- Plant a young tree in the autumn or winter, or grow them from seed, or allow mature trees to grow in your hedgerow.
- Avoid areas that you could return to species-rich grassland by reducing mowing.



Bumblebee and a willow flower



## 4. Avoid pesticides

- Herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides
- These chemicals have been found to kill, harm, and disorientate pollinators, either directly through exposure or indirectly by killing or poisoning their food.
- ‘Weeds’ such as dandelions are often an important food source for pollinators



1. Dandelion (more than double number of sightings of Knapweed!)
2. Knapweed
3. Bush Vetch
4. Heather
5. Clovers (Red & White)
6. Ragwort
7. Bramble
8. Bird's-foot-trefoil
9. Willow
10. Lavender

### Top plants each month in 2021:

Month	Most important food plants – in descending order
February	Garden heathers, Crocus, Mahonia, Hellebores
March	Garden heathers, Dandelion, Willow, Flowering Currant, Rosemary
April	<b>Dandelion**</b> , Flowering Currants, Berberis, Willow
May	Dandelion, Bush Vetch, Bird's-foot-trefoil, Cotoneaster, Apple blossom
June	Bush Vetch, Red Clover, Bramble, Buttercup, White Clover
July	Knapweed, Bramble, Lavender, Thistles
August	<b>Knapweed*</b> , Ragwort, Lavender, Bramble, Buddleia, Bird's-foot-trefoil
September	Knapweed, Ragwort, Devil's-bit-scabious, Sedum
October	<b>Ivy*</b> , Devil's-bit-scabious

\* indicates where this was a clear favourite over the other species (based on the data received). Wild bees are typically active from February until October.



## 5. Create nesting habitat

- Wild pollinators nest in hedgerows, long grass, dry stone walls, and in bare earth.
- Scrape back some bare earth on sunny slopes
- Drill holes 10cm deep in unvarnished wood for solitary nesting bees
- Choose areas near flowers
  - Bumblebees travel 1km
  - Solitary bees only travel a few hundred metres



Common Carder Bee flying out of a tussocky grass nest

## 6. Pollinator-friendly planting

- Choose nectar and pollen-rich plants. Try to choose plants that will provide food throughout the year.
- Perennials are generally better than annuals
- Bidens and Bacopa look great in containers and hanging baskets
- Herbs such as Rosemary, Thyme, and Chives
- Bulbs like Snowdrops, Crocuses, and Grape Hyacinth provide vital early food





## 7. Think twice about getting honeybee hives

- On the island of Ireland, we have one native honeybee and it is not in decline.
- Our other wild bee species are under threat – too many honeybee hives can lead to competition for food.



Bumblebee and Honeybee (Pic: Michael Ryan)

## 8. Be careful with wildflower seed mixes

- Wildflower seed mixes have been found to contain non-native species and can inadvertently introduce invasive species.
- If you must use them, make sure they are native species and of Irish origin.
- Or, collect seeds from local wildflowers in August when meadows drop their seeds.





## 9. Don't install a large bee hotel

- Large bee hotels can encourage the spread of disease and attract predators.
- Avoid anything larger than an average-sized bird box.



A bee hotel should be no bigger than an average bird box

## 10. Spread the word and get involved

- Talk to your council, school, college, or workplace about the actions they are taking for pollinators
- Join a community group or your local Tidy Towns.



Buncrana Tidy Towns



# Find out more

- Lots of resources on our website [pollinators.ie](http://pollinators.ie)
- Including resources for:
  - Gardeners
  - Community groups
  - Schools
  - Businesses
  - Farmers
- Free signage to download
- Free course in how to identify and record common Irish bumblebees

