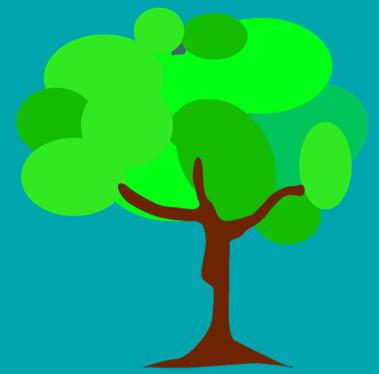


GREEN SHOOTS

maynooth green campus

NEWSLETTER



Issue 5 May 2022

Welcome to the fifth Maynooth Green Campus Newsletter!

Welcome to Issue 5 of Green Shoots. In this issue you will find articles on the events and initiatives of the Maynooth Green Campus and our collaborators from the past 6 months. These include the MU Green and Biodiversity Days, school visits and our efforts to improve our links with external communities and groups.

Some of our external partners have written pieces for the newsletter where we can learn more about the Maynooth/Kilcock Green Forum and the development of the Maynooth Heritage Trail.

Against a backdrop of the war in Ukraine and the biodiversity and climate crises we are all feeling considerable

anxiety and helplessness and we highlight the importance of self-care and promoting positive wellbeing.

Read also about the biodiversity on our campuses, the amazing progress of the edible garden project, the problems of ash dieback and how you can pledge your garden to help our important pollinators.

In addition, we present an excellent overview of the recently published IPCC reports and their key messages and findings. Surrounded by dread and gloom it is crucial that we continue our efforts and not give up hope that we can avert the environmental and societal challenges we face.

Maynooth Green Campus Team



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In this edition...

- *Self Care is Earth Care*
- *The Environmental Soc*
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- *Ash Dieback*
- *Pledge your garden*
- *MU's Edible Garden*
- *Maynooth - Kilcock Green Forum*
- *Maynooth Heritage Trail*
- *Event Updates: Green Day, Biodiversity Day & more!*

SELF-CARE IS EARTH-CARE



Mireia Guardino Ferran

MGC Co-ordinator

We live in a fast-paced society, where most of us are exposed to constant news and flooded with updates on social media. When it comes to combating climate change and the prevention of biodiversity loss some of us may feel overwhelmed with feelings of anxiety and grief, sometimes those feelings are even paralysing making us feel that ‘we are not doing enough’. Therefore, it is equally important to be conscious and mindful of our own mental and physical health.

Those that consider themselves environmentalists and/or people that care deeply about the state of the global biodiversity and climate crisis may find it challenging to focus on themselves. Having spent the last few years on a ‘learning journey’ with nature-based activities and deepening my knowledge regarding the challenges ahead of us,

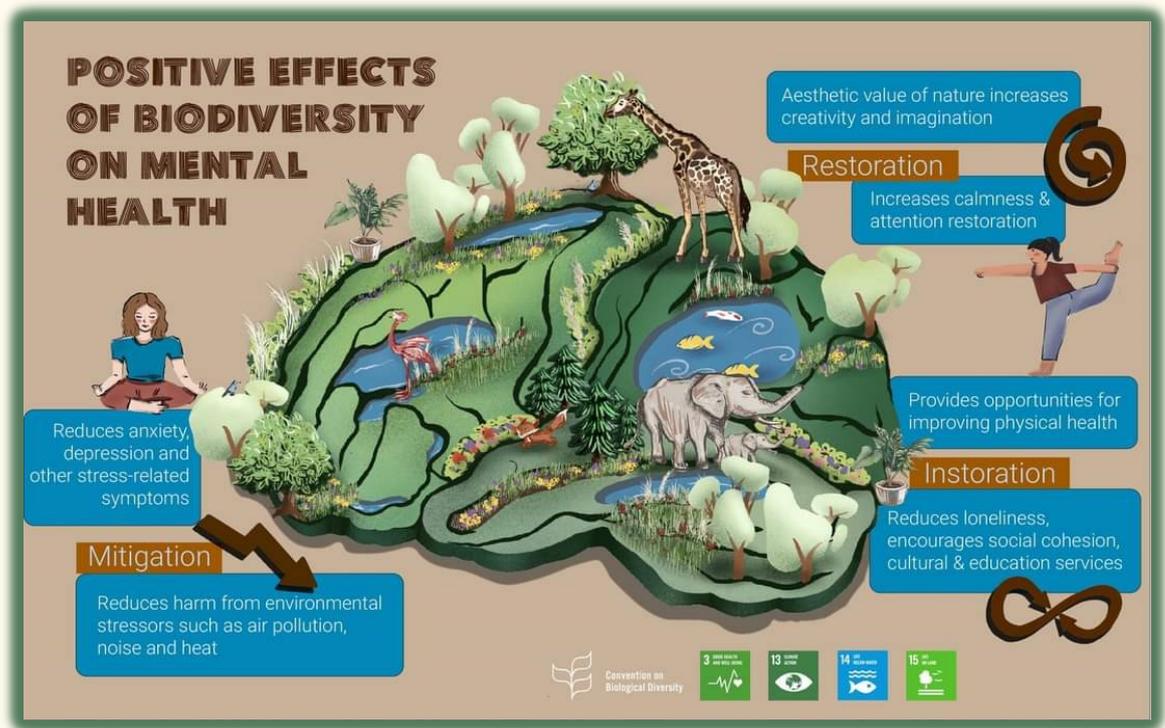
I have realised how important it is to develop and maintain mindful practices for oneself and those around us. After all, change starts with oneself and emanates from within, like a ripple from a skipped stone on the ocean’s waters.

I share this reflection with you as an invitation to engage with nature, actively or passively for a few moments every day. Enjoy the passing of time, ground yourself, go for a swim, have a walk under the wood’s canopy or find a quiet ‘sitting spot’ and just listen to the Earth’s pulse. Nature never ceases to change nevertheless she does not rush. Go deepen your connections with nature and all its beings and you will be transformed.

Nature-based practices such as these can support us through the challenges that inevitably arise as we take steps to be the change we wish to see in the world.

LINKS

- * [EPA report](#)
- * [Convention on Biodiversity, Biodiversity & Health](#)



Positive effects on mental health infographic (Convention on Biological Diversity, 2020)

RE-INTRODUCING THE ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIETY



Emma O'Toole

Environmental Society

My name is **Emma O'Toole** and I am the Events Officer at the **Environmental Society** and this is my first year at Maynooth University. I was eager to join the Environmental Society when I discovered it needed a new committee. A few other students and I who are passionate about the environment decided to come together and "revive" the Environmental Society at Maynooth University. It was late into last semester before the idea gained momentum, however we have managed to take part at the Green Campus Day that was held at John Paul II Library as part of An Taisce's National Green Campus Week. We took this opportunity to engage with interested students and share our future hopes for the society. This was a great interactive event because of the range of stands including a free clothes-swap, Birdwatch Ireland stand, a seed bomb making workshop and many more.



Daniel O'Brien (left), MU EnviroSoc Vice-chairperson; Students at Maynooth Green Day seed bomb workshop (right).



We have also liaised with the Urban Agriculture working group and successfully met in the Edible Garden (between Rowan House and Laraghbryan House) three or four times to help with the planting and learning how to care for the vegetable patches. A few of our members also took part at the litter pick as part of the National Spring Clean campaign, a great initiative to help remove any litter or unwanted trash from



The EnviroSoc members planting seeds at the Edible Garden

campus. Our plans include setting up an educational event with BirdWatch Ireland, running monthly clothes-swaps, food sovereignty events, planting more around campus, getting water fountains outside around campus to support and encourage the use of reusable bottles, lobby at on campus shops/cafes to use more eco-friendly materials and encourage the use of student's cups.

Lastly, we hope to organize nature trails, workshops, film screenings and perhaps a trip away to learn more about what we could do to help the environment. We hope new members will join us on this sustainable adventure during the next academic year and help our society grow.

Visit our IG page @MUEnviroSoc and become a member at:

www.mulife.ie/society/environmental



Swap Shop!

Sustainable Fashion- Free & Fabulous!

First clothes Swap-Shop with Zero Waste Maynooth!



Scan Me



Bring an item, take an item
must be clean and in good condition

#GreenWeek2022







LATEST CLIMATE SCIENCE DEMANDS TRANSFORMATIVE ACTION



Dr Stephen Flood

Post-doctoral researcher in ICARUS

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Membership is open to all member states of the WMO and UN, and currently 195 countries have joined. Every six to seven years, since 1990, the IPCC produces a suite of assessment reports. The sixth assessment report cycle is the latest, and has been released over the last nine months. There are three reports (working groups) within the latest assessment cycle that cover three elements of climate change science and research: **1) physical science, 2) impacts, adaptation and vulnerability, and 3) assessing options for mitigating climate change.**

Here are three of the key messages identified in the WGI physical science report:

- 1) For the first time the IPCC has concluded that human influence upon the climate system is clear beyond the long-term changes. What that means is we are now finding human influence in many of the extreme heatwaves, extreme rainfall events and droughts that we are increasingly seeing around the world. That evidence was inconclusive back in 2013, at the time of the previous (5th) IPCC report; now it's certain;
- 2) In coastal areas we will see continued sea level rise throughout the 21st century, contributing to more frequent and severe coastal flooding in low-lying areas and coastal erosion. Extreme sea level events that previously occurred once in 100 years could happen every year by 2100;

- 3) Changes to the ocean, including warming, more frequent marine heatwaves, ocean acidification, and reduced oxygen levels have been clearly linked to human influence. These changes affect both ocean ecosystems and the people that rely on them, and they will continue throughout at least the rest of this century;

The Working Group II contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report assesses the impacts of climate change, looking at ecosystems, biodiversity, and human communities at global and regional levels. It also reviews vulnerabilities and the capacities and limits of the natural world and human societies to adapt to climate change.

Three of the key messages identified in this report are as follows:

- 1) Across sectors and regions the most vulnerable people and systems are observed to be disproportionately affected. The rise in weather and climate extremes has led to some irreversible impacts as natural and human systems are pushed beyond their ability to adapt;
- 2) Safeguarding biodiversity and ecosystems is fundamental to climate resilient development. Maintaining the resilience of biodiversity and ecosystem services at a global scale depends on effective and equitable conservation of approximately 30% to 50% of Earth's land, freshwater and ocean areas, including currently near-natural ecosystems;
- 3) Climate resilient development prospects are increasingly limited if current greenhouse gas emissions do not rapidly decline, especially if 1.5°C global warming is exceeded in the near term. These prospects are constrained by past development, emis

sions and climate change, and enabled by inclusive governance, adequate and appropriate human and technological resources, information, capacities and finance.

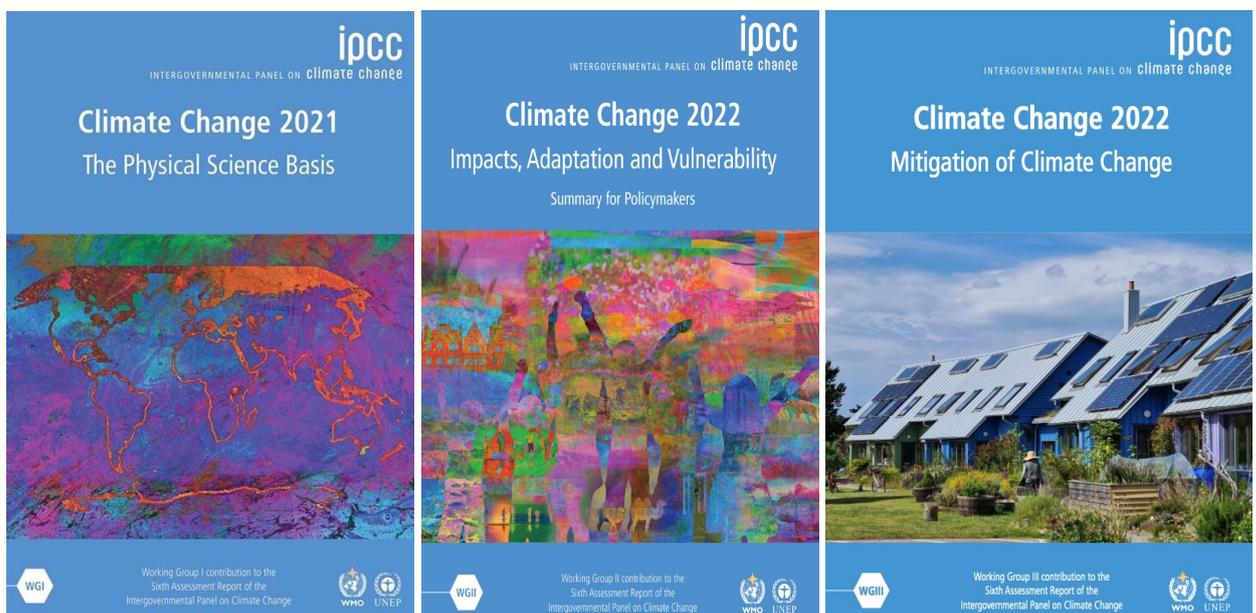
The Working Group III report provides an updated global assessment of climate change mitigation progress and pledges, and examines the sources of global emissions. It explains developments in emission reduction and mitigation efforts, assessing the impact of national climate pledges in relation to long-term emissions goals.

Three of the key messages identified by this report include:

- 1) The wealthiest countries are responsible for disproportionately more emissions than developing countries, even though developing countries are experiencing more severe climate impacts;
- 2) We not only need to cut out emissions – we also have to remove some of the carbon that’s already in the atmosphere;
- 3) The most urgent thing we can do to

help nature fight climate change is protect the natural habitats around the world that store billions of tons of living carbon. We can also help by changing the way we manage working lands like farms and timber forests so they retain more carbon, and restore natural habitats on lands that have been cleared or degraded.

In summary, in order to limit global warming, strong, rapid and sustained reductions in carbon dioxide, methane and other greenhouse gases are necessary. However, a certain amount of damaging global warming is locked in, and extreme weather events will become more frequent and damaging until we completely stop emitting greenhouse gases. Every choice, every emission, and every bit of warming matters. How bad climate change will get depends on our actions and choices from now. Therefore we need to adapt our societies to cope with the present and future impact of climate change. In short, we need to look at things like making cities greener (tree cover, biodiversity, natural drainage and providing shade) making room for rivers, our roads and other infrastructure resilient to climate impacts.



The recent reports from the three IPCC Working groups. More details can be found at this [link](#).

WILDFLOWER WALKS



Dr Gail Maher

Biodiversity Working Group

Biology Dept.

In March, as part of **Maynooth University Green Day** we had our first campus wildflower walk since 2019. We explored the areas near Rowan House, the Froebel Department and the Adult Education Department on the North Campus and saw Red Dead-nettle, Bitter Cress, Groundsel, Chickweed and Speedwells growing at the base of the trees and along the edges of the grass areas. We then moved to the South Campus where we explored some of the woodland areas and found Snowdrops, Lesser Celandine and Herb-Robert. We also saw the often-overlooked flowers on native trees such Alder and Hazel and Willow, providing food for queen bumblebees as they emerged from hibernation.

In April, we had our second wildflower walk. We explored the grassy areas around the Applied Social Studies Department and Laraghbryan House and the School of Education. We saw a wonderful collection of spring flowers, including Speedwells, Scarlet Pimpernel, Cowslip, Cuckooflower, Common Vetch and Plantain as well as an abundance of Dandelions and Daisies. Thanks to the reduced spraying regime now in place, these plants are getting a chance to flower. These all provide pollen or nectar for adult insects such as bees and hoverflies, as well as food for their larvae, which happily munch on the roots or leaves.

On 30th April I carried out a survey of the Cowslip population on the North Campus that will feed into a Citizen Science project run by the University of Tartu in Estonia. This survey is part of a Europe-wide research project looking at the health of Cowslip populations across Europe. Habitat loss and changes in farming practices are leading to a decline in Cowslip populations.

By implementing low impact grounds management practices across the campus Maynooth University is providing a healthy habitat for this iconic spring flower.



From top left (clock-wise): Hazel flower (male); Dandelions, honeybee & daisies; April Cowslip; Hazel flower (female).



Slender Speedwell (left); Scarlet Pimpernel (right).

If you would like to discover what wildflowers are growing outside your window, contact the Green Campus at Greencampus@mu.ie and we will explore the biodiversity in your corner of campus.

ASH DIEBACK (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*)



Stephen Seaman

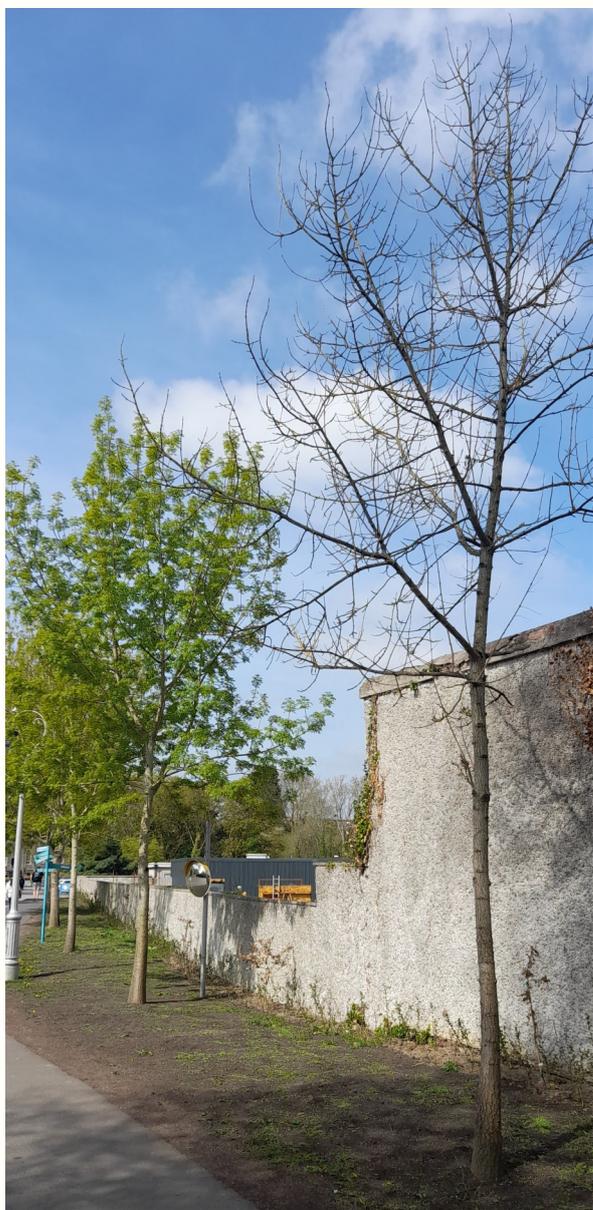
Maynooth Campus
Grounds Supervisor

Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), one of Ireland’s favourite tree is under serious threat of being wiped from the landscape by a widespread disease, known as **ash dieback**. The disease is caused by the fungal pathogen *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, which is infecting ash trees all across Europe.

Ash dieback was first identified in Ireland in 2012 in County Leitrim, and was thought to have arrived through the importation of stock trees from continental Europe. Since then, the disease has swept through the

country and the vast of majority of ash trees are already infected, leading to the deaths of millions of trees the coming years.

Our campus is no exemption and some of our ash trees have already died and hundreds if not thousands will require removal over the coming years. Ash dieback causes a rapid decline in the overall health of the tree, with the main symptoms being bare sections and leaf loss on the crown of the trees. Over the years the condition spreads until the entire tree is devoid of leaves and the tree eventually dies.



The ash tree (*Fraxinus excelsior*), is under serious threat of being wiped from the Irish landscape due to ash dieback, caused by the fungal pathogen *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*.

Unfortunately, there is no treatment for ash dieback and the only course of action is to monitor the disease closely and identify and remove infected trees. This practice is currently employed across the campus by our **Grounds Services Team** and it is hoped that through the selective removal of infected trees the spread of the disease is slowed. Several mature ash trees that were deemed dangerous and located in high traffic areas around the campus have already been removed on safety grounds. However, as the disease takes hold the ash trees on the campus over the years, we will be forced to removed many more. There is no doubt that the Irish landscape will change considerably with the loss of one of our most iconic trees.

Although our Grounds Services Office occasionally receive criticism and complaints when we remove trees from the campus, it is important to acknowledge that this is only done as a very last resort on safety grounds or to reduce the spread of disease. The Campus Grounds Services team and office have a substantial tree management programme for our campuses which involves not only the removal of some trees but also the planting of thousands of new trees over the coming years.

Pledge Your Garden



Dr Jim Carolan

MGC Chair

Biology Dept

All across Ireland, gardens are being transformed from over-manicured green deserts to islands rich in biodiversity. Much of this is down to the success of the **All Ireland Pollinator Plan** and the guidelines provided by the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC). There has also been a major shift in public awareness about biodiversity and pollinator loss, with many of us now asking how we can do more for our beleaguered and important pollinator populations.

In response the NBDC have developed a number of programmes and initiatives that can be followed by members of the public in their own localities. The latest initiative is the **“Pledge your Garden for Pollinators”**.

These specific guidelines are aimed at anyone who wants to make their outdoor space more pollinator friendly. Whether your garden is large or small, well managed or not, if you have pollinator friendly flowers it will provide a pit stop for hungry bees. Pollinator friendly actions have been provided to cater for all levels- from a few window boxes, medium or large gardens, through to large community gardens.

Most suggestions are no or low-cost actions, ranging from very simple to slightly more involved, so you can pick the ones that suit you best.

For more information on how to pledge your garden, click [here](#).

Pollinator friendly guide for estates management

Pollinators are important for our health, wealth and environment. If you have been given this sheet, the people living in the properties you manage are concerned about their local pollinators. Show them you care by taking these five no-cost measures to help pollinators:

- 1 Let the Dandelions bloom:** wait until late April to do the first grass cut. This allows some Dandelions to flower, providing bees with much needed food in the spring
- 2 Do not spray edging or bases of trees:** avoid using pesticides to tidy up these areas; trim instead, or let the grass here grow to provide pollinators with food
- 3 Protect hedgerows, dry stone walls and earth banks:** especially when south facing, these areas are important nesting sites for harmless solitary bees. Avoid using pesticides on these areas
- 4 Create a ‘6-week meadow’:** cut small areas or strips of grass on a 6-week rotation to provide more wildflowers for pollinators
- 5** If you take any pollinator friendly measures, log them on the publically available mapping system, **‘Actions for Pollinators.’** Let everyone know that your company is doing its part for pollinators
<https://pollinators.biodiversityireland.ie>



MU'S EDIBLE GARDEN: A PHENOMENAL SUCCESS



Dr Patricia
Healy Kettle

Critical Skills Dept.



President Eeva Leinonen visits the garden. Image source: Saran @2022

Spring is a season of rebirth and rejuvenation of nature; a time of the year that never fails to elicit many pleasures; a time where flora fight to emerge from the ground. As Spring awakened across the campus daffodils, snowdrops and a wide variety of flora and fauna began to emerge, MU's **Sustainable Food and Agriculture Working Group** dusted off their gardening gloves, and with forks and spades in hand set out to prepare the Edible Garden in anticipation for the new growing season.

However, Spring of 2022 was different. Though in its infancy, the Edible Garden had drawn much attention from staff, students and the wider community of Maynooth (and beyond !) and required expansion to meet the rise in interest and demand for growing space. It was a huge success, despite the shift to remote and blending learning in the previous two years. Whether that success can be attributed to a newfound appreciation of nature and the solace it provided during the restrictions imposed by Covid-19, the success of the garden can also attributed to the drive and commitment of the

Sustainable Food and Agriculture Working Group, and the staff and students engaging in, and supporting it. Against a backdrop of the global pandemic, climate change, war and rising food prices, it seems that cultivating food and engaging with nature has never been more important. Whilst a growing body of literature shows that natural environments and green spaces play an important role in improving health and wellbeing (Foley 2021), and also counteracting the adverse effects of the restrictions imposed during the pandemic (Guzman *et al.*, 2021), research shows that engaging in the tasks of cultivation provides opportunities to reconnect with nature, knowledge and practice, and a means to foster a strong sense of belonging to community and place (Kettle, 2015, 2016; 2019). As such, the impetus for the working group is to create a **'shared-in-common space'** where staff, students and the wider Maynooth Community can join in concert and interact with nature, share and exchange knowledge and skills, enhance biodiversity and improve health and wellbeing, whilst also providing new opportunities, links to learning and research.

This year, the garden was extended to include additional (and larger) raised beds, a large composting bay, a storage facility, and additional seating and planters rescued from undergrowth and repurposed to accommodate cultivation needs. Plans are also in place to extend the current water harvesting system and additional resources to enhance participation. A wide variety of events and cross-departmental collaborations (Froebel, Applied Social Studies, Geography, Science, Critical Skills) in recent months gave rise to and boosted interest and engagement with the garden across the academic community.

Since the first signs of Spring emerged the social and environmental landscape of this once grey and dull space has been transformed, creating new opportunities for interaction. Students and staff continue to regularly engage in and make use

of the garden on a daily basis, whether to sit quietly and absorb their surroundings or simply stop by to enjoy the flora whilst having a cup of coffee and some lunch.

The garden is there for all to use, and we welcome everyone to come and participate, learn how to cultivate, and of course, reap the benefits of our wonderful produce. The WG meet in the garden every Friday at 1:00pm, but often potter around to do odd jobs during lunchtimes on weekdays.

If you would like to join us, learn how to cultivate food, do a little foraging, or simply drop in for a chat we would be delighted to see you. Or, if there is a particular event you would like to get involved in or like to organise, please contact: patricia.healykettle@mu.ie



Students preparing and planting raised beds. Image Source: Dr. Patricia Healy-Kettle

MAYNOOTH/KILCOCK

GREEN FORUM:



Michael Kenny

Adult & Community
Education Dept.

A forum is a "place of assembly in ancient Rome," from the Latin forum "marketplace, open space, public place". A group of local people convened the first **Maynooth/Kilcock Green Forum** on March 2nd, 2022, and the second was held on April 13 in MU Education Hub building.

The purpose of the Green Forum is to have an open space to share ideas, information, and concerns; then to learn from each other about possibilities and solutions. Jim shared the initiatives of the MU Green Campus and the openness of MGC to link the campus with the Maynooth community; Paula shared the Kildare Co. Co. upcoming Climate Innovation Fund details; James shared the air quality monitoring citizen project and Sue shared the hedgerows initiative, both in Celbridge; John shared information of the LIFE project; etc.

Twenty-eight people attended the second forum meeting where the attendees self-organised workshops on waste, transport, funding, biodiversity, community responses, supporting green initiatives, etc. There was tremendous energy in the room. Like a dating space the Maynooth/Kilcock Green Forum is a space where ideas get life but attendees, who are often members of other group such as MGC, make connections and progress the partnership in their own groups. For example, a number of the forum members attended the recent MGC meeting.

The process is organic in itself as the Forum has no agenda other than facilitating connections and to learn for action. The next Maynooth Kilcock Green Forum meeting will be held in June and is open to all. If you are interested in joining the Green Forum please contact greencampus@mu.ie.



Members of the Maynooth/Kilcock Green Forum sharing ideas and initiatives to improve sustainability and tackle green issues in our communities.

A HERITAGE TRAIL IN MAYNOOTH - REALLY?



Michael Kenny

Adult & Community
Education Dept.

We walk past buildings and spaces every day not knowing their historical and community significance. The Maynooth Tidy Towns group were painting the green galvanise building on Harbour Street, that is as you leave the Maynooth Harbour area heading for the town, last August. In the chat among each other we learned of the fascinating history of this non-descript Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA) community building that students and staff walk past daily heading to the campus, not realising its significance.

Out of this chat has come an initiative by members of Maynooth Tidy Towns for a 1.5km, one-hour, 16 stop, Maynooth Town Heritage walk. From Fitzgerald Castle to Buckley's House: from William Bridge and the Pound to Charter House and Leinster Cottages: from St Mary's Church of Ireland built in 1840 to the original market square – Court House Square. The Maynooth Heritage Trail

Group have prepared a walker's map and information on 16 places of interest on the 1.5km, one-hour, 16 stop town walk. The group is printing the map + commentary for visitor and local use, and erecting directional boards so that visitors from the greenway and the places of hospitality in the town can enjoy a convivial informative walk that takes them behind the main street.

The Maynooth Heritage Trail links seamlessly with the Tairseach Tree Trail <https://bit.ly/3law9Vi> prepared by the Froebel Department, Maynooth Green Campus, Dept. of Geography, and Grounds Supervisor Stephen Seaman. It also compliments the MU campus tour and will stimulate many more exploratory walking tours to increase awareness of our community assets.

The Maynooth Heritage Trail will be launched in the summer.



Members of the Maynooth Heritage Trail Group that will provide guided tours of Maynooth's heritage and cultural hotspots throughout the year (beginning in summer 2022). The Maynooth Heritage Trail will link seamlessly with the Tairseach Tree Trail <https://bit.ly/3law9Vi>, compliments the MU campus tour and will stimulate many more exploratory walking tours to increase awareness of our community assets.

MAYNOOTH GREEN DAY



Dr Jim Carolan
MGC Chair
Biology Dept

Our Maynooth Green Campus Committee organised the inaugural **Maynooth Green Day** on **Thursday the 10th of March** as part of An Taisce’s National Green Week 2022. The event provided an opportunity to reflect on the work of the Maynooth Green Campus and highlighted the importance of making connections across our campuses and with the wider community.

The morning session involved a series of seminars on management plans for the campus, the importance of natural environments on our health and wellbeing, SDGs in our teaching, local community action groups, projects on education for the bioeconomy, the dangers of mining in Ireland, our on campus edible garden and the recent IPCC report. There was also a presentation to students **Sean Casey & Niamh Lacy** (Dept Design Innovation) who were the winners of the MSc Design and Innovation project on the Green Campus. All presentations were recorded and can be found on the Maynooth Green Campus [YouTube Page](#).

Throughout the session it was clear the MGC comprises passionate and dedicate



Niamh Lacy (2nd from left) and Sean Casey (centre) winners of the MSc Design Innovation project.



A busy fashion swap shop organised by the MGC and Zero Waste Maynooth.

individuals keen to see meaningful change in our approach to environmental and sustainability issues and we reaffirmed our commitment to face these challenges head on. There is general agreement that we must continue our efforts to embed sustainability and social ethics into the lives of our staff and students and promote global goals for sustainable development.



The stalls and displays from Maynooth Green Day 2022 that included seed bomb, recycling and wave energy displays and stalls from Bird Watch Ireland and our student societies.



A **Bike Repair Clinic** was held outside the Library by **Coyne Cycles** who serviced numerous bikes for a reduced fee. Coyne Cycles also had a display on the **Bike to Work Scheme** where an employer purchases a new bike for an employee, which is then repaid by the employee over a fixed period. For more details see https://coynecycles.ie/biketowork_roadshow/

The MGC hopes to organise a bike repair clinic each semester to publicise and promote cycling across our communities.

The afternoon session involved a series of displays and giveaways in the Library Foyer. These included displays by our waste contactor **Thorntons Recycling**, **Bird Watch Ireland**, **Centre for Ocean Energy Research-Wave Energy Model**, seed bomb and degradable plant pot workshops (Urban Agriculture Working Group and Stephen Seaman) and a Fashion Swap-shop organised by **Ollie**

Fenelon (Dept. of Chemistry) and **Zero Waste Maynooth**. We also had student representation from members of our **Enactus** and **EnviroSoc** societies.

The Maynooth Green Day impressed upon us how fortunate we are to have access to a diverse campus environment, rich in both nature and heritage. Efforts will continue to manage our campus grounds for biodiversity and to improve the accessibility and utilisation of our recreational and natural spaces for the benefit of our staff and students alike.

There is no doubt that the impact of Covid-19 on our student community will be felt for many years to come. Their usual enthusiasm and interest in sustainability and environmentalism has been replaced with pragmatism and an acceptance of reduced standards. However, our event provided an opportunity for many students to rediscover their environmental curiosity and to make connections with other students of similar interests and it was the report that the ENACTUS and Environmental Societies recruited many new members which made the day an even greater success.

Additional Details

- **Organising Committee**-Dr Jim Carolan (Biology, MGC Chair); Mireia Guardino Ferran (Frobel, MGC Coordinator); Dorena Bishop (History, MGC Secretary); Stephen Seaman (Head of Grounds Services, MGC Co-Coordinator)
- **Camus Guided Walk**-Dr Gail Maher (Biology, MGC); Stephen Seaman (Head of Grounds Services, MGC Co-Coordinator). Stopped off at the Edible Garden with Dr Patricia Healy-Kettle.
- **Library Support**-Elaine Bean (Senior Library Assistant, Facilities and Events) and colleagues.
- **Fashion Swap Shop**- Ollie Fenelon (Dept Chemistry), Mireia Guardino Ferran, Edel Keane and Annie Byrne (Zero Waste Maynooth), Caoimhe Carolan (TY Work Experience Student).
- **Photography**- Saran Dakshina (MSc international student).

MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY BIODIVERSITY DAY



Dr Jim Carolan

MGC Chair

Biology Dept

On Wednesday the 18th of May, we saw the return of the MU Biodiversity Day after a 2 year absence. This event (our fifth) is run in collaboration with Kildare County Council’s Heritage Office and form part of a biodiversity promotion programme for National Biodiversity Week. Unfortunately, due to difficulties securing a venue we could not run a full programme but we did manage to hold two events that showcased biodiversity across our campuses and the excellent work being done by our Grounds Services Team led by Mr Stephen Seaman.

The first event involved a whistlestop tour of some of our biodiversity hotspots and a hunt for bees. Given that the weather was unseasonably cold and windy we did not hold out too much hope, but we did manage to catch and identify 11 different species in 45 minutes. Our expedition team consisted of staff, some students and members of the public and showed a great interest in learning about Irish bees. Many a

preconceived notion about bees were dispelled by the end of the walk.

The bee hunt started off at the Pollinator Bed beside the St John Paul II Library. The bed, which has been planted so that there are continuous floral resources for pollinators all year round, also has an insect hotel designed and built by Stephen and we were lucky enough to meet some of its solitary bee occupants. We then ventured to the Junior Garden where we caught several bumblebees (mainly queens), another solitary bee species and watched some honeybees drink from our small pond. Our tour finished with a visit to our resident honeybee hives where some of the bees took too keen an interest in the hair of some of our party. We left quickly after this.

All recorded bees will be logged on the National Biodiversity Data Centre’s Biodiversity, Recording App, which allows to collate, track and record biodiversity across the country. For more information on the app please visit <https://biodiversityireland.ie/>.

Some common questions/comments heard on a bee walk

- **What’s killing our bees?** In Ireland one third of our bee species are threatened which means that we could loose these species forever if we don’t act. The main threats to our bees are habitat loss and widespread agrochemical use, although diseases and climate change are also playing a role.
- **“Do all bees sting?”** The females of most bee species can sting. Male bees don’t. Most bees have retractable stingers which means they don’t loose them. Honeybees however do die when they sting due to their barbed stinger which gets lodged when they sting. Bee venom can contain hundreds of proteins and compounds designed to paralyse/ward off their attackers.
- **“Do all bees have hives?”** No. In fact it is clear that many misconceptions about bees stem from thinking that honeybees represent all other bees. In Ireland the honey bee is just one of 101 other bee species. We have 21 bumblebees which generally have colonies of 100-200 bees and the rest are solitary bees that don’t have colonies at all.
- **“I would never have though that was a bee.”** The diversity in the shape and size of bees is incredible ranging from very large bumblebees (3cm in length) with characteristic yellow and black stripes to small solitary bees which are thin and slender.
- At some point and in response to another honeybee question, I invariably spout out the line that saving honeybees will not save biodiversity. In Ireland the vast majority of honeybees are imported and there are very few of our native black honeybee populations left. Honeybees are domesticated and generally kept for honey rather than pollination and I remind our participants that **“we can’t save our wild birds by keeping more chickens and it’s the same for bees”**.

Our Biodiversity Day finished with a Dusk Walk led. Tom McCormack, Brendan Murphy (Bird Watch Ireland Kildare Branch) and Anthony Mooney (local farmer and biodiversity champion). As with the bee hunt the weather wasn't great so our encounters with our ornithological friends were limited. We did however learn so much from our guides including that there are 7 species of crow in Ireland, the difference between a normal and an alarm bird call and that we should be cleaning our bird feeders (in warm water and a drop of bleach) every 2 weeks to reduce the spread of diseases that are devastating our chaffinch populations.

The highlight of the tour was the sighting of our resident peregrine falcons that nest on the spire of the University Chapel. It is thought that we have had falcons on the campus since the early 1990s and it is hoped that the

pair will begin to breed and keep the tradition going. A camera has been installed in the spire and the MGC plan to provide a live stream if ever the union is consummated.

These events are so important, not only for showcasing the biodiversity on the campus but for educating our staff, students and the wider public and biodiversity and its importance. Managing our lands for biodiversity can start with the reduction of mowing, which increases the diversity in flowering plants, which attract and support pollinating insect communities which in turn support our bird populations. By connecting people with that diversity (by showing them 11 different bees for example), the message that we can make a difference gets through, and we realise that small steps, changes in our behaviours and acceptance of wilder gardens or landscapes can reverse the dreadful loss in biodiversity we currently face across the globe.



The guides for our Biodiversity walks included Tom McCormack on birds (BWI) and Jim Carolan (MGC) on bees. Our pollinator hotel was happily occupied, and our party used the NDBC swatches to identify some bumblebees.

NATURE ON YOUR MU DOORSTEP



Dr Ronan Foley

Head of Health and Wellbeing Working Group

Geography Dept.

The **Nature on your MU Doorstep** workshop was run as part of the *Maynooth University Employee Wellbeing Supports* and took place on the morning of April 7th, 2022, World Health Day. The hosts were the University’s **Learning and Development Team** within **Human Resources**, supported by **Ann Pepper**. The presenters were representing the MGC group and included Dr. Ronan Foley and Dr. Patricia Healy Kettle from Health & Wellbeing/Biodiversity Working Groups and Stephen Seaman representing several strands. There were around ten online attendees including President Eeva Leinonen and each presenter spoke for around 15-20 minutes with a Q&A after.

Ronan spoke on the topic of nature as a health-enabling space and introduced research and ongoing projects that identified the benefits of nature on campus. Stephen then introduced the campus space to attendees and in particular a range of recent sustainable initiatives that aimed to reduce harm, create new green/blue features and protect and educate both human and more-than-human inhabitants of the campus. This was then picked up by Patricia in introducing the biodiversity on campus and its potential to promote health

new University Edible Garden on the North Campus, where both students and staff are developing an amazing foodscape. This ‘Reciprocal Relations with Nature’ perspective shared by Dr Healy was attended by our President who found the session highly informative. From the Q&A session, there were some excellent suggestions, including a comment by Professor Leinonen on the potential to provide support to new Ukrainian refugees, especially in relation to health and wellbeing supports (such as guided walks), as well as wider thinking on public engagement across Kildare County.

Other ideas discussed included fuller signage, potentially linked to guided walks, as well as more benches and places to sit, enhanced lighting and a possible designated Silent Space, to promote the campus as both an active and passive setting for all to enjoy and develop their own personal wellbeing programmes within. Information on some new associated initiatives was also noted including; the **Food Sovereignty Workshop** (held in mid-April), Wellbeing & Our Environment (April 27th), Employee Wellbeing Month in May, the resumption of monthly wildflower walks, and a Dusk Chorus on May 18th; all additional ways for staff and students to learn about the campus as a space to enable health and wellbeing.



Image source: Pexels

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY FESTIVAL



Dr Patricia Healy Kettle

Critical Skills Dept.

Dr. Patricia Healy-Kettle of the Edible Garden and Urban Agriculture Working Group hosted the afternoon seminar at the annual 'Food Sovereignty Festival' on 13th April last. The session included a seed swapping and planting demonstration in the MU Edible Garden, opening up new opportunities and potential collaborations between Maynooth University and various stakeholders at both local and national levels. The session was rounded up with a number of Tai-Chi workshops in the garden, hosted by Nicole Mills of Dublin's Tai Chi School.



EDIBLE GARDEN FUTURE EVENTS

In the forthcoming academic year, the Edible Garden and Urban Agriculture Working Group will provide a range of demonstrations to staff and students on the medicinal benefits of foraging flora on campus, and making use of the produce harvested from the garden in a bid to promote healthy eating and healthy lifestyles. A phone app with QR Codes and digital resources are currently being developed to share knowledge on plants and their benefits to health and well-being (see example below).



There is some lovely Mint in the garden right now ready for picking. It's perfect for an after dinner tea or maybe a Mojito ! A few leaves added to a fruit salad is very refreshing, or maybe use it to make some mint sauce to go with Sundays lamb.



Our Fennel in the garden is flourishing. While we wait on the flowers and the pungent seeds why not try some Fennel leaves. Add them to salads or fish dishes. Drink as an after dinner tea to aid digestion, or use in facial steams or the bath for deep cleansing.



Lemon Balm tea is said to relieve headaches and is also good after meals to aid digestion. Simply pick some leaves, 6 or 7 should do. Place in a mug. pour over your boiling water, let steep for 5 to 10 mins for a fresh Lemon Balm tea.

The WG are also collaborating with students to develop a range of publications (Eg. 'Eating healthily on a budget using produce from the Edible Garden'), which future graduates can draw upon and make use of to improve their health. In addition, the WG have plans to collaborate with the Green Campus Health and Well-Being WG in the forthcoming academic year whilst plans are also underway to host an event in the garden for displaced Ukrainian refugees to foster a sense of belonging, and provide insights for suitable study and potential research options in the future. In the coming Academic Year, collaborations with Froebel will mean that over 400 students will be afforded an opportunity to engage in the tasks of cultivation in the garden, through specific modules (SESE students and EDF485 - Teanga an Ghrá), which will include visits by local primary schools to the garden to discuss biodiversity and the benefits of growing food. A parallel project with the Dept of Geography will also provide students invaluable opportunities to use the garden for paleoecology (testing plants and the soil for biodiversity).

School visit to Maynooth University



Aoife Titley

Froebel
Department of
Primary and
Early Childhood
Education

In the **Froebel Department**, we are keenly aware about the lack of diversity in the teaching profession and the inequity of access to initial teacher education programmes that still pervades the Irish system. We are committed to widening participation in initial teacher education and empowering students to become agents of change in their own contexts. As part of a broader programme of work in this area, we recently hosted 240 first year students and 25 of their teachers from **St. Oliver's Community College Drogheda**. St. Oliver's CC is a DEIS school with a very diverse student population and the visit to MU formed part of their school tour. The teachers in St. Oliver's CC are doing an amazing job and are committed to raising aspirations and fostering a culture of high expectations for all their students.

As part of their visit, students got a chance to visit 'A Lens on the Global Goals' photo exhibition in the School of Education Building, as well as to sit in a lecture theatre and listen to inputs from various departments. Many thanks to **Laura Thornton** (Froebel Department) for introducing the photo exhibition, **Séamie Ó Néill** (Froebel Department) for getting our visitors to think about primary teaching, **Sam Blanckensee** (MU Equality Officer) for an overview of all the great EDI work happening on campus at the moment, and **Hira Khan** (MSU Ethnic Diversity Senator and Law Student) for capturing the student experience in such a powerful way.

The highlight of the student visit was four different **Green Campus** tours where they got to experience some of the natural beauty and biodiversity on our campus, including the Edible Garden, the Tairseach Trail, the birdboxes and a wildflower walk. Many thanks to **Mireia Guardino-Ferran, Stephen Seaman, Patricia Healy Kettle and Gail Maher** for sharing their expertise and for all their patience facilitating such big numbers on the tours. There was brilliant feedback from all the participants. We look forward to welcoming some of those same students back on campus in about 4-5 years time!



Students from St Oliver's Community College, Drogheda visiting our Edible Garden as part of a number of tours led by members of the Maynooth Green Campus.

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