

# Herbs & edible Plants

in the Castlegregory Tidy Towns Planters

You can find our herb planters in the Playground and throughout the village. We hope you enjoy discovering our edible plant trail. Take a moment to explore – smell the flowers, feel the leaves, enjoy the magic! Please leave the plants as you found them for others to enjoy.



Sponsored by:  
**Castlegregory**  
**Sláinte Seniors**



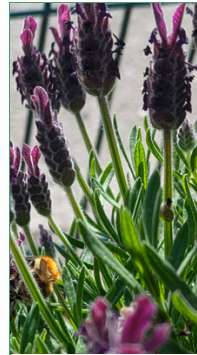
## Mint

*Irish: Miontas*  
*Scientific: Mentha spp*  
*Perennial; Flowering: May to October*

- Square stems, purple, pink flowers; highly aromatic
- Used in herbal teas for digestion



Attracts a variety of pollinators: bees, butterflies and hoverflies



## Lavender

*Irish: Labhandar*  
*Scientific: Lavandula angustifolia*  
*Perennial; Flowering: May to August*

- Grey, green narrow leaves. Tall spikes of purple flowers. Strongly aromatic.
- Historically used in Irish linen chests for moth protection.



Highly rated by honey bees, bumblebees, hoverflies & butterflies.



## Sage

*Irish: Sáiste*  
*Scientific: Salvia officinalis*  
*Perennial; Flowering: June to August*

- Soft, velvet leaves. Grey-green colour, woody base. Purple, blue flowers. Strong scent
- Name come from Latin: salvere: to heal.



Highly attractive to bumblebees.



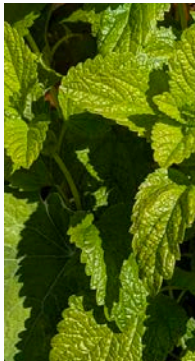
## Rosemary

*Irish: Rósmairín*  
*Scientific: Salvia rosmarinus*  
*Evergreen; Flowering: February to May*

- Needle-like, evergreen leaves with silver underside. Strong piney scent.
- Traditionally used for memory, and as an antiseptic.



Early nectar source for bumblebees & solitary bees.



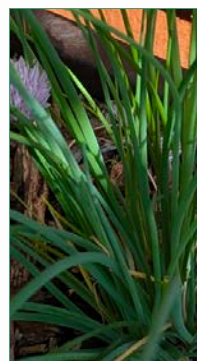
## Lemon Balm

*Irish: Lus na Meala*  
*Scientific: Melissa officinalis*  
*Perennial; Flowering: July to September*

- Toothed, stalked leaves. Spikes of small whitish-yellow flowers. Lemon scent.
- Historically used to lift mood.



Loved by honey bees and other pollinators. Melissa = "bee" in Greek



## Chives

*Irish: Síobhas*  
*Scientific: Allium schoenoprasum*  
*Perennial; Flowering: May to July*

- Hollow leaves like tiny straws, with purple pom pom flowers. Mild onion scent.
- Helps to deter pests in vegetable beds.



Excellent nectar for early solitary bees, small bumble bees & hoverflies.



## Majoram

*Irish: Oragán cumhra*  
*Scientific: Origanum majorana*  
*Perennial; Flowering: July to September*

- Small, soft, green oval leaves. Tiny white or pink flowers. Aromatic scent.
- Traditionally used to aid digestion and soothe nerves.



Particularly appeals to honeybees & bumblebees.



## Thyme

*Irish: Tím*  
*Scientific: Thymus vulgaris*  
*Perennial; Flowering: June to September*

- Tiny grey-green leaves. Tiny, tubular, pinkish-purple flowers. Woody stems. Aromatic scent.
- Traditionally used for antiseptic properties



Excellent nectar source for butterflies and bees.



## Parsley

*Irish: Peirsil*  
*Scientific: Petroselinum crispum*  
*Biennial; Flowering: April to June*

- Tall stems with small yellow-green flowers in second year. Aromatic scent when crushed.
- Traditionally used as digestive and breath freshner.



Flowers attract hoverflies, solitary bees, & parasitic wasps.



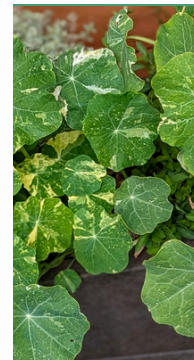
## Fennel

*Irish: Fionchaor*  
*Scientific: Foeniculum vulgare*  
*Perennial; Flowering: July to August*

- Soft feathery leaves, clusters of small yellow flowers. Hollow green stems. Aromatic scent.
- Traditionally used as digestive aid in breads, teas and tonics.



Attracts a variety of pollinators e.g. hoverflies, bees, wasps & butterflies.



## Nasturtium

*Irish: Nastúirseach*  
*Scientific: Tropaeolum majus*  
*Perennial; Flowering: July to November*

- Round leaves like lily pads. Bright orange, red or yellow flowers. Long trailing stems.
- The whole plant is edible, and high in vitamin C.



Enjoyed by bees, hoverflies & butterflies.



## Oregano

*Irish: Oragán*  
*Scientific: Origanum vulgare*  
*Perennial; Flowering: July to September*

- Small oval leaves. Pink-purple flower clusters. Spicy scent.
- Used in ancient remedies for coughs and digestion.



Nectar rich. Loved by pollinators, incl. numerous bees & butterflies.

# Wildflowers

This sign shows some of the wildflowers growing in our community gardens. Not every flower grows in every garden – but keep your eyes open!

👁️ How many can you spot today?

🌸 Do any of these grow in your own garden or on your local walk?



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**Tidy Towns**



## Dandelion

*Irish: Caisearbhán*  
*Scientific: Taraxacum officinale*  
 Perennial; Flowering: March to October

- Bright yellow flower heads with many narrow petals. Hollow stem that releases white sap. Turns into fluffy white seed head.
- Name comes from French “dent de lion”–lion’s tooth.

🐝 A vital early nectar source for bees, hoverflies, and butterflies from March onwards.



## Daisy

*Irish: Nóinín*  
*Scientific: Bellis perennis*  
 Perennial; Flowering: February to November

- Small, flat flower with white petals & yellow centre, short stems. Rosette of spoon-shaped leaves.
- Known as the “day’s eye” – closes at night, opens with the sun.

🐝 Attracts small bees, flies, and beetles. Important for early and late-season feeding.



## White Clover

*Irish: Seamair bhán*  
*Scientific: Trifolium repens*  
 Perennial; Flowering: May to early October

- Low-growing with small white to pinkish flower heads. Hairless stems that root at leaf joints. 3-lobed leaves, sometimes with a faint V-mark.
- Used to be called the “bee’s banquet”.

🐝 Valuable for honeybees, bumblebees, and hoverflies. Blooms heavily and for long periods.



## Red Clover

*Irish: Seamair dhearg*  
*Scientific: Trifolium pratense*  
 Perennial; Flowering: May to October

- Round pink-red flower heads made of tiny tubular flowers. Leaves in groups of three with faint pale chevrons. Hairy stems, often sprawling.
- Helps fix nitrogen in the soil, improving soil fertility.

🐝 Loved by bumblebees, solitary bees, butterflies. Deep florets attract long-tongued pollinators.



## Lesser Trefoil / Yellow Clover

*Irish: Seamair bhuí*  
*Scientific: Trifolium dubium*  
 Annual; Flowering: May to October

- Tiny yellow pea-like flowers in small heads. Sprawling, fine-stemmed plant with 3 tiny roundish leaflets.
- Often confused with other yellow-flowering trefoils.
- It is also referred to as Shamrock.

🐝 Supports pollinators such as small bees and hoverflies.



## Germander Speedwell

*Irish: Lus cré talún*  
*Scientific: Veronica chamaedrys*  
 Perennial; Flowering: April to July

- Low-growing with brilliant blue flowers, each with four petals & a white centre. Flowers grow in pairs along upright stems.
- It was thought to bring good luck and safe journeys.

🐝 Visited by bees, flies, and solitary pollinators. Flowers offer nectar and pollen early in the season.



## Creeping Buttercup

*Irish: Fearbán reatha*  
*Scientific: Ranunculus repens*  
 Perennial; Flowering: April to October

- Bright yellow, glossy five-petaled flowers. Leaves divided into three lobes, often with pale blotches.
- Creeping stems (stolons) root at leaf joints, forming spreading mats.

🐝 Enjoyed by bees, hoverflies, beetles, and small flies. Offers early and long-lasting nectar and pollen.

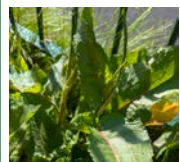


## Herb-Robert

*Irish: Ruithéal rí*  
*Scientific: Geranium robertianum*  
 Biennial; Flowering: April to October

- Small wild geranium with delicate, deeply lobed redd-tinted leaves. Bright pink five-petaled flowers. Thin reddish stems, often hairy.
- When crushed, gives off a strong, musky smell, hence also known as Stinky Bob.

🐝 Loved by hoverflies, solitary bees, and small butterflies. Valuable nectar source in shaded or sheltered areas.



## Dock

*Irish: Copóg shráide*  
*Scientific: Rumex obtusifolius*  
 Perennial; Flowering: June to September

- Large, oval to oblong leaves with wavy edges. Central stem with tall spires of reddish-brown flowers and seeds.
- Deep roots bring up minerals & help break compacted soil.

🐝 Flowers are wind-pollinated, but seed heads attract insects and birds. Host plant for some moth species.



## Cleavers

*Irish: Garbhluas*  
*Scientific: Galium aparine*  
 Annual; Flowering: May to August

- Long, scrambling stems tiny hooked hairs. Leaves grow in in circles of 6–8 around the stem. Small greenish-white flowers.
- Also known as sticky willy as sticky seed balls cling to clothes & fur.

🐝 Modest nectar value. Acts as cover and habitat for insects, and seeds are eaten by small birds.



## Nettle

*Irish: Neantóg*  
*Scientific: Urtica dioica*  
 Perennial; Flowering: May to September

- Tall, upright plant with heart-shaped, serrated leaves. Leaves and stems covered in fine stinging hairs. Small greenish flowers hang in clusters.
- Supports over 40 species of insects.

🐝 Caterpillar food plant for small tortoiseshell, red admiral, peacock, and comma butterflies. Flowers attract hoverflies, bees, and beetles.



## Broadleaf Plantain

*Irish: Cuach Phádraig*  
*Scientific: Plantago major*  
 Perennial; Flowering: June to October

- Low-growing broad, oval leaves with distinct veins. Tall, narrow flower spikes emerge from the centre.
- Leaves can soothe nettle stings when rubbed gently on the skin. Called Patrick’s shield in Irish.

🐝 Flowers visited by hoverflies, small bees, and beetles. Seeds eaten by birds.

# Native Irish Trees (Part 1)

This sign introduces some of Ireland's native trees and their unique features. You can find them in and around Castlegregory – including our West End and Playground Garden pocket forests\* and nearby hedgerows.



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**Village Voices**

👁️ How many can you spot today?

## Oak (pedunculate)\*\*



*Irish: Dair ghallda*  
*Scientific: Quercus robur*

- Deep green lobed leaves; produces male & female flowers
- Ireland's top biodiversity tree: supports ca. 500 different types of insects, fungi, mammals, mosses & lichens.

Traditionally the Oak symbolised longevity. It's wood was used in ship building and for whiskey barrels

Provides an early source of pollen and nectar in spring. Supports 67 species of moth. Acorns are an important food source for squirrels & deer.

## Scots Pine



*Irish: Péine Albanach*  
*Scientific: Pinus sylvestris*

- Tall straight trunk with reddish bark
- Long paired needles
- Small woody cones (male and female)
- Traditionally used for pine resin as pitching for boats.

Old Irish law: Part of lords of the wood. A most valuable tree. If damaged, the offender had to pay restitution.

Supports early season insects with pollen. Provides shelter for nesting birds and roosting bats. Seeds are eaten by red squirrels.

## Hawthorn / Whitethorn



*Irish: Sceach Gheal*  
*Scientific: Crataegus monogyna*

- Common hedgerow species
- Thorny branches, small deep lobed leaves (like tiny oak leaves)
- White or pink flowers in May; red berries (Haws) in autumn.

Irish mythology: known as the 'fairy' tree; it was bad luck to cut it down.

Supports ca. 149 insect species. Flowers are great for pollinators in spring. Birds love the haws in the autumn.

## Hazel



*Irish: Coll*  
*Scientific: Corylus avellana*

- Rounded, toothed leaves
- Yellow catkins (lamb's tails) in winter
- Traditionally used for fencing and baskets.

Irish mythology: linked to wisdom; the salmon of knowledge ate hazelnuts from sacred trees.

Even though they are wind pollinated, catkins feed early bees. Birds love the nuts as do red squirrels

## Apple



*Irish: Úll*  
*Scientific: Malus domestica*

- Oval toothed leaves with slightly hairy underside
- Pink buds opening to white flowers in spring
- Apples in autumn
- Apple trees can live over 100 years.

Irish mythology: seen as symbols of healing, with the sea god Manannán carrying a branch of magical apples that could relieve weariness & worries.

Blossoms provide early nectar to honey bees, hoverflies and bumblebees. Fallen apples feed birds, insects, badgers, and even foxes.

## Rowan (Mountain Ash)



*Irish: Caorthann*  
*Scientific: Sorbus aucuparia*

- Feather like leaves with 5-9 pairs
- White flower clusters in spring; bright red berries in autumn
- Berries are traditionally used to make jelly.

Irish mythology: planted near homes in Ireland to ward off evil.

Supports 28 insects and 125 lichens. Pollinators love the flowers in spring.

## Alder



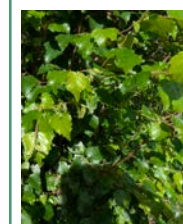
*Irish: Fearnóg*  
*Scientific: Alnus glutinosa*

- Rounded leaves with a notched tip. Small female cones and long male catkins
- Fast growing
- Roots support nitrogen-fixing bacteria, improving soil for other plants

Traditionally used for Irish crannógs (artificial islands) & Venice foundations as timber stays water resistant.

Early catkins offer pollen for bees. Alder seeds are a good food source for birds & small mammals during winter.

## Birch (downy)\*\*\*



*Irish: Beith chluhmhach*  
*Scientific: Betula pubescens*

- Triangular leaves with toothed edges, smooth white bark with horizontal lines
- A pioneer tree, one of the first to colonise bare or disturbed ground
- Traditionally used for brooms.

Irish Folklore: symbolises renewal and protection. It could often be found planted near homes.

Early catkins provide pollen for bees. Host plant for many species, over 300 types of insects and fungi, incl. moths, butterflies and caterpillars.

\*A pocket forest is a small, densely planted native woodland designed to mimic natural forest layers and accelerate biodiversity. Based on the Miyawaki method, it supports climate resilience, wildlife, and rapid ecological regeneration in compact urban or rural spaces.

\*\* The other type of Oak we have in Ireland is sessile Oak. It has slightly differently shaped leaves, with a visible stalk attached to the branch.

\*\*\* The other type of Birch native to Ireland is silver Birch. It's leaves have less of a curve, and the bark has vertical diamonds.

Sources: [www.pollinators.ie](http://www.pollinators.ie); [www.iwt.ie](http://www.iwt.ie); [www.treecouncil.ie](http://www.treecouncil.ie); [www.freetrees.ie](http://www.freetrees.ie)

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# Native Irish Trees (Part 2)

This sign introduces some of Ireland's native trees and their unique features. You can find them in and around Castlegregory – including our West End and Playground Garden pocket forests\* and nearby hedgerows.

👁️ How many can you spot?



Sponsored by:  
**The Rambling House**

## Willow (Goat)\*\*

Irish: *Saileach*  
 Scientific: *Salix caprea*



- Oval shaped leaves, twisted at end; matt green, hairless above, felty coating of fine grey hairs at bottom.
- Early catkins, “pussy willow” (silvery, then yellow) appear before the leaves.

Called “goat willow” due to its traditional use as fodder for livestock. Traditionally, pussy willow branches were sometimes brought indoors at Imbolc to mark the coming of spring.

Supports 266 insect species and 160 lichens. Goat & Grey willow provide nectar and pollen early spring for pollinators.



## Willow (Grey)\*\*

Irish: *Saileach liath*  
 Scientific: *Salix cinerea*



- Small tree with a spreading shape; oval, soft grey-green leaves - at least twice as long as they are wide
- Catkins appear in early spring before the leaves

Grey willow is Ireland's most common native willow. Willows were used in traditional basket weaving and wattleing

One of the earliest sources of nectar & pollen for bees & hoverflies. Supports numerous insect species, incl. moths & beetles. Catkins are especially important for queen bumblebees emerging from hibernation.



## Crab Apple

Irish: *Crann fia-úll*  
 Scientific: *Malus sylvestris*



- Small tree with wide, twisted shape. Oval, toothed leaves
- White or pale pink blossom in spring
- Small, hard green-yellow apples in autumn.

Traditionally used in jellies, chutneys and cider. Considered the wild ancestor of our cultivated apple.

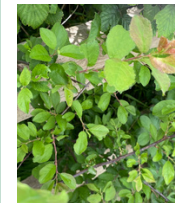


Early spring blossom attracts bees, hoverflies, and pollinating insects. Fallen fruit feeds birds, badgers, foxes, and insects.



## Blackthorn

Irish: *Draighean*  
 Scientific: *Prunus spinosa*



- Dense shrub with very sharp thorns, small white flowers bloom on bare wood in early spring
- Oval leaves emerge after flowers, round purple fruit (sloes) in autumn.

Traditionally used to make sloe gin and jellies. Was used as a boundary plant as it forms thick and protective cover.



Nectar & pollen for early-emerging pollinators such as bees, butterflies & hoverflies. Home for 109 insect species. Fruit loved by birds such as thrushes.



## Guelder Rose

Irish: *Caor chon*  
 Scientific: *Viburnum opulus*



- Maple-like leaves (3 lobes)
- Creamy-white flower clusters in early summer
- Bright red translucent berries in autumn
- Great for damp hedgerows

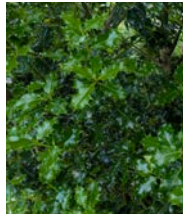
Berries are not edible raw but can be used for jelly after cooking

Flower heads attract hoverflies and native bees  
 Berries are a food source for winter birds like thrushes.



## Holly

Irish: *Cuilleann*  
 Scientific: *Ilex aquifolium*



- Glossy, dark green evergreen leaves
- Small white flowers in spring (male & female on separate plants)
- Bright red berries on female plants in autumn and winter

Holly is one of Ireland's few native evergreens. The spiny leaves act as a deterrent against browsing animals.

Holly trees provide valuable habitat and food for wildlife: birds (thrushes, blackbirds & robins) feed on the berries. Provides nesting sites & shelter for birds.



## Elder

Irish: *Trom*  
 Scientific: *Sambucus nigra*



- Compound leaves with 5–7 leaflets
- White, flat flower heads in early summer
- Black berries in hanging clusters in autumn
- Ability to fix nitrogen in the soil.

Traditionally used to make elderflower cordial, wine and elderberry syrup.

Flowers attract bees, hoverflies, and butterflies  
 Berries feed birds and mammals



## Wild Cherry

Irish: *Crann silíní fiáin*  
 Scientific: *Prunus avium*



- Shiny, oval leaves with serrated edges and a slight point
- Clusters of white flowers with five petals appear in spring
- Small red to dark cherries ripen in early summer

Birds often eat the fruit before humans can – it's a vital wildlife food source. The wood is prized for furniture-making due to its rich colour and grain

Spring blossom attracts bees, hoverflies, and early pollinators. Fruits provide food for birds, including thrushes and blackbirds.



\*A pocket forest is a small, densely planted native woodland designed to mimic natural forest layers and accelerate biodiversity. Based on the Miyawaki method, it supports climate resilience, wildlife, and rapid ecological regeneration in compact urban or rural spaces.

\*\* Other willows out of the total nine willows native to Ireland include: Eared Willow, Dwarf Willow, Dark-leaved Willow, Bay Willow, Tea-Leafed Willow, Purple Willow, and Creeping Willow.

# Leaf Mould Compost



Sponsored by:  
**Trí na Chéile**

This is our Castlegregory Tidy Towns Leaf Mould bin.

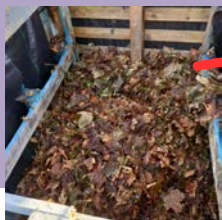
This bin is filled with leaves gathered from village streets in autumn and winter. In our community gardens we leave fallen leaves to support wildlife – they create warm hiding places for bees, bugs, and other small animals through the cold season.

## What is Leaf Mould? = Nature's Soil Conditioner

Leaf mould is the crumbly, dark, earthy material produced when autumn leaves decompose slowly over time. Unlike compost, it's made solely from leaves. It's one of the best soil improvers that you can make it for free.

### How to Make Leaf Mould

1. Collect fallen leaves in autumn (avoid evergreen or leathery leaves like laurel).
2. Contain them in a mesh bin, black sack with holes, or wire cage.
3. Keep moist and wait—nature does the rest!
4. Time: 6–12 months = mulch; 2+ years = fine, crumbly leaf mould



12/11/24

7 month  
 =  
 70%-80%  
 reduction  
 in volume



05/06/25

### Why Use Leaf Mould?

- Improves soil structure - it helps loosen compacted soil and improves drainage
- Enhances water retention in the soil
- Ideal for seed sowing and potting mixes
- Feeds soil life and encourages healthy root growth
- Reduces need for synthetic fertilisers
- Perfect for mulching borders, woodland paths, and shady gardens



### Did You Know?

- Leaf mould is fungus-based, unlike compost which is microbe-rich
- Helps capture carbon
- Used in historic Irish walled gardens as key growing medium
- A leaf pile, is a great winter home for hedgehogs, solitary bees, bumble bee queens, frogs and other bugs



Sources: Irish Peatland Conservation Council - <https://www.ipcc.ie/>

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# Bug Hotels / Bee Hotels

Castlegregory Tidy Towns has installed bug and bee hotels in the Playground and West End Gardens to provide safe shelter for overwintering pollinators.

🤔 What do you notice about them?

🌻 What could you do in your own garden to help pollinators through the winter?



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## 🐝 Bug & Bee Hotels – Welcoming Ireland’s Wild Pollinators

A bug and bee hotel is a man-made structure that mimics natural habitats for solitary bees, ladybirds, lacewings, and other beneficial insects. These hotels support biodiversity by offering a safe space to nest, hibernate, or shelter—especially where wild habitats are declining.

### 🌻 Why bug / bee hotels?

- Support solitary bees, which make up 80% of Ireland’s bee species
- Provide safe winter homes for pollinators and pest controllers
- Particularly helpful in areas where natural habitats are limited or are regularly disturbed
- Encourage pollination in gardens and food crops
- Act as educational tools for biodiversity awareness

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

### 🐝 Top Tips for Bee Hotels

1. Plant flowers nearby – bees need food close to home.
2. Mount 1–2.5m high, facing east or south; avoid north-facing spots.
3. Keep it small – bird box size is ideal. Big hotels can spread disease.
4. Use a sloped roof to keep it dry in wet Irish weather.
5. Avoid bird feeders nearby – protect bees from predators.
6. No activity after 2 years? Move it to a sunnier or quieter spot.
7. After 4 years, place a new hotel beside the old one to support returning bees.

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

### 🌍 Did You Know?

- Solitary bees don’t sting unless trapped
- One red mason bee can pollinate as much as 120 honeybees
- Solitary bees nest in two main ways; *mining bees* burrow into the ground, while *cavity nesting bees* use existing holes in hollow stems, wood or stone walls.
- More than 30% of Ireland’s wild bee species are under threat

Source: National Biodiversity Data Centre

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