

A YEAR TO BE REMEMBERED

By ORLA FARRELL

IN a season where world attention has been on presidential tweets, the Patron of Crann sent a message to his 136K Twitter followers: “President Michael D Higgins marked National Tree Day 2020 with members of the Easy Treesie Project and Crann – Trees for Ireland”.

We were so excited that the President shared our goal in a film posted from Áras an Uachtaráin, quoting young Sam Harrison (see picture on pg 3). “My class planted a hundred trees on our Tree Academy... There are a million school children in Ireland and the plan is to plant a tree for every single child by 2023.”

I write this on the first day of the first planting season of the United Nations Decade of Ecosystem Restoration 2021–31. There are great reports of Covid vaccines coming soon; the closest we have to a vaccine for our climate is tree planting; simple, cheap carbon capture. Is this just my view? Our biggest virtual communications this year have been with my all-time favourite web platform. In Easy Treesie’s bid to make earth cooler, we feel very cool indeed partnering with the TEDx Countdown, a global initiative to accelerate solutions to the climate crisis. We went into full virtual festival mode for our watch party which, despite its serious intent, was, like all TED (Technology, Education, Design) events a feast of “ideas worth spreading”.

I felt we had come very far indeed from when we first pushed our rusty, rescued supermarket trolley down the path from our school to the park to plant our first five Tree Week saplings a few years ago. Now we were the licensed co-hosting watch-party for Irish youth with Jane Fonda and Chris Hemsworth (aka Thor), promoting the talks of our distinguished guests, quoted below.

“We start this new decade, knowing it is the most consequential period in history.” **Prince William.**

“We now have one last chance to truly change our course.” **Christina Figueres** (architect of the Paris

A Season of Virtual RealiTREE

■ The Crann/Easy Treesie Project: planting 1m trees with Ireland’s 1m school children and their communities by 2023.

■ Joining the UNESCO-backed Plant-for-the-Planet’s www.trilliontreecampaign.org challenge, with the aim of reducing global heating by 1 degree during the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, 2021–31 while other solutions to the Climate and Biodiversity Crisis are found.

■ We have planted 101,390 trees to date.

■ Our goal this year: planting 100,000 trees in 2021.

Climate Accord).

“We know we need to stop the damage and start the repair.” **Tom Crowther** (who has counted the world’s 3 trillion trees and mapped the world’s space for 1 trillion more).

“Science tells us, every day, with more precision, that urgent action is needed -- and I am not dramatizing, this is what science says -- if we are to “keep the hope of avoiding radical and catastrophic climate change. And for this we must act now.” **His Holiness Pope Francis.**

Our next step was to host a TEDx circle. We celebrated Halloween with a Trick or Tree-t online occasion; these events are small-group discussion, like a book club for TED talks. By

hosting the event online and providing free tickets through the Eventbrite service, once again we could facilitate visitors from not only Ireland but from an international participation.

Kai Zheng, attending from ETZ Zurich who are working on the Trillion Tree Tracker App, commented: “It was fascinating to hear about all your wonderful projects in Ireland and the excitement about contributing and eagerly trying to make our world a better place.”

Cllr Joe Newman, who has done trojan tree-planting with our project, told the group the story of how he set up the Swords Woodland Association with the aim of stopping urban sprawl and planning space for trees in the fast-growing town, providing a template for similar organisations.

Aileen Crossley of Mastercard spoke of the great ambition of Mastercard Ireland to facilitate the planting of trees and her work on animating tree films to engage children and her co-workers and customers to plant trees.

Last Earth Day it did seem as if we were looking at a wipe-out of all action. Tree Week had just been cancelled, a week when in one morning we had had 245 Tralee schoolchildren at a planting-and-PoeTREE workshop in other years. Biodiversity Week, when we had run nine Tree-planting Parties in seven days last year? Also cancelled, and with it the financial support that came with it. World Environment Day, when we had welcomed the Minister for Climate Action to launch our first City Park woodland? Another day of staying apart. The Crann calendar with its colourful tree pictures was covered in blacked-out events.

The need to address the scourge of Covid-19, to limit contacts and stay apart, is abundantly clear and we have had to face these challenges as have all other business, social and environmental activities. So how were we to make lemonade from the lemons we had been handed?

We had harnessed the magic of the online from our very earliest initiatives. Everyone loves a well-written manual;

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President Higgins and Diarmuid McAree of Crann – Trees for Ireland at the Áras an Uachtaráin presentation event
Opposite: Sam and Maeve Harrison at Áras an Uachtaráin

CRANN for Christmas

Give a gift of CRANN membership to someone this Christmas

Membership subscriptions enable Crann – Trees for Ireland to fulfil its mission to enhance the environment of Ireland through planting, promoting, protecting and increasing awareness about trees and woodlands. We would like your friends to share the benefits of Crann Membership and to help achieve its climate action mission.

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Crann – Trees for Ireland, PO Box 860 Celbridge, Co Kildare



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the knack is having them to hand. Because the better ones are often slim volumes they can be easy to lose and spring-cleaning is happening now all the time as people delight in decluttering. By making our film series on how to recognise each of Ireland's 28 native trees with our now newly-elected Tree Council President Éanna Ni Lamhna in 2016 we shared what we were doing in the easiest way possible: searchable how-to videos. We made our film, 'How to Plant a Tree Sapling – It's Easy Treesie' (Winner at the National University of Ireland Galway REELScience Film Awards 2020) for the same reason, to share what we had learned with children and their families everywhere at no cost. This year we also made a film of our Tree Academy at the venerable Royal Irish Academy in Dublin to capture the day's actions and inspire. From this good base we asked ourselves what more of our million-tree project activities could be moved online?

Our first goal was to continue to spread the word and ensure people could hear of our project. In the past this has been done through teachers talking to teachers, but also through the media and social media. We increased our activities in this area and now have thousands of followers enjoying our message of Positivity-TREE based mainly in Ireland but also in other countries across the globe.

A really exciting part of this promotion occurred on Culture Night when we ran a 4-hour Ext-TREE-vaganza of Culture for 100 zooming participants. We ran premieres of six new films. Seriously, a four-hour zoom? No, it was even longer because we were running across two platforms! Dublin Culture Night simultaneously ran our film of socially distanced apple-tree planting with families in Santry Woods on their special Culture Night channel. Thanks to all 100 participants. Rory Malone gave a wonderful presentation on Artists for Climate Change. Aoife Wilson of We Make Everything Simple ran a Pose-of-the-Tree workshop from the tree-lined Palmerstown Park. Diarmuid McAree of Crann – Trees for Ireland spoke of the importance of trees. Poet Anto Kerins returned with a spellbinding session. Here is an excerpt from our report to the organisers:

"An amazing feature was the spread of visitors; we had a participant in Northern Canada who could describe seeing and smelling the smoke from the Western American forest fires; a couple of front-line workers cycling through Germany describing the forests there that day; our poet, artist and one of our film makers were in the capital, I don't know where the other film maker beamed in from but, hey, it didn't matter,

Edward Stevenson of the Swords Woodland Association provides support for the children planting Trees on the Land heritage apple trees supplied by Future Forests at Santry Demesne for the NearTV Culture Night film.



she was there! In the middle of her birthday dinner! Best of all, our 7-year old star from one of our films Harper, with her dad, Adam Hosp, who co-wrote the script of the Mastercard animation 'Priceless Planet', beamed in from St Louis, Missouri! These are only some of the locations that were represented. We had a speech from a Ghanaian representative of our tree planting trillion-tree project live from Africa and from Irish abroad from Croatia. Many were enjoying a glass of something nice! Our sponsor, Patagonia, could join in with a staff member at a time convenient to them at their outlet. It was great to be able to support artists through this event; they appreciated it and so did we. We made several new films for this event specifically, which have received huge attention on social media since and we can use them forever more! Online Culture Night was a great success for us. For one, given the travel restrictions which were just coming in on that day, I ran Dublin Culture Night from a small village in Co Louth. And on this, our third Culture Night, our event had a new Donate Button; this was a good idea!"

Organising planting in safety has required a lot of planning. And we have done it. We are operating using deliveries and couriers for socially distanced planting, such as when we arranged apple tree deliveries to Athenry, Roscahill and Celbridge.

We salute here our long-time supporters, members of the Rotary Club of Great Britain and Ireland. Their Raheny branch – where I am Environmental Secretary – has a new motto, "The Art of the Possible", which this year sums up our angle too.



Tree Day saw the Greenore Tidy Towns plant the northernmost East Coast Scots Pine of the 1,500 planted with schools and their communities all over the country, while over the road Rampark NS added to the tree planting carried out with ourselves and local forester Dom with three Heritage Apple trees purchased by our project from Trees on the Land, as well as quantities of spring bulbs, to mark the appointment of Julie Kirk,

The principal and staff of St Paul's school, Ratoath, Co Meath, give a 'Tree Cheers' for Mark and past pupil Harry Bogan as we plant out tree #100,001, planted in a pot in St Patrick's Week during our first Online Tree Academy with the Innovate2Zero project





Greenore Tidy Towns members plant Scots pine on the Cooley Peninsula against a backdrop of the village's iconic pines on Tetrapak National Tree Day

Left inset: Children from St Anne's NS Shankill and friends who have won the NUI Galway Science Festival Film Awards for their film, How to Plant a Tree Sapling – Easy Treesie

newly-appointed principal of Scoil Áine here on the Cooley Peninsula (not far from the Biden homestead). Their thank-you reads: "The children had a great day of planting last Thursday."

We will be working with Julie to enable some re-planting by the children of adjacent Coillte Ravensdale forest which was ravaged by fire last summer. This is one of the many projects lined up for socially-distanced planting. Athenry is as usual early out of the traps and we will plant one of the Scots pines which were presented to President Higgins marking the 2,020th tree of our Galway 2020 City of Culture planting. Another of the Scots pines will be planted by Shankill Tidy

Towns and yet another in Seagrang Park, our first urban park woodland of the project. Other school planting is tabled at the High School, Rathgar, Our Lady's Templeogue, planting their 1,000th tree, and Kylemore Abbey. Planting continues at Santry Woods and Racecourse Park, Fingal, and we are collaborating on numerous projects, some of particular scientific interest involving water purification with the Tree Council of Ireland.

Local organisations have been the first responders during the Covid crisis. Our project with Roscahill Tidy Towns members, sponsored by Galway County Council, planted 1,000 saplings, slowly and surely using their networks built over years of voluntary endeavour to ensure all work was carried out in safety. The Orchard Project engaged eight similar communities in Co Kildare in a 14,000-sapling feat of civic-spirited engagement. Our other main projects for which we received very welcome sponsorship from counties Fingal and Cork were completed as planned, with certain necessary modifications to meet national best practice safety guidelines.

Our project has planted on public land as far as possible. However, with this year's onset of national restrictions coinciding with Tree Week, in order to have the trees safely in the ground we allowed planting on some farms and in some gardens to ensure no precious sapling was lost. The trees will achieve the goal of capturing carbon and improving biodiversity wherever they are planted.

We welcome a myriad of new supporters to our cause. Mars Ireland not only made a

generous contribution towards tree-planting, a tree for each of their 300 employees in their new collaboration with the Nordic countries, Mars North Europe: hearing that our project is powered by chocolate they sent us a tree-mendous supply of MalTREEsers TREEsers. I mean Maltesers Teasers. These have been distributed to tree-planting children in Co Louth and to Baldoyle Tidy Towns. This Dublin suburb is now well on track to be the first Fingal suburb to emulate Shankill, Athenry and Goresbridge by planting 'Trees For All', not just one for each local schoolchild but in the name of their residents of all ages.

We are so very grateful to all of our supporters old and new with a very special mention for Coillte and charity Trees on the Land. We have a big shout-out for some of our newest supporters: RIA printing house who are sponsoring trees for two of their new publications. GreenPrint-Maxol has asked us to plant 500 trees on their behalf and contribute to education on aspects of the transition to clean energy highlighting the many benefits of trees. The Friendly Brothers of St Patrick have made a generous donation towards our tree planting – we are in search of a site on public land with a connection to the holy man, if any reader has a suggestion.

I leave the last word with our Environmental Intern, Asfand Bakht Yar, currently finalising his research on attitudes to Environmental Education in Dublin schools which he carried out during his Master's Degree placement with us from Dublin's Technological University.

"It has been a Tree-t to work with Easy Treesie! If you want to bring a change in the whole citizenry, it's important that the change starts with the children. This is why I love and cherish the Easy Treesie Project; it's very easy to plant a tree, so plant as many as you can! And plant when you can because Climate Change is not waiting for anyone."

You can learn all about our project on the www.easytreesie.com blog and on our social media. You have no room to plant? We can sort that. You can sponsor Easy Treesie project trees for €10 on the www.crann.ie website and at <https://www.trilliontreecampaign.org/donate-trees> where you can sponsor trees on projects all over the world. Or you can phone or email Marguerite and arrange a €10 donation for a tree to be planted as part of our project and you can download an e-Tree Certificate if you are giving a gift, which you can print if you would wish. You can pay directly using our PayPal or credit card options.

Have you an idea worth spreading to do with trees and climate action? Please get in touch with orla@easytreesie.com and let's share our love of trees!

