

The serious fun of tree planting parties

ORLA FARRELL and Easy Treesie appreciate the benefit of a nine day working week as the jobs keep coming in!

WE'RE IN the middle of another nine-day week as I write; this time for National Biodiversity Week—and for a fifth year in a row Easy Treesie is running a parade of events. Our volunteers tell us they get such a buzz from Tree Planting parties that they don't want to stop for summer so we've a new programme—Tree Maintenance parties! You've also told us that meeting online is often convenient; if you missed our online webinars you'll find them on the Tree Council channel. There you'll find our launch of our *Champion School Plants 3,555 Trees* film, the inspiring story of the dynamic tree planting Coláiste Chiaráin school community in Croom, Co. Limerick. We talk to the President of the Tree Council of Ireland and Fingal Tree Officer, Cormac Downey about 'How to Keep Your Trees Alive'. We look forward to next season when we invite everyone to join our 'Plant an Elder Wand' initiative. And we look back at the achievements of our tree planting communities and the fun we've had. It's been Serious Fun; the motto, as it happens for Barretstown. Since that is our philosophy too, what joy it was to be off to start planting the first of 4,500 trees with them for our very first planting party of 2023. 100,000 children have passed through the gates of this holiday camp, for children who are sick, since Hollywood actor Paul Newman welcomed the first visitors 30 years ago. There's no place we'd rather be.

The tree-mobile is very tightly packed; what's the kit? Well, see a typical short-list of supplies in the sidebar! Since we like to travel

sustainably, we bring as many people as we can too so on the way I collect Steven Doody and Deirdre Lane, artists working on our community participative project. We are off on a road-trip to the country, what fun it is to see the countryside. And as our trip is to Kildare, which is the home county of Crann, all the better as we are on the home pitch!

All that good land, ah, what a sight. The better the land, the better the trees grow and that is a fact. Much fun is had as we drive along, Deirdre is a Kildare native and Steven is from neighbouring Wicklow so both take on the role of guides and we hear tales aplenty shortening the road.

I'd always been in awe of the Barretstown mission. It was so interesting to hear the story of how Paul Newman had benefited so much himself from the great North American practice of going to camp. His dream was to make the experience available to children who were sick by making sure that there was a medical and care team on hand so that they were free to enjoy a holiday too. When children started crossing the Atlantic to attend

Rush & Lusk Educate Together, St. Macullin's and Corduff NS came out to add 1,000 saplings to their local canopy with Fingal County Council



The Easy Treesie team join with Minister Martin Heydon, the Barretstown and Kildare Chamber-Intel communities at our first planting event of 2023

his US camp he decided that these children would benefit from a new camp closer to home to avoid the distress of an arduous journey. He searched all over Europe for a suitable place and when he finally came to Ireland, was greatly facilitated by the Government in his search and in securing Barretstown Castle for the project.

A secret pleasure is that when we arrive to plant trees, we always get a VIP welcome; today it's 'Everyone please go to the public car park. Orla and your team, since you have

all the gear, you may park at the front door of the castle.' It is the birthday of the late Paul Newman today—we'll be planting an oak tree in his memory as well as celebrating the work of 'Sustainable Kildare's climate action championship', hosted by Intel and County Kildare Chamber who explain that their campaign demonstrated 'the power of small actions'.

We have been looking forward the whole way to tea and scones we have been promised in the tree house. The day is cool enough, so

I am surprised when CEO Dee Ahearne, welcoming us with beaming smiles, says it will give us a chance to warm up. The tree house it turns out is a magical indoor sunroom, entered through a glade of birch and tall ferns. Banks of outdoor sinks are supplied for handwashing, the heavy doors are kept snugly closed electrically and inside is a fairyland of fairy lights, a welcome breakfast of lemon croissants and other delights, steaming tea, coffee and of course, (signature snack of the world tree project), hot chocolate.

After our tea break we pose for some photographs with our tree planting crew to record the day's event. Steven has been using plastic tubs in the nursery having cleverly acquired a quantity of them from a local food establishment. Making the Scots Pine saplings, which feature in the photographs, look good requires some staging. We hide the recycled plastic Mayonnaise tubs in which the Pine are planted inside our fancier, shinier new buckets—important given Minister Martin Heydon is present to launch the initiative.

We chat with Mitch, who has run the camps here for over a decade and Peter who will ensure all the saplings are safely planted. Our conversation covers the hares, rabbits and deer all living on site and the issue of tree-guards; these animals love nothing better than some fresh new saplings. The Coillte nursery team has had 1,500 saplings delivered the previous day with a wide variety of species. We have brought just a few spindle as well... a fairy tale tree because of its connection to Sleeping Beauty who pricked her finger on a spindle and slept for 100 years. This is the

MeerGroen and Easy Treesie introducing some Elder Wands to the Swords Woodland Association and friends. Ronan Lynch



kind of place so peaceful I can imagine a long sleep and a prince striding across the Kildare parkland. Or St. Brigid perhaps, our first 1,500 saplings also mark her anniversary this year just in time for our new National Holiday.

Following our morning planting session we are kindly brought back for more refreshments by Keith. We sit in the tranquil setting at wooden tables and chairs and chat to some of the volunteers who will be carrying out the afternoon's tree planting. We hear of the Barretstown Camp policy; the children leave their sickness at the front gate. They also leave their phones there for the week. While there is wifi available, required now for diabetes management by some of the visiting children, the password is not generally available and children spend their time at camp with that old technology; Mother Nature. A pheasant lands as we wheel away the last of the tools to enjoy the newly-planted glade, planted along the avenue leading from the Castle. These new trees will be standing sentinel for years to come encircling this Magic place.

We've had very many highlights this year. The Easy Treesie podcast was launched at Christmas and has been heard as far away as Holland by members of the stunning Tree Rescue MeerGroen project! I had spotted their work in a two minute film from the Economic Forum. What fun to hear they were coming to Ireland as part of a tour taking in England, Wales and later France and Italy to show us what they are doing! I issued a cordial invitation through their Kerry-born organiser, Aileen, to tag along with us for Tree Week if they thought any of our events would work for them in their missionary cause. Our Invitation was to our planting events; the global motto of the Trillion Tree initiative, "Stop Talking, Start Planting" focuses us on doing exactly that and away from talking events, be they ever so interesting. (Though we certainly listen attentively to local requirements before planting, which is carried out by our communities as far as possible on public lands. Our parks and greens are hugely valued by all and consultation is critical to the success of restoring tree cover.) Since our Dutch new friends are people of action, we agreed an exciting tour with much planting, taking a few rests to listen at a handful of talks and off we set.

Franke and Grant made space for me in their capacious van and we set off on a Grand Tree Week Odyssey. First stop, the Botanic Gardens where I bring them to the Wild Ireland space after one of the wonderful talks. They point out all the great possibilities there, surrounded as we are with a living catalogue of our native species. From there we head to Wicklow town to network with council

Santa Sabena, Sutton students lineout for a Tree Planting party with Steven Doody, Easy Treesie Community Liaison and Verity Swann, Rotary



officials and tree lovers at Anja Murrays talk at Wicklow library. Our team do the same at dawn in St. Anne's Park where we are joined by our new Tech Lead Dr. Emma Carrigan, then heading to Seagrang Park for tree-planting with an international group of pupils and our old friends at Baldoyle who are about to accept the National Tidy Towns Tree Award in the coming weeks. We get straight to work, Franke with his sharp secateurs always at the ready harvests an elder wand, cutting a branch he spots poking out onto the footpath and in the process pruning this bushy tree nicely back so that it now no longer blocks the pavement. Each pupil plants an Elder Wand in the soft wet ground amongst the woodland we started at our very first Tree Academy. 50 trees planted, free, in a flash! What a great way to plant a tree! We decide on the spot that this will be our first project for our next planting season, letting Nature be our Nursery.

On with the tour! After joining Brendan Smith, Galway Tree Planter extraordinaire, at Croke Park for a bite to eat and to hear how they can join this Tree-volution we set off for Dunsany to view the wonderful



Above: Enjoying a poetry reading from a young environmental poet, National Tree Week. Ronan Lynch

Below: Apple volunteers plant 100 saplings at their EU Headquarters, Hollyhill, Cork and sponsor 250 more at Bishopstown Community School and the surrounding area to mark Earth Day
Below right: A break for the Salesforce Tree Maintenance team to hear the story of the People's Choice Global Top Ten Community Gardens at Santry from its lead gardener, Ciaran Connelly

rewilding heaven. Littlepace in Fingal is our next stop on the following morning. We chat with the Parks team who are out with augurs and spades digging the holes for the children

who are coming out to do the planting. The day starts with a double espresso and a whole-school-meditation over the speakers. Next we welcome two classes after they have walked their park 'Daily Mile', a tradition in this school which happens rain or shine. The Fingal team has identified an old hedgerow which has become patchy and bald and it is at this spot we are putting back the old line of hawthorn and holly, rowan and oak. The prize for most work done? Future Apple Blossom! Franke pruned the crab apple to stop branches rubbing together and to allow in more light. The tree-planters who managed to plant 250 saplings in an hour with their bare (gloved) hands took home three bouquets. For a second year in a row, Fingal Co. Council are giving away 16k trees to its citizens, this initiative goes from strength to strength. Next, our workshop with the Swords Woodland Association. We rescue tiny oak seedlings which would not have grown in an area where the ground is left mulched only. Then on to Shankill where Diarmuid McAree and the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Parks team sees how new cherry seedlings too close to the

mother tree can be transplanted to a place where they can grow.

In other news, we're streamlining the www.easytreesie.com website where we plan to post big thank-you messages to the very many supporters and volunteers who have brought us to over 400k trees planted so far, from those who have made many contributions such as Coillte, Plant-for-the-Planet, Salesforce, Maxol, and the Loreto Order to newer groups such as Goodera, EY, Tenable & Fingal Volunteers. Above all we thank our planting communities, the children and community leaders from from Bishopstown school in Cork City way up to Northern Ireland's Creggan Heights.

Please contact Orla or Marguerite to sponsor trees on our project (Certificates available) or apply for trees to establish in your community at orla@easytreesie.com and info@crann.ie

The Easy Treesie Story - listen wherever you get your Podcasts. Logo by Ruza Leko

The Easy Treesie Story



WHAT TO BRING FOR A PLANTING PARTY?—THIS IS OUR KIT

- A Smile!
- Saplings; bare-root is best with roots kept moist or trees in pots; we try to have at least 5 species suitable for the site when establishing new woodland
- Bucket or watering-can for soaking bare-root saplings for an hour before planting (our silicone buckets fold flat for ease of transport and storage)
- Water; use rain or grey water if possible
- Gardening gloves, large and small; we use cotton as they feel good, they last and launder best, (if they are too fancy much time can be spent choosing a pair, neutral colours safest). Rubberized ones are handy if there are briars and nettles.
- Spades; can be shared, one between 2 or 3 is good. We use Bulldog planting spades, their size and weight makes them suitable for all ages.
- Trowels; – some people prefer them
- Mud-proof container for dirty gloves; ask the volunteers to pull them apart as they won't wash right if stuck together
- A tarpaulin; so handy to protect the car from mud and water when transporting trees and tools
- First aid kit; with appropriate care this will never be required
- A wheelbarrow is handy; ours folds up!
- Personal gear; waterproof hiking boots or wellies depending on conditions, raincoat, hat, a whistle is handy to round people up easily
- Hand sanitiser
- Treats for the tree planters and their supporters; we like meeting at a refreshment/bathroom stop and start with some chocolate before we get our hands dirty
- Swag; Prizes for good effort like our Crann Magazines and Calendars
- Banner; We bring ours and one for the school and/or group who are planting
- A phone or camera; to record all the good work and share it with the wider world and to remember where you planted your trees so you can find them to water them, weed around them and generally check they are doing well!
- Tree guards; if required, stakes and ties for taller trees
- Permission forms if required
- A refuse bag; Not only do we leave no trace, we like to leave any place better than we find it so we collect any litter we come across while planting.

