



Sabina and Michael D Higgins meeting Steven Doody and Maebh Cotter at Áras an Uachtaráin in October.

Opposite page, Orla Farrell with Seosamh O Donaill, principal of Gaelscoil Mhde in Dublin, who is hosting tree planting for four local schools



good for us all to take other actions in this era of energy transition.

Preaching is not our thing, we know what has to be done. Think of that old 1980s pop song; "It ain't what you do, it's the way that you do it".

The latest round of Easy Treesie plantings saw native pines going out in An Post's electric vans to 2,000 schools around the country. Conscious of 'being the change we want to see in the world', we've been ferrying our trees by electric car, train and bike.

The Dublin deliveries included four schools in Foxfield, while other young trees went to Croke Park. More saplings travelled by bike and train with the Irish Rotary DG to Ballymoney, Co Antrim, while pedal power and another pushbike also took Easy Treesie's representatives to that all-important afternoon tea invite at Áras an Uachtaráin.

At home, Maebh supervised the planting of silver birch trees we'd delivered to her own garden, both in pots and in the ground, nurturing them with her family over the following years.

When schools reopened, Maebh joined Easy Treesie's inaugural

Transition Year Work Experience

Programme. This involved listening to

the awesome (it really is) expertise on

display at the Tree Council of Ireland

meetings, conducting inventories of our

tools and equipment, and launching our

#### Establishing more roots

Easy Treesie is now helping to support training in tree establishment as part of Ireland's only Arboriculture Apprenticeship programme.

This was confirmed to me at a recent Crann meeting by our newest Crann director, Jeremy Ryan.

"We do a module on tree establishment with our students where we use the saplings obtained through the Easy Treesie project," explained Jeremy, who is the national programme co-ordinator, QQI Level 6 Advanced Certificate in Arboriculture at the Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board.

Maith sibh!

## Easy Treesie's autumn log: 730,000 saplings planted and a trip to Áras an Uachtaráin

### Orla Farrell looks back on a memorable few months for group

**A**s I write, the golden harp still glints on the invitation sitting on my oak kitchen table. Easy Treesie and Crann were invited back to Áras an Uachtaráin in October for afternoon tea with President Michael D. Higgins and his wife Sabina.

I'm looking out at the tree nursery, the heat pump spinning around in the garden and toasting myself at the radiator, smiling at the card.

This was Easy Treesie's third time to be recognised by President Higgins. It is now five years since we presented Crann's patron with our 100,000th tree, and here we are with over 730,000 new trees in the ground.

Every tree we plant brings us closer to our one-million goal – we're three-

quarters of the way there. We have come a long way from those 2020 days when our delegation was so warmly welcomed by President Higgins, and all at a time when travel was severely restricted by Covid.

As I continue to smile at the golden-harped invitation, I recognise once more that this is my favourite spot to sit, at my marvellous pale gold-coloured wooden table. It was made by my younger brother Malachy as a wedding present, and he guaranteed it would last 1,000 years.

Any wear-and-tear over the decades will only enhance its appearance, he insisted.

In return, I made his wedding cake – which lasted a lot less time.

With new PV panels and thick insulation under wooden floors, our house does not have that damp chill it had years ago.

What has this to do with tree planting?

Well, we've celebrated National Tree Day in October and this year it was sponsored by Glennon Brothers, timber processors who started out in their Longford Mill in 1913. A great outfit, my cousin Edmund worked for them in their Fermoy sawmills.

The motto for the National Tree Day – "Building a Better Future" – spread the message that wood is our star renewable resource and that tree planting is a highly effective response to the chorus of calls for action by all.

The World Meteorological Society recently announced a 2024 record increase in carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the air. My wooden furniture here at home is locking carbon away, while looking so handsome as it ages gracefully.

However, since trees cannot slow down or reverse global warming in isolation, it's

## Growing leaders: Maebh's story

Our two representatives who joined the Crann delegation to give our thanks to our patron President Higgins will be bearing gifts of course.

COP Change Fairtrade Chocolate which supports nature restoration, from Tree HQ in Munich was presented to President Higgins by Climate Justice Ambassador Maebh Cotter who first joined Easy Treesie in 2020.

At that time, Maebh attended our Plant-for-the-Planet Tree Academy with her younger siblings, Gráinne and Sean.

Due to Covid restrictions, we moved the event from Fingal County Hall and Swords Castle to an online format – the first ever such virtual Tree Academy.

This innovation meant that children participated from as far apart as Donegal (planting hawthorn) and Johannesburg (planting lemon trees), with our colleagues from Plant-for-the-Planet headquarters in Munich joining live via Zoom – they planted apple pips.

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meetings, conducting inventories of our

tools and equipment, and launching our

podcast 'The Easy Treesie Story' at the National Botanic Gardens.

In her final year at Dominican College, Griffith Avenue, Maebh, a long-standing member of the school's Green Schools Committee, organised a tree-planting ceremony for her classmates, using one of the trees she had helped care for at home since 2020.

Now, as she begins a new chapter at Trinity College Dublin, Maebh continues to share the 'Trees for Climate Justice' philosophy that inspired her journey from Tree Academy participant to youth leader in climate action.

The other Easy Treesie representative at the Áras an Uachtaráin tea party was Steven Doody, the organisation's community liaison facilitator.

Steven is a Dublin-based artist, whose work is primarily in sculpture. Over the last few years he has developed a strong public participatory element to his work, engaging a diverse range of communities on a national level through workshops, education and discussions.

He brought a basket of Coillte-grown Scots pines on his bicycle to the tea party. Scots pine was this year's National Tree Day 2025 native tree.

Steven also brought a new candle for the window of the president's west of Ireland home.

That's a good cue to focus here on some of our west of Ireland collaborations. One of our favourites is that from Brendan 'Speedie' Smith, who has spearheaded an ambitious initiative in Galway.



Volunteers working on the Terryland Forest Park project in Galway.

See full report, pages 12 and 13



# Terryland Forest Park turns 25: From wasteland to Atlantic rainforest

Idea of an urban forest park in Ireland was unheard of, writes **Brendan Smith**

This summer marked the 25th anniversary of Galway city's Terryland Forest Park, one of Ireland's boldest community-led environmental projects.

Who would have thought that in these few short years, a new hazel tree would be thriving at Áras an Uachtaráin, grown from a hazelnut harvested from a hazel tree planted in the millennium year in this public park.

Crann patron, President Michael D. Higgins, was clearly delighted with the transformation that the Terryland forest has heralded. Looking out across the transformed landscape on a recent visit, he happily declared: "This is the Galway we want."

President Higgins visited the park to plant a new oak tree and unveil his poem 'The Mountain' on a stone plaque.

## Beginnings

Back in the late 1990s, local residents, local government officials, councillors, ecologists, environmentalists, schools, scientists, state agencies and community groups joined together to push for something unheard of in Ireland at the time – an urban forest park.

On March 12th 2000 more than 3,000 people turned out for the first community planting day, for what organisers called a 'plantathon'. These pioneering volunteers of all ages and backgrounds came to a field and proudly left behind a forest. It was referred to as 'The Green Lungs of Galway city' and the 'People's Park'.

The area zoned for the Terryland Forest Park embraces 80 hectares and it now contains an estimated 100,000 native Irish trees. Where once there were barbed

wire fences, rubble and bare fields, you'll now find meadows, wetlands, woodlands, orchards, farmland and limestone outcrops alive with wildlife.

Its advocates see it as a developing 'ecological corridor', linking the River Corrib through the city to farmland in east Galway.

## Collaboration

The success of Terryland rests on partnerships. Funding for the project was secured from the Forest Service and from the very start, the steering committee brought together Galway City Council, residents, scientists, state agencies, disability advocates, schools, artists and activists.

Volunteers known as the 'Tuath' or 'Tuatha' (the Old Irish word meaning land and its people) work on a weekly basis with the Galway City Council to maintain, conserve

and develop the forest park for citizens and biodiversity.

We were delighted to have the support of Easy Treesie in this work in 2022, when we received 100 young Coillte sapling trees to restart planting events after the Covid pause. Since then, Easy Treesie has been proud to be part of the park's regular 'plantathons', connecting volunteers with us and involving schools, scouts, companies and visitors from near and far.

Children have been central to the

vision for this transformation – drawing and painting visions of the park's future, helping with the establishment of its brand-new nursery, studying wildlife, removing invasive species, and planting trees that they can return to with their own children as many did this year, 25 years since they first entered the park.



Volunteers young and not-so-young get stuck into the work at Terryland Forest Park in Galway. Below, President Michael D. Higgins at the 25th year celebration in Terryland. Photo: Joe Shaughnessy. Opposite page, volunteers repairing stone walls as part of the work at Terryland Forest Park



## Lessons for everyone

Terryland shows what can happen when local people, councils and volunteers act together. Ask yourself, can your community also...

- ◆ Claim a piece of land for nature.
- ◆ Bring the whole community on board.
- ◆ Plant native trees, start a nursery, and keep planting.
- ◆ Make space for art, culture and play in nature.
- ◆ Celebrate milestones – and use them to dream even bigger.

As President Higgins reminded us, Ireland's future lies in weaving nature back into our towns and cities. Terryland Forest Park is a shining example of how to do just that – and an invitation to communities across the west, and beyond, to follow suit.



## Terryland's big vision realised after quarter of a century

At the anniversary celebration, President Michael D. Higgins joined volunteers in launching a number of fresh initiatives for Terryland.

- ◆ An enhanced Celtic Oak Grove replacing storm-damaged trees.
- ◆ A Poets' Trail (Sli na bhFili) comprising a series of stone sculptures of nature-themed poems by local poets, beginning with his own poem.

◆ A living nursery, raising young trees from seeds, saplings and cuttings collected in the park, such as the hazel already sent to Áras an Uachtaráin.

- ◆ A giant 'Fairy Ring' as part of an Outdoor Classroom initiative.

◆ Art and heritage projects, from eco-sculpture educational trails to monuments honouring local Traveller and farming communities.

- ◆ An exhibition of Terryland art work



Sarah Blake and participants on an Earthwalk at Climate Cocktail Festival in Ballintubbert House

## From walnut trees to red squirrels

Sarah Blake from Earthology is one of the many members from the Dublin City Women In Business network who have collaborated with our project over several years.

Have you seen Sarah's great TEDxCrannTreesforIreland talk for our conference on Trees for Small Gardens?

"We began our journey beneath the ancient canopy of a walnut tree," Sarah said as she led a group of conference participants on a powerful, immersive Earthwalk through the stunning organic ornamental garden at Ballintubbert House at the recent Climate Cocktail Carnival.

"The walnut tree is an excellent

example of the service nature provides. Walnuts are a brain-boosting nut packed with Omega-3s, and the tree itself provides deep carbon sequestration, often living for over 100 years. It's a natural model for both human potential and environmental resilience," Sarah told the participants, as red squirrels broke cover to make cameo appearances.

Back at my oak table, I think of how every sapling we plant today shelters nature and may one day make its own sturdy furniture, sheltering families and storing carbon for centuries. Easy does it – tree by tree.

waterways linking the city to Connemara, Mayo and the east coast of Ireland.

Imagine if an old, abandoned 19th century waterworks was transformed into a vibrant interpretative centre used by communities, schools and tourists alike, and was dedicated to the natural and human heritage of its environs. President Higgins himself has pledged to support this vision.

## Seeds of change

The Terryland model is already inspiring others. With support from the Easy Treesie project, saplings are being sent to Ennisco House in Mayo where volunteers, supported by the Terryland community, are setting up their own new nursery, again using the 'More Trees Now' approach.

Here too, schools and community groups are rolling up their sleeves, turning small steps into lasting transformation.

# GAA goes green and plants more than 100,000 trees

**There is growing success for the Association's 400 'Green Clubs', says Orla Farrell**

**E**verything we do at the Easy Treesie project is a collaboration and partnership brings us closer to our vision of a re-leaved Ireland, with a million trees planted by our one million school children and their communities.

One of our biggest such partnerships is with the GAA, not just in the west of Ireland but now involving its 400 'Green Clubs' throughout the island.

The link-up between Easy Treesie, Crann, and the GAA has been a huge success, according to Jimmy Darcy, GAA

sustainability manager. At a recent event in Croke Park, Jimmy and representatives from around the country spoke of the positive impact on their communities of the project.

"We were delighted to have Orla Farrell talk about how planting trees is one of the most wonderful ways of engaging all members of communities in climate action," said Jimmy. "Orla engaged our representatives who had travelled from all over the country with tales of the great contribution made by GAA Green Clubs since the idea's inception in 2021," he pointed out.

"Over 100,000 trees have been planted by children in their clubs and with their neighbours all over the country since



GAA ran Tree Collection Depots from its clubhouse, with Sean Dolan's Club in Co Derry running an Irish dancing display showcasing its tree planting.

Many clubs have broadened their focus to include good community health, the meeting heard.

One such club is Cooley Kickhams in Louth who have constructed a 1km floodlit tree-lined walkway where the community can enjoy nature and the spectacular Mourne views and meet up for coffee beside their playground.

Hats off to all who are contributing to the success of these new projects and to our many supporters.

Tree planting is a wonderful way to engage communities in climate action was the consensus on the GAA Green Clubs Panel. Above, Jimmy Darcy and Orla Farrell on stage at the Climate Toolkit launch in Croke Park

## Tree cheers

We are deeply grateful to Sarah Blake from Earthology and to all our incredible supporters and volunteers. Special thanks to Crann and to the Tree Council of Ireland, Happy 40th Birthday to Crann this December - we'll all be planting 40 trees to celebrate!

A big shout-out to our tree growing partners especially the mighty Coillte teams and to the dedicated volunteers such as at Google, Wells Fargo, Kelsius, Rotary, Maxol Greenprint, Okta and WP Engine.

Thanks to all the Dublin City Women in Business, our many tree planting local authorities, and the many friends who help us grow this movement. Not forgetting our newest helper, Rafael Pelaez.

A very special thanks to the Department of Agriculture for its new Forestry Support Grant.

And, of course, a special word of thanks to our former President Michael D. Higgins for all the support during his term in office. Mile buiochas.

## Why stamping on grass can help keep trees alive

**O**ur work flows as ever from our planting sites to the classroom, from the parks to your screens. Have you watched our IEN-backed Biodiversity Week webinars, shared on YouTube and the Tree Council of Ireland website <https://www.treecouncil.ie/national-biodiversity-week>

People are incredulous when they hear that trampling on long grass and weeds can have such an important positive effect on the growth of saplings. That's why we wanted to share this simple technique in our film *No Weeds, More Trees: Natural Methods for Protecting Young Woodlands*.

We were particularly happy to have schoolchildren in attendance this year from Kilcummin, Co Kerry where we have several projects going in the area. This activity can easily be carried out by even the youngest children.

We do not use sprays on our saplings and many schools find this hard to comprehend as there is great importance placed on the neat appearance of school grounds. At a Dublin school, where we had carried out work over several years, contractors recently strimmed and sprayed



Some of the crowd at the Toolkit launch in Croke Park.  
Photo: Ben McShane/ Sportsfile

ecocides killing many young saplings.

Our YouTube appearance may stop a reoccurrence of such episodes.

Meanwhile, the case study presentation entitled *Building a moveable shield: how to keep trees safe from wildlife damage* showcased Easy Treesie's work with Castleknock GAA Green Club in video form.

The IEN support helps us to share expert input by professionals in an accessible manner, such as where we could compare drone footage taken in 2024 with new footage providing an interesting comparison with the work done last year and how well the trees thrive safely behind

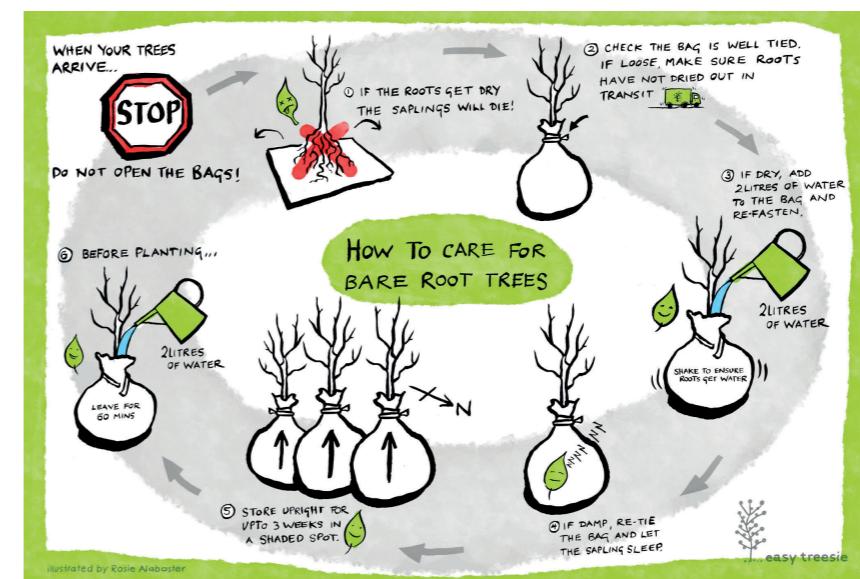
rabbit-proof fences.

Our volunteer, Aidan ffrench who gave the talk *Tree Rescue Mission: Preventing Strangulation & Ensuring Healthy Growth* has over 40 years' expertise in the subject matter. It was a pleasure to hear his valuable insights into the basics and indeed some finer points of the art of tree-staking.

At a time when there is a lot of fake news in our subject area, having a trained professional talk through the many factors involved in successfully staking and of course removing the stake at the optimal time on camera is a valuable resource. We view making such filmed resources as vital in preserving intergenerational expertise.

## Taking care of those young saplings

This illustration by talented artist Rosie Alabaster demonstrates how you can care for bare root trees.



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