



Coillte's Deborah Meghan and Easy Treesie's Orla Farrell with pupils from Rathdrum Boys' National School planting our 200,000th sapling at Avondale Forest Park on Tree Day 2021.

Photo: Robbie Reynolds

Easy Treesie's history log:

We may all be individual leaves, but we are part of the same tree

Orla Farrell chronicles group's goal of planting a million trees

There have been 58 wet days in a row reported from Valentia by the week that I am writing this column. And there have been plenty of flood warnings.

As I clean children's spades in the garden, I remember heavy showers are forecast again for the afternoon.

It's our busiest time of the year as we mark National Tree Week. Our priority is to get 100,000 trees in the well-watered ground during the rare gaps in the driving rain with school children and their communities all over the country. Our first activity of the week includes a ceremonial oak tree planting back at Newbridge House Demesne with President of Ireland, Catherine Connolly and the Tree Council of Ireland.

So, when our editor asked me for a history piece about Easy Treesie for this celebratory edition, sending a "who, what, why and when" list of questions, I was very taken with the notion of downing tools. Oh, to kick off the muddy boots, to take off to my sofa with a fleecy rug to leaf through our archives and sit with phone

and email pings turned off, writing up our history. It would be a great chance to thank all those who have helped.

But suppose I forget to name all the important people?

Like writing a wedding speech, the first thing is to **thank you all** heartily.

Writing up our history did seem an ideal, if complicated activity, for one of the upcoming forecasted rainy days.

Should I start 10 years ago, during this very Tree Week, when a class of six- and seven-year-olds wheeled our first five trees in a rusty supermarket trolley to be planted to the playground in Racecourse Park, north Dublin? Or did the story start with our school planting, with Crann's

Dale Treadwell back in 1999, our native hedgerow and later a school orchard?

I might add that both are still growing nicely at St Laurence National School, Baldoyle.

Shall I get on with the planting or shall I stop and write? Action or thinking? With that, my phone rings. As I answer, the motto of our global project, 'Stop Talking, Start Planting' catches my eye through the window from my poster of Mary Robinson on my home-office wall. Perhaps a better time for this history task would be when all the questions on the phone have been answered, the trees have been ordered, our community groups informed their saplings are coming and the saplings have been dispatched and planted.

As I chat with Dr Rory Harrington, Crann member and our go-to advisor about the yew tree he has propagated for us for the Lord Mayor of Dublin, I have an idea. I beg a favour of Rory: to make a start for me and write a few lines about our project. 'Ask a busy person' to get something done if you are in a hurry, they say and in short order Rory has written me the response you'll find overleaf, and I think it says it all...



Former President Michael D. Higgins with our Plant-for-the-Planet Climate Justice Ambassadors and our 100,000th tree on Tree Day 2020. Photo: Maxwell Photography



Easy Treesie in a nutshell:

As the woodlands develop, they further inspire all involved

Dr Rory Harrington, ecology advisor to Easy Treesie, on the impact the social initiative is having

Easy Treesie is a social initiative promoting awareness of trees and woods in Ireland. It was established in 2015 with a focus on planting trees and educating as to their many benefits. It is a citizen-based initiative focused on using suitable land, both urban and rural, wherever available.

The initiative is particularly applicable for small communal areas, sometimes only 100 square meters or so, though

occasionally many times larger. These plantings, typically with children and local communities participating, undertake the planting and subsequent aftercare.

Each undertaking provides enduring practical awareness of the value and capacity of trees, their amenity value and their ongoing needs. As the subsequent woodlands go on to develop, they increasingly progress to further inspire. The ensuing effort needed in the aftercare of the planted trees and their associated

environment reinforces appreciation.

The initiative has been shown to be socially and emotionally engaging, especially with children, across the country's many schools and communities. The value derived from each initial tree planting and woodland establishment extends beyond trees and woods, to an enhanced appreciation of the wider natural world. This includes the habitats that subsequently develop at both ground and canopy levels. The biological diversity

Our 500,000th sapling is planted with members of the Diplomatic community, the EU in Ireland team and Commissioner Mairead McGuinness in Kilternan, Dublin with local schoolchildren during Tree Week 2024.



that develops enhances the quality of life for human society and the natural world.

It helps advance a deeper understanding of the wider natural world, both factually and emotionally, upon which humans depend – it is not only about the trees. This may occur through enhancing curiosity upon seeing trees grow and the greater biological diversity that subsequently develops for both plant and animal life. The many lifeforms include mosses, fungi and invertebrates, small mammals – and even occasionally larger ones – birds and bats.

On a wider environmental level, trees, woods and forests provide key roles towards enhancing our basic wider environmental needs. These actions include intercepting and abating the impacts of precipitation, as experienced in recent months.

Furthermore, woodland experiences in youth often have a life-long impact promoting overall human empathy generally. Children particularly delight in responding to trees; from planting to nurturing them, and at times even climbing them.

The project leaders at Easy Treesie appreciate the help, encouragement and the contributions from communities across the country – particularly its successes in planting so far, more than 760,000 trees.

How and when the early seeds were planted

Orla Farrell details the simple and audacious idea: plant one million trees

So how did Easy Treesie get started? Well, our Green Team were on a winning streak at our primary school in St Laurence National School, Baldoyle, Dublin.

We'd had great success planting a roadside hedgerow for the millennium and had won an iPad and five Green Flags – which all came with a free team lunch.

Now we were tackling the Biodiversity Flag; we wondered what great projects were going on around the world that we could join with?

The children googled and discovered the work of Plant-for-the-Planet, a global children's movement calling for tree planting as a practical as well as a symbolic climate response.

The Plant-for-the-Planet organisation was started by nine-year-old Felix Finkbeiner who challenged the children of the world to plant a million trees in each of their home countries.

The Baldoyle children decided to take up the challenge locally.

The idea was simple and audacious: plant trees. Lots of them. And involve as many children as possible.

What followed has grown into one of Ireland's most sustained child-centred tree initiatives.



Felix Finkbeiner challenged the world's children to plant a million trees in each country when he was aged nine, seen here with Orla Farrell

The founding ambition was straightforward and bold: one million trees planted – and cared for – by Ireland's schoolchildren and their communities.

As Ireland has a million schoolchildren our little team thought, well, how hard a goal could this be?

Felix's organisation put us in touch with their UK co-ordinator, Wendy Davies, a teacher like myself who invited me over to see their schools' projects. They were planting 1,000 trees every year in the Queen's Jubilee Forest, Andover.

We would make a start by inviting Wendy and her crack team of British teenage tree-planters over to lead Ireland's first Tree Academy. We sent invitations to children from six local schools and to the Fingal mayor in 2018, planting 300 trees in our nearest Fingal Park.

Central to our approach from the outset was aftercare and establishment systems – the idea that survival and stewardship matter as much as planting.



Our Plant-for-the-Planet Tree Academies have provided training for almost 200 school children as Climate Justice Ambassadors



Orla Farrell with the Plant-for-the-Planet team at the launch of the world trillion tree campaign, Monaco, March 2018



‘We’ll be within a wellie-throw of the million trees planted by 2027’



Orla Farrell talks to Sean Buckley about how Easy Treesie has grown legs

‘Gardening is not my superpower; as my husband will attest,’ Orla Farrell admitted when talking to *Crann*.

However, this drawback hasn’t impacted or restricted the success of the Easy Treesie programme.

The children’s project has 760,000 saplings in the ground to-date. And Orla Farrell is adamant that the organisation will be “within a wellie-throw of the million” trees planted by 2027.

“My background is as a registered teacher, so I was aware of the importance of teaming up with the community of tree experts,” Orla Farrell explained.

“Being a former Dublin City councillor also helps in navigating relationships with local authorities, securing sites, understanding planning and community

systems, and integrating tree planting into local civic calendars,” she added.

“I showed up with a growing team of supporters at every event we could find about trees, seeking backing and collaboration in achieving our goal,” Farrell said.

“I joined in tree planting with the Native Woodland Trust in Wicklow. We learned from walks with the Irish Tree Society and their world-class tree scholars.

“We enjoyed a tour of Hometree with the cool surfers near Spanish Point – going home with some Scots Pine gifts from their nursery snuggled out of the wind under a wall of rock,” she said.

“It did not take long for us to join Crann – Trees for Ireland one sunny Saturday. Its aims exactly matched those of our project; planting, protecting and educating.

“We celebrated when we won the Patagonia 1% for the Planet Award, and when we secured LA21 workshop funding from enlightened local authorities,” Farrell explained.

Above, we film what we do to inspire others; here recording The Irish Tree Trail at the Botanic Gardens featuring Ireland’s 28 Native Trees. Photo: Evelyn Murphy

Below, Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights participates in the Stop Talking Start Planting campaign.



“We invested in children’s planting spades, a library of gloves in every size and colour and hot chocolate to warm up cold children’s hands.

“After sustained success and epic support, our first mass-planting happened during Science Week 2019 where we distributed 30,000 Coillte saplings all over the country and got them planted,” she said.

“Now we were up and running, so there was no difficulty in getting the word out about what we were doing during the next season,” Farrell insisted.

“More support came in through the Community Foundation for Ireland and next Rethink Ireland, both organisations assisting greatly in setting up systems to keep getting the ‘right trees in the right place’ in the ground.

“With new funding awarded through the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine we were able to bridge grassroots with national policy and funding mechanisms,” she said.

Testimonials

“Easy Treesie was a major collaborator in The Balcony Project’s 2025 programme and helped us bring the joy of trees and nature to hundreds of Dubliners over two weekends in March 2025. It was such a rewarding experience to collaborate with Orla and Steve (Doody), learn from their expertise, and share their knowledge amongst our community of city-centre growers and passers-by. The event really highlighted a disconnect between the public and ecology, and only serves to demonstrate the vital and essential work that Easy Treesie delivers year on year, with an abundance of enthusiasm and joy for nature.”

Louis Haugh; The Balcony Project, lead artist

“I never knew I could grow trees on my balcony, I was so worried I would kill them. But now it’s been a year and every time I look out and see my Scots Pine that Orla gave me, I feel a sense of pride. Thank you Easy Treesie”

Bev Porrino; received a Scots Pine from Easy Treesie in March 2025

Easy Treesie is among the most worthwhile projects on the planet. It involves educating children on climate, climate change and what they can do about it. As well as learning how to care for the planet and nature through planting trees.”

Evelyn Murphy, Easy Treesie climate advisor

“Planting trees has become one of our favourite ways to step outside, slow down, and do something meaningful. There’s a real joy in swapping the usual routine for fresh air, muddy hands



Christmas tree mulch bark is applied to Coillte’s 1,000 trees on Paddy’s Hill, Portmarnock, Dublin at the Easy Treesie-Crann, Trees for Ireland Academy. Photo: Mary Twomey

and a bit of laughter, all while giving something back to the planet. Working with nature has a grounding effect — almost like hitting a reset button — and watching new greenery take root around our grounds brings a sense of pride that lasts long after the planting day is over. It’s a simple, uplifting climate action, and we’re proud to play our part... even if we do end up looking a little too proud of our muddy boots.”

Eoin Reardon, Rush community engagement instructor, St John of God Liffey Services

“Last year our annual community Tree Give Away - thanks to Easy Treesie - supported many projects in the village and surrounding area. The school took some of the trees to be planted by the children and the Tidy Towns did also to complete a biodiversity project. The trees got the newly formed Allenwood Community Garden off to a great start. The volunteers in Allenwood are placing a huge emphasis on biodiversity and planted three of each species. They covered the planted area with cardboard and mulch from the gardens of the nearby Irish Peatland Conservation Council. These were the first trees planted in the garden and since then they have planted hundreds more.”

Veronica Anderson, Allenwood Community Gardens



Minister for Education and Skills Richard Bruton launches the Irish Tree Trail film guide



The groups of people behind the planting

No initiative of the scale of Easy Treesie grows alone, writes Orla Farrell

Everything we do at Easy Treesie is collaborative and we are spreading through developing relationships.

At its centre are children – not as mascots, but as leaders. They research native species, measure survival rates, present to assemblies, and explain biodiversity corridors to adults who may never have used that phrase before.

Around them stands a wide ecology of support:

- ◆ Crann – Trees for Ireland, whose four decades of advocacy for planting and protection created fertile ground for initiatives like this. Easy Treesie would not exist in its current form without the strategic support and steady wisdom of the Crann board and membership.
- ◆ The Tree Council of Ireland and allied organisations offering knowledge, legitimacy and backup.
- ◆ Coillte and other nurseries supplying healthy native stock suited to Irish conditions.
- ◆ Local authorities, schools, institutions, families and farmers offering land and long-term guardianship. This cohort

provide us with the sites for planting.

◆ Funders such as Community Foundation Ireland, Rethink Ireland and Patagonia's 1% for the Planet.

◆ Corporate volunteers who trade desks for spades such as Maxol Greenprint and Wells Fargo.

◆ The Plant-for-the-Planet organisation who link us with the World Trillion Tree Campaign.

And then there are the thousands of unnamed young planters who have knelt in wet grass and pressed roots into soil. They are the true founders of Easy Treesie.



A great example of *meitheal* as our community gathers on Paddy's Hill, Portmarnock, Dublin to plant 1,000 native trees. Photos: Mary Twomey

Threaded through it all is the global perspective of Plant-for-the-Planet, reminding Irish children that their work forms part of a planetary effort toward climate justice.

The world Trillion Tree challenge aims to bring down the temperature of planet Earth by 1°C to buy us 17 years to implement proven climate solutions.

Along our journey we have had incredible support from many quarters:

- ◆ An Taisce – Green Schools provided us with fantastic initial training;
- ◆ Éanna Ni Lamhna, president of the Tree Council of Ireland advised us on the trees to plant and, before we knew it, the great Éanna had made a film with us about all 28 of our native trees.
- ◆ The Minister for Education who supported our film launch – and before we knew it we won a slew of prizes (even €500 cash) – which we used to hire a film editor.

We were delighted that the Tree Council CEO, Brendan Fitzsimons came along to see our film and over tea and chocolate cake, we asked him if he could think of where we might pick up a million trees.

“Not impossible” was his reply. He would see what he could do. Our dream was moving from classroom to canopy.



Crann director Diarmuid McAree with GoogleServe volunteers at a tree maintenance and work-parade which supported local community council projects in Shankill, Co Dublin

GoogleServe volunteers making a huge difference in Shankill, Dublin

By KATRIN NAGEL

Google Ireland was proud to partner with Crann – Trees for Ireland for recent volunteering days in Shankill, coming together to give back to the Dublin community.

The Google volunteers joined others from the community, Easy Treesie – Crann, and local council members to conduct essential tree maintenance, including weeding and mulching.

This action ensured that the young trees planted earlier by local children and their community continue to thrive.

They were fantastic days, We were even lucky to receive a lecture in Irish tree names, their meanings, and the history and lore of Ireland, presented by Crann director Diarmuid McAree, who visited our recent Googlers' charity fundraiser.

We look forward to a similar partnership for 2026 to repeat the ongoing engagement and success of the previous years.

Katrin Nagel is sales manager in Google and Google Serve Co-ordinator

Easy Treesie highlights

Highlights in the Easy Programme are a daily occurrence. However, four invitations to visit the President of Ireland for the project so far is certainly a great mark of respect for the work of the children and their communities. Here are just a few more:

A. Easy Treesie's Plant-for-the-Planet Tree Academies

These have been a huge success in getting children and schools involved in the project.

B. The Easy Treesie Film Series
Intergenerational learning at its best by sharing everything useful including "The Irish Tree Trail", (introducing Ireland's 28 Native Trees), our Biodiversity Week webinars such as our 2026 series with renowned author Christy Boylan and our short instructional pieces on our media channels.

C. Podcast Series

"The Easy Treesie Story" podcast on Spotify shares stories, techniques, expert insights, and youth voices with a national audience beyond physical planting days.

D. Science Week 2019 — 30,000 Trees Planted

A major early milestone that helped build visibility, community engagement and national momentum.

E. TEDx Crann Trees for Ireland Conference (Covid Adaptation & Resilience)

Moving online, supporting home and family plantings, and maintaining momentum when in-person action was restricted. When gatherings were restricted, the work adapted rather than paused. Families planted in gardens. Our conferences moved online. Carefully distanced distribution points replaced assemblies.

F. National Tree Day and Tree Week Collaborations

Annual involvement with schools across Ireland in partnership with the Tree Council of Ireland during the national celebration of trees.

G. GAA Green Clubs Tree-Planting Network

Integrating biodiversity and climate action into sporting communities island-wide.

