



JULY

SUMMER on the farm

NATURE'S CALENDAR & PRACTICAL ACTIONS



As the farming year unfolds, are you keeping an eye out for what wildlife appears on your farm?

What flower or bird brings you joy as the seasons change? What can you look forward to appearing this month? What wildlife might be on your land? What more can you do to encourage it and enhance it?

HERE IS A MONTH BY MONTH GUIDE TO HELP YOU FARM FOR NATURE!

This is just a start – please help us create a rich calendar to celebrate and support farming for nature! What have we forgotten? Do you have any useful ‘nature hacks’ to share? Let us know on info@farmingfornature.ie

Generally, there is lots of good information available for farmers who want to help wildlife. We have many resources available on www.farmingfornature.ie

If you have any queries why not submit them to our **Farming for Nature Forum** on the website and allow other farmers to answer.

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NOTICING NATURE - AND SOME WAYS TO HELP IT!



Hedges

The fruit of Crab Apple, Sloe and the different Rose species are gradually maturing at this time. Hedgerows are a hive of activity in mid-summer, from buzzing bees to darting bats to furtive field mice.



Pastures
Woods
Gardens

Summer evenings are the best time to come across Hedgehogs.



Pastures

Meadowsweet begins to flower in late summer near streams or in wet grasslands.

In more diverse grasslands, the bluish-purple [and occasionally white] flowers of the Devil's-Bit Scabious appear now.



PRACTICAL ACTIONS AND NOTES

The natural bounty of our hedgerows is a testament to our pollinators having done their job in spring. With so much countryside activity around now, these hedges also act as a safe space for our wildlife to shelter, travel and eat.

Snuffling and grunting like a pig [its young are called 'hoglets!], the hedgehog is out and about looking for food. They can travel 1 to 2 km each night in search of food – their diet includes earthworms, beetles, spiders and slugs.

Its creamy flowers look like feathers in the wind. It has a distinct strong sweet smell which attracts insects [it smells of almonds!].

The story goes that Devil's Bit Scabious received its name because the plant contained so many cures that it angered the Devil and he cut the roots short [they look blunt as if bitten off]. It is the larval foodplant of the marsh fritillary butterfly.

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Meadows

It's hay cutting season for some; deciding when to cut is to strike a balance between the condition of the crop, the availability of help, the weather forecast and, ideally, nature's needs!



Delaying the cropping of hay until late July or August can make a huge difference to plant-species diversity as more plants get a chance to flower, seed and thereby replenish the soil seedbank.



Wetlands

Manage your wet grasslands carefully: light grazing from here on may be worthwhile if underfoot conditions allow. While some poaching of the ground is inevitable, take care not to overdo it.



Wet grasslands are important for lots of biodiversity including charismatic breeding 'wading birds' such as lapwing, snipe and curlew. Where drains have been used in the past, it will really help if these can be blocked or maybe even if sections could be expanded out to form linear ponds.



Pastures
Woods

Another damp-loving, sweet-smelling plant that starts flowering in July is Wild Angelica.



Look for its umbrella-like clusters of pink-tinged white flowers in wet grasslands and woods. A cousin of Fennel, it was used to flavour liqueurs.



Hills

Heathers are becoming increasingly prominent on hillsides as the summer progresses, to the delight of many beekeepers.



On closer inspection it's usually possible to distinguish different types of heather – from 'ling' to 'bell heather' to 'cross-leaved heath'. Often growing together, these can form a spectrum of pinkish-purple colour with occasional flashes of white.



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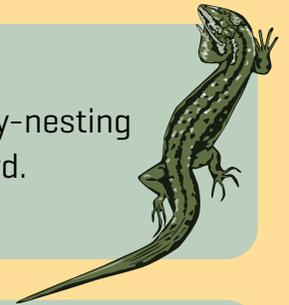
Walls

Have a closer look and see what your stone walls are growing - ferns like Hart's Tongue, Wall rue or Maidenhair spleenwort, the pink flowers of Herb Robert, mosses and lichens.



PRACTICAL ACTIONS AND NOTES

Walls can also provide homes for bird nests, cavity-nesting bees and our only native lizard, the Common Lizard.



Pastures

It's a great time to go orchid-hunting. Look out for the fragrant orchid, the pyramidal orchid, the frog orchid and helleborines such as the 'common' and the 'dark-red'.

Ragwort is beginning to flower. This noxious weed [it contains alkaloids which can cause liver damage to cattle and horses] shouldn't be mistaken with 'Goldenrod'.

Keep your ears open for the shy, secretive [but noisy!] Corncrake in any old-fashioned hay meadows.



While orchids aren't known for their scent, the pyramidal orchid is said to have a faint 'foxy' smell and the fragrant orchid has a wonderful smell resembling that of cloves.

The Latin name for Goldenrod is Solidago which means 'to make whole' and this plant was used on the skin to heal wounds.

Once common, this is a really rare bird now. It is hanging on in a few places [e.g. Mayo] with some farmers really working hard to give it a better future.



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Everywhere

Care for your soil. It is the basis of everything for your farming produce and productivity. Among the many benefits of healthy soils are:

- Improved soil aggregate stability
- Better infiltration
- Crop and grassland resilience [to drought/flood]
- Reduced weed pressure
- Adherence to Statutory Management Requirements
- Avoidance of pollution issues



PRACTICAL ACTIONS AND NOTES

- Do not leave soil exposed or susceptible to erosion.
- Avoid poaching, pinch-points, trafficking and rutting.
- Nurture the soil and build humus – give back [healthy] nutrients.
- Minimise tillage.
- Add species diversity to your sward.



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Farming For Nature offers best practice Guidelines and Actions for different land types.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE GO TO
www.farmingfornature.ie

To investigate what native species you have or could encourage on your land there are plenty of sources to help:

FOR NATIVE FLOWERS - YOU CAN SEARCH BY FLOWERING MONTH, COLOUR OR HABITAT
www.irishwildflowers.ie

FOR NATIVE TREES SEE HERE - IT WILL GIVE YOU ADVICE ON DIFFERENT TREES
www.treecouncil.ie

FOR NATIVE BIRDS SEE HERE
www.birdwatchireland.ie

FOR NATIVE BUTTERFLIES SEE HERE
www.irishbutterflies.com

FOR A COMPLETE BREAKDOWN OF ALL IRISH SPECIES,
THE NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY DATA CENTRE IS THE KEY SOURCE
www.biodiversityireland.ie



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