



AUGUST

AUTUMN 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

Berries in the hedges are ripening



Brambles, blackthorn, crab apple, hawthorn and other shrubs will all soon be weighed down by their autumn load. These berries will be important food sources for birds such as thrushes, blackbirds, starlings and smaller birds going into winter. Delay cutting these hedges until much later in the year so that wildlife can benefit as much as possible.



Pastures

Plant a herbal ley?



A native grass-wild flower mix sown now increases the value of the area for wildlife, especially pollinators. The weather in August – warm spells and showers – may suit the establishment of these leys. Contact your seed merchant for info.

Can you find space to allow some tussocky grass and wildflower seed heads to remain uncut through winter?



Allowing tussocky grass and wildflower seed heads to remain, in field margins, along tracks and roadside verges, and in gardens, will provide food and shelter for invertebrates and other wildlife.



Tillage

Create beetle banks.



Use a plough to create a ridge of earth about 40cm [16inches] high and 2m [about 6.5 feet] wide. Sow with tussock and mat-forming native grasses, timothy, cocksfoot, fescues. To allow wildlife to move to and from the bank, the distance between it and the field boundary should be less than 25m. These banks provide a habitat for many beneficial insects and nesting birds.

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Hedge
Woods

Let the ivy grow in the hedgerow as a key source of nectar for the pollinators.



Some people worry about ivy growth but, unless it's causing real damage, the consensus seems to be that it's better to leave it, maybe pruning it back. Its early season flowers are vital for bees and the fruits are important late-winter feed for birds.



Grasslands

Look out for late-flowering orchids in your pastures and meadows

Late summer colours are still to be seen, with purples, blues and yellows to the fore.



While it's getting late in the season for orchids, you can still see fragrant and pyramidal orchids in bloom, also some helleborines. But one of the rarest and most beautiful of Ireland's orchids, the Autumn lady's tresses, is best seen at this time of year. Try not to graze orchid-rich areas too heavily in August, light grazing now, followed by heavier grazing into the Autumn, would be ideal.

Knapweed and scabious flowers are common at this time of year, as well as harebells. Complementing the purples and blues are an array of yellows – including bedstraws, ragwort and goldenrod. The latter two flowers are deceptively similar, though one is far more benign than the other! Delaying the mowing of hay meadows into August will allow some of these taller herbs to spread their seed, as well as providing food for insects and birds.



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Wet ground

Lots of late blooming flowers appear on heavy, wettish ground around now.



PRACTICAL ACTIONS AND NOTES

Purple loosestrife, willowherbs and meadowsweet (so called as it was once used to sweeten mead) are big, showy plants often found in profusion at this time in hedges and on wettish areas, but one of the most stunningly beautiful flowers in Ireland, the delicate 'grass of parnassus' is also found on damp ground at this time and is worth the search.



Hedgerows

Late summer is when some of our 'exotics' are on show.



The orange flowers of Montbretia and the bright red flowers of fuschia are exuberant in some parts of Ireland in August, but few people realize that these are native to south America and were originally introduced to Ireland as garden plants. Not as aggressively invasive as some of the Himalayan knotweeds and balsams, care should nonetheless be taken not to introduce these 'honorary natives' to new areas.



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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:

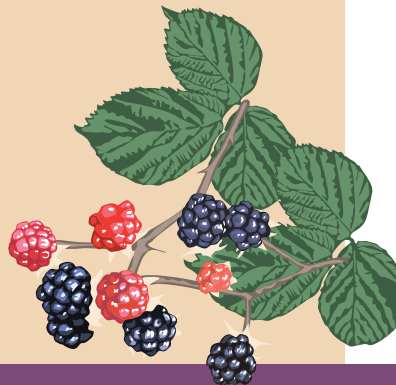
FOR NATIVE FLOWERS - YOU CAN SEARCH BY FLOWERING MONTH, COLOUR OR HABITAT
www.irishwildflowers.ie

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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