



## Welcome to the Autumn Farming For Nature Newsletter

Welcome one and all to the August-October Edition of our Farming For Nature (FFN) quarterly newsletter. After a Summer of very mixed weather – which brought challenges for farmers, parents and holidaymakers alike! - we're now entering the 'Autumnal' harvest period when farmers are hoping for some better weather to gather the crops and remaining fodder.

There's a lot going on here at FFN, which we are delighted to share with you in this newsletter. We're getting ready to announce our own annual crop of Ambassadors for 2023 who will bring new ideas, energy and expertise to our expanding network. We have almost 100 Ambassadors across Ireland now and we're hoping to extend this to an All- island network in the near future.

We're continuing to harvest – pardon the puns! - knowledge from our Ambassadors and share it as widely as we can through various user-friendly formats – for instance, we're very excited about a beautiful upcoming animation on soil health, narrated by Kildare Ambassador Andrew Bergin.

Our farm walks continue throughout this Autumn – those of you who have attended walks thus far cant but have been impressed with the level of knowledge and hospitality on show – from fully home-grown meals to beer tasting.

But we're not the only busy ones - some of our farmers are also very busy installing 'hare's corner' wildlife ponds or doing 'horse's mouth' farm visits, as well as hosting farm walks and study tours. Thanks to the Ambassadors – John, Mimi, Oliver - who recently hosted a delegation of their FFN Austria equivalents.

We are grateful for your ongoing support – please spread the word about FFN – and we do hope to see you at some of our upcoming on-line and in-person events. Make sure to save the date for this year's Burren Winterage Festival which will take place on Oct 27th – 29th. Happy Harvest - or Bíodh Meán Fómhair maith agaibh go léir.

## **The Horse's Mouth Farmer to Farmer Mentorship - still has a few spaces left**

Our farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing and mentorship service is in full swing around the country with 40 farms being visited. A farmer recently visited in Cork said: *"To have a famer out to give you advice, to have boots on the ground. This type of peer to peer help is invaluable."*

This programme is aimed at supporting farmers and landowners who are looking for on-the-ground practical advice from fellow farmers on how they might improve their land's biodiversity and be productive farmers. Though every farm is different, you can't underestimate the value of some sound practical advice and encouragement from a fellow farmer. **Sound like something you would like to avail of - we still have 10 spaces available.** Just read the below information and fill in the simple application form to be considered.

[The Horse's Mouth Mentorship Application](#)

## Onsight Insight Farm Walks continue

The highly popular Onsight Insights farm walks are still going strong this Autumn. Farming for Nature Ambassadors use it as an opportunity to showcase their practical actions for nature on their land. Join us, we look forward to meeting you across the country over the next few months. Please see upcoming ones below and book on the below link.

- **5th August 11am Cathal Mooney Co. Donegal** *"Diversity is key – mixed regenerative farming on 7-acres"*
- **12th August 2pm Brigid O'Connor Co. Kerry** *"Organic hill sheep farming and farm diversification"*
- **26th August 2pm Colm Flynn Co. Kildare** *"Reducing inputs and incorporating min-till into a tillage farming system"*
- **2nd September 2pm Paul McCormick & Jacinta French Co. Cork** *"Agroforestry, native Irish cattle production and nature conservation"*
- **9th September 2pm Thomas & Claire O'Connor Co. Kerry** *"Organic market gardening, building soil fertility and growing nutritionally dense food for the local community"*
- **18th September 2pm David Dennison Co. Waterford** *"Viticulture and cider making in Waterford"*
- **23rd September 2pm Kate Egan Co. Westmeath** *"Horticulture, environmental education and farm diversification"*
- **30th September 2pm Andrew Chilton Co. Roscommon** *"Building biodiversity on an Alpaca farm"*
- **7th October 2pm Eoghan Daltun Co. Cork** *"Restoring a native Atlantic Rainforest"*
- **11th November 2pm Eoghan Daltun Co. Cork** *"Restoring a native Atlantic Rainforest"*

A huge thank you to our wonderful farmers who have already hosted walks and many a social session long after the walk is complete on their farms.

[Farm Walks Booking](#)

## Ambassador Awards 2023 Update

We will be announcing our 2023 FFN Ambassadors in September. We are excited to introduce to you all another wonderful, inspiring and creative group of farmers from across the country and representing a broad range of farming systems. We will work with this group of Ambassadors over the upcoming year and beyond - to share their stories, wisdom and practical tips for nature as far and wide as possible. This programme is supported by Bord Bia

Our public vote will also open in September, giving people the opportunity to vote for the farmer(s) whom they believe deserve to be crowned the FFN Public Vote Winner in 2023. Keep an eye on our social media over the next few weeks and be sure to vote for your favourite farming story!

Our annual awards ceremony will take place in Gort, Co. Galway on the 28th October of this year and we can't wait to celebrate our new bunch of Ambassador farmers, all of whom are doing invaluable work for nature on their land. This will be part of the wider Burren Winterage Weekend. Why not join us for talks, walks, entertainment and more. Keep an eye out on the below link for the upcoming programme.

[Burren Winterage Weekend](#)

## Meet the last of our 2022 Ambassadors up close

Each newsletter we have featured our most recent Ambassadors who have joined our network. In this edition, we would like to welcome the final Ambassadors from the 2022 selection; The McDonagh Family

### August Ambassadors: McDonagh Family (Co. Mayo)

The McDonagh family run an organic mixed farm in county Mayo. They keep cows, sheep, pigs, ducks and hens. They grow 2 acres of organic root vegetables which are sold locally. They have planted over 8 acres of mixed

broadleaf forestry on the land. The mature hedgerows and field boundaries are left to grow naturally and serve as important habitats for birds and other wildlife. They continue to plant trees on the farm every year. Relying on very few external inputs, the family have built a farm that is highly self-sufficient and resilient to environmental and economic shocks. The grazing paddocks contain a diverse mix of grasses and herbs. The animals provide manure which is a crucial source of fertility for the vegetable beds. They use green manures to naturally increase the nitrogen content of the soil where the vegetables are grown. Eamonn has worked with draft horses and more recently with oxen to work the land. The draft animals are used to carry out many of the farm tasks – from harvesting trees from the wooded part of the farm to harrowing vegetable beds. The McDonagh's have hosted farm walks on the farm for Slow Food Ireland and the Small Growers Network. *"This farm is a testament to what can be achieved when a love of nature is coupled with a passion for local, sustainable food and when diversification is championed over specialisation."*

[View our full network of Ambassadors here](#)

## **The Hare's Corner - creating wildlife ponds**

We are delighted to that we were able to offer funding to our ambassadors and those that had been through The Horse's Mouth programme in 2022 the opportunity to build a wildlife pond. So far 34 substantial ponds have been build this year and last year with funding through The Hare's Corner project. Wildlife ponds on farms are one of quickest ways to invite nature to your farm. If you would like to avail of this funding in the future - why not consider being part of our Horse's Mouth programme (see above) as a starting point.

Meanwhile if you would like to build a pond on your land but not sure where to start. See below.

[How to build a wildlife pond on your farm](#)

## ***Why Soil Matters - and how to improve it***

We are delighted to launch our first ever animation, with where it all starts - soil. *Why Soil Matters - and how to improve it* is a short animation (just over 3 mins) on why good healthy soil is important to all of us and how as a livestock or arable farmer you can improve it on your land for the benefit of your land, your community and the planet. This video is relevant to farmers, gardeners, students and anyone with an interest in soil.

**Please share the below link far and wide.**

Thanks to Farming For Nature Ambassador and Kildare farmer, Andrew Bergin for doing the voiceover. Thanks to Annie Forrester and Aaron Ross for their beautiful work. Finally, thanks to DAFM & NPWS for supporting this project.

'Why soil matters' animation

## **Nature's Calendar this Autumn - observations & actions**

As we arrive into the celtic Autumn, 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 the taller herbs to spread their seed, as well as providing food for insects and birds. Meanwhile brambles, blackthorn, crab apple, hawthorn and other shrubs will all soon be weighed down by their autumn loads. These berries will be important food sources for birds such as thrushes, blackbirds, starlings and smaller birds going into late Autumn

For more information on what wildlife to look out for and what practical actions you can take on your farm to help nature this Autumn, see our nature calendar below.

Nature's Calendar - AUTUMN

## Farming For Nature Podcasts

These podcasts are a great way to listen to what our farmers are up to on their land and how they are carrying out certain actions to improve nature on their farm. They can be enjoyed whilst out to on your tractor, milking the cows or when you are working the land - basically at a time and place that suits you. Subscribe to our podcasts through the usual means (Spotify, iTunes etc) and you will be notified when new episodes are issued.

Please rate, review and share in order to help get the message out there.

Farming For Nature Podcasts

## Groundtips - advice from farmers for farmers

Groundtips provides practical advice and tips from farmers in their own words on how they have enhanced nature on their land. Each newsletter we like to share one of these opinion pieces with you. This month we are covering ***Attracting birds to your farm*** with tips from ambassadors Paul Moore on barn owls, Noel Kiernan on improving your farm for birds and Anthony Mooney on what you can do around your farmyards for birds. Click below to find out more.

Attracting birds to your farm

## Forum

This is space for farmers and others to ask questions and share information around farming for nature. It is set up to encourage and support farmers that are or wish to include nature more in their farming practices. Whilst it is primarily for farmers we welcome users that are able to contribute from related fields.

Most recent queries include:

*Soil Nematode And Microbe Analysis In Fields With Oilseed Rape*

*How can I manage bineweed in a nature friendly way?*

*Volunteers needed for moth monitoring project in Co.Donegal*

*Opinions wanted on wetland agriculture/paludiculture*

Forum

## Events Calendar

Welcome to our new section on our website - This has all our events up on it as well as events our Ambassadors are involved in, or other related organisations and groups. If you have relevant event coming up, please get in contact with us on [lucy@farmingfornature.ie](mailto:lucy@farmingfornature.ie) and we will put it up and share.

Events Calendar

## Farming For Nature

Farming for Nature is an independent initiative set up to inspire and encourage farmers that farm or wish to farm more for nature. We would love to hear any ideas, suggestions or feedback you have. Just contact us through the below website or social media platform. Hosted by the charity Burrenbeo Trust and funded by

NPWS, DAFM and An Bord Bia



[www.farmingfornature.ie](http://www.farmingfornature.ie)