



What you can
do to help
Biodiversity

Make the Connections!

Being part of this planet's biodiversity is one of the greatest relationships we have. When we begin to notice the small connections with nature around us we can appreciate this relationship even more. There are literally millions of connections to be made everyday, for example, crows chasing bumble bees, tiny insects piggy backing on slugs, doves and magpies playing together. The list is endless – swifts and trout catching insects, hundreds of bacteria breaking down dead stock. So tune into nature in all its wondrous variety.

www.noticenature.com

Be a Hunter not a Shopper!

Healthy eating need not cost the earth. Buy fruits in season and other locally grown produce – fruits can be preserved in jams and food storage. Some fruits are flown from Africa or shipped from the other side of the world. Remember, more air miles mean more emissions. Global warming is a major threat to biodiversity. Organic goods are great as they use minimum amounts of chemicals and fertilisers and in some cases none at all, thereby reducing threats to water and wildlife.

www.powerofone.ie

Tolerant not Toxic!

Don't use herbicides or insecticides unless absolutely necessary. Plants are primary producers and provide habitat infrastructure for millions of bugs and insects including the 19 or so species of ants recorded in Ireland. See the National Council for Conservation of Plants and Gardens.

www.nccpg.com

Break it Down and Build it Up!

Compost all your organic waste including peels, over-ripe veg and fruit. Creating a compost heap will attract worms and slugs, insects and bacteria. These in turn feed the soil and fertilise garden ecosystems. Frogs will thrive here as well as hedgehogs and birds. Butterflies will lay eggs in the nettles grown in the nitrogen rich soil. Before you know it you will see a very rich and fascinating system. See composting and wildlife gardening on

www.ipcc.ie & www.npws.ie



Grow Your Own!

In the garden plant indigenous (common to Ireland) species of trees, flowers and shrubs. Collect seeds from wild flowers. Leave areas within a garden or outdoor environment to attract insects. The flower seeds will be eaten by hungry birds in winter. This will help disperse seeds to other areas. Plant some herbs also – these can be used in recipes throughout the year. Apples and blackberries can be harvested in autumn, gooseberries and strawberries in summer. These can be frozen for use later on. For details of Irish plants and ideas on conservation techniques see also www.botanicgardens.ie

Wear It Out!

Increasing volumes of waste have detrimental effects on wildlife. Recycling helps to reduce these heavy volumes. Recycle as much as possible – mend and wear things out, rather than buying anew or throwing out. See also www.raceagainstwaste.ie

Sink or Swim!

When you pull the plug in your sink or flush the loo that's not the end of it. All waste and soiled water is recycled through the water cycle. The more chemicals in waste water the bigger the strain on the natural system and its inhabitants to clean it. Collect the water from your roof and use it for dry periods or as a reservoir for a small wildlife pond. See the Geological Survey of Ireland website for information on the water cycle; www.gsi.ie

Bacteria Can Be Friends Too!

Many homes throughout Ireland use septic tanks. A well functioning septic tank is a natural system of waste disposal and does not stress the local environment. If you use a septic tank make sure you avoid using bleach. Bleach will stop the bacteria from doing their job. It is also important that the system doesn't clog up and overflow. Have the solid sludges removed and you will have an efficient system.

Take a Walk on the Wild Side!

Use public transport where possible, better still cycle or walk to school, work or when out and about. See also www.transport21.ie

Eat Leaves and Shoots!

The heavy use of fossil fuels contributes to pollution and adversely affects biodiversity. Cut down on unnecessary use of energy. Turn off the Wii, Xbox or Playstation when not in use. Invest in rechargeable batteries (this will save you money in the long term too). Turn off sockets which have chargers or hair straighteners plugged into them. Remember if you can sing your favourite song or begin to wrinkle in the shower you probably have spent too much time in it. The use of curtains across big window openings also helps to keep the heat in the room and reduces the need to produce it.

One for You and One for Me!

Give unwanted clothes, furniture, bric-a-brac or books to family, friends and charity shops or have a car boot sale. Buying from charity or second-hand can help you to pick up lots of bargains. Websites such as www.dublinwaste.ie and www.jumbletown.ie offer an excellent means to pass on unwanted stuff.

Better to Fly than Hop!

Illegal trade in exotic species is devastating to homes and habitats of all creatures. Invariably they are stolen and plundered from their natural environments to satisfy a curiosity and provide a profit. Check out www.cites.org

Feed the Birds.

Gold Finches, one of our most colourful small birds in Ireland can cover a hundred metres in a second or two – caging birds really restricts them when a handful of nuts will attract a small family of 5 to 10 of them to your nut bag on a tree all year round. This way it costs you very little and you have a permanent display of dozens of healthy species and lots of activity – make sure you put a bell on your cat in order to protect wild birds. A 15kg bag of nuts will keep many birds fed for the winter.

www.birdwatchireland.ie

Be the Difference!

Challenge and encourage others to create a better environment. Begin to make positive changes in your home and in your workplace. Increase your interest in nature by taking trips in the countryside. Remember to just leave your footprints.