



SEPTEMBER

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 a lot 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!



Everywhere!

Parting is such sweet sorrow... around this time is our last chance of the year to admire our **swallows** and **swifts** before they make their return trip to Africa.

Wildflowers, bees, bats, birds and butterflies are still visible in September but usually in decreasing numbers. It can be a good time to identify them and to begin your own farm nature audit.



PRACTICAL ACTIONS AND NOTES

As we say goodbye to these wonderful summer migrants, we can say hello to many more. Lots of birds visit Ireland in the winter, with some **geese** trumpeting their return around this time.

Among the more obvious flowering plants seen in grasslands in September are **scabious, knapweed, ox-eye daisy, eyebrights** and **harebell**.



Bogs

As September comes around the palette of the bog is gently shifting to autumnal tones.



Take a closer look at the many species of **bog moss** that make up the ever-changing landscape.



Buildings
& walls

Can you spot a **common lizard** basking on a warm rock?



The common (or viviparous) lizard is Ireland's one and only **native reptile**. As it is cold-blooded, it needs a warm spot to lie and absorb the heat of the sun. Watch for lizards on rocks, sand or timber – they also need some shelter into which to run if they sense danger – dry stone walls can be great.

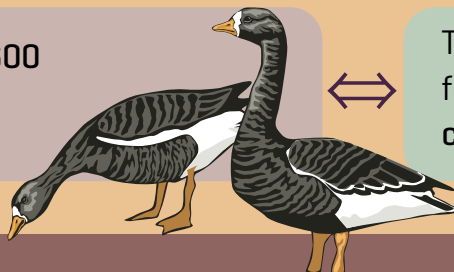


Coastal farms

Did you know there are over **600 varieties of seaweed** growing around the Irish coastline?



Traditionally, coastal farmers harvested seaweed for use as food, medicine or fertiliser. Commonly harvested species include **carrageen, dulse and kelp**.



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Garden or farmyard

As nights become colder, wildlife starts to prepare for the winter to come.

The **common puffball** is visible now and easy to identify by its white, football-like fruiting body.



PRACTICAL ACTIONS AND NOTES

Where possible, resist the temptation to 'tidy' as summer draws to a close! – seed heads and dying vegetation provide crucial food sources and warm nooks for over-wintering wildlife.

Puffballs have a spout [opening] at their centre. When a leaf or raindrop falls on the ball, the pressure of the impact causes the ball to 'puff' out spores through its spout!



Hedgerows

The concept of hedgerow as **nature's larder** is never more apparent than at this time of year when a wide variety of fruit and nuts are available.



A really nice idea for adults and kids alike is to take a stretch of hedgerow and collect a sample of each type of fruit or nut available. **Blackberries, haws, rosehips, rowanberries, crab-apples, guelder rose and spindle fruits...** so many types, colours and shapes. Lay these out on a white surface and take a photo of them to send on to us.



Hill pasture

Time to head for the hills before the winter sets in!



Fewer farmers now actively manage their flocks in upland areas than in the past. Regularly walking the land is a wonderful way to watch nature unfold throughout the year, as well as to keep an eye on any unintended impacts that the flock may be having on the environment.



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Pasture, meadows
& field margins

Areas of **species rich grassland** should be grazed, or the excess vegetation removed by hand tools/machinery, from now on, if it hasn't been already.

On the heads of **thistle** and **teasel** you may spot the bright yellow and red of the **goldfinch** snacking on the seeds at this time.



PRACTICAL ACTIONS AND NOTES

By removing excess vegetation, you are allowing more space and light for wildflowers to germinate next spring, as well as reducing the nutrient levels in the soil which also encourages greater biodiversity. Saying that, leaving some areas of ungrazed rough grassland will also provide warm nooks for overwintering wildlife – as always, the more diversity of habitat you can provide the better!

Leaving at least some seed-bearing plants to stand into the winter provides food and shelter for lots of birds as they try to build up energy for the winter ahead, or for long flights overseas.



Ponds

Can you spot any perfectly formed **tiny froglets** that have made it through the summer? Early Autumn is the ideal time to construct, or do maintenance work on, a **pond**.



Before the ground gets too wet, think about building a pond, one of the very best actions for nature. Or take time to improve your existing pond – excess silt can be removed from ponds between September and November. This should be done in small sections over a 3-4-year rotation. If silt builds up, eventually it chokes out the aquatic vegetation.



Streams
& rivers

September is a good time to do some **watercourse management**.



Some streams will be too small for fish like trout, but all will have a community of mini-beasts. Light and shade are very important for this community to thrive so now that bird-nesting season is over some carefully planned and targeted work can be done.

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Tillage fields

Have you ever heard of 'Worm Tea'?



As sowing gets underway, it's a good time to think about seed treatments. Chemical inoculation of seed can be damaging to soil and water systems. **Worm Tea** [aka **vermi liquid**] is one example of a nature-friendly biological seed treatment [it is extracted from worm-filled compost]. Such treatments act as natural biostimulants [making crops stronger and more resilient]. Take some time to investigate how you can treat your seed at home with nature friendly inoculants and cut down on chemical seed treatments.



Wet or rough ground

Look out for the tiny, orange [and aptly named] **small copper butterfly**. While not a favourite of the farmer, **docks** are a favourite food plant of the **small copper butterfly**.



Have you ever noticed how grasses in unfertilised swards often grow up more strongly directly around a **dock**? The root of the dock is long and strong [as you may know from trying to pull them up!]. This long root breaks up the soil pan and carries nutrients back to the surface of the soil, where the shallow rooting grasses can reach them.

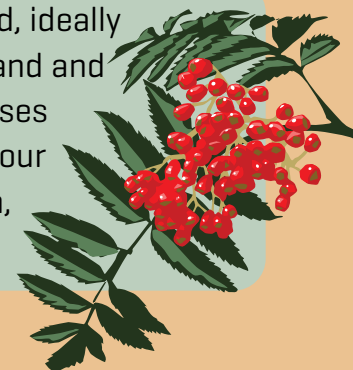


Woods

If you are interested in planting some **native trees** on your land this winter, it might be worthwhile pre-ordering some as soon as possible, as supplies are very limited at present.



Always try to source plants grown in Ireland from native seed, ideally as local to you as possible. These trees will grow best in Ireland and buying local stock also reduces the risk of introducing diseases to Ireland from stock grown elsewhere. Better yet - gather your own seed and grow your own - it's really easy and lots of fun, and there are plenty of online resources to help you!



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TIPS FOR THE MONTH!



Climate

Grazing livestock outside for as much of the year as possible is a great way to reduce your carbon footprint.



The production of **soya based concentrate** feed is contributing to deforestation of the rainforest. Think about how best to manage your covers this autumn to ensure that you can minimise feeding meal by closing covers late and opening them early.



Pollinators

Did you know that flowers use their bright colours to indicate to pollinators the depth of their **nectar stores**? Yellow or white flowers, for example, have shallow nectar stores, while pink, red and blue flowers have deeper nectar stores. Different species of pollinators have different mouthparts that only allow them to access nectar at a certain depth – so flowers use colour to attract the right insects! Many pollinators also prefer relatively inconspicuous tiny green flowers – so bright colours are not always best.



To provide for everyone's mouthparts, try to maintain lots of different colours in your pollinator strips. The best way to do this is to avoid using chemical sprays or fertilisers, and to manage the strips extensively, simply cutting or grazing back the dead vegetation once per year. While store bought seed mixes can be colourful, the advice from the All Ireland Pollinator Plan is '**Don't Sow Let it Grow**': natural regeneration of wildflowers from the natural seed bank in your soil is better than store bought alternatives – and it's free!



Water quality

September can be a good time to consider how best to better manage **run-off from the farmyard** before the winter sets in.



It can be helpful to make a list of all of the potential sources of damaging run-off from your farmyard. Some of these [e.g. slurry, pesticides] are more obvious than others [e.g. spoil from tractor tyres, washings or waste silage]. Every yard is different – take a few minutes to consider how you might reduce run-off from your own yard this winter.



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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

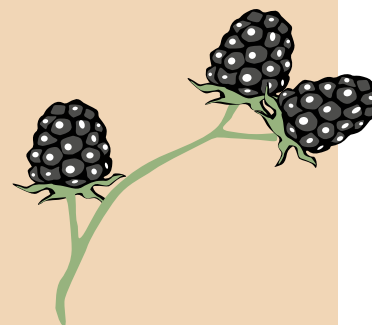
www.birdwatchireland.ie

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. IF YOU WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO CITIZEN SCIENCE YOU CAN JOIN THE FARMERS WILDLIFE CALENDAR CLIMATE TRACKER BY RECORDING AND SUBMITTING YOUR SPECIES THROUGH THE BIODIVERSITY DATA CENTRE

www.biodiversityireland.ie



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