

Meán Fómhair – Gairdín Torthaí ar Scoil – Cur Chuige Teagmhálach

Paddy Madden continues his series of SESE tips

October

Hands-on – the school fruit garden

What is it?

A garden which teaches children about fruit which can be grown and eaten in their school.

Background information

It's important to grow fruit that can be harvested during the school year. There's no point in planting blackcurrants for example which fruit during the summer holidays.

Why have a fruit garden in the school?

1. It integrates well with a healthy-eating policy in the school.
2. It will enable children to differentiate between imported fruit and home-grown fruit.
3. It will also enable them to differentiate between the taste of home-grown and imported varieties.
4. It will enable children to learn about the importance of pollinators for fruit production.
5. It will increase seasonal awareness.

Sloe fruit
of the
blackthorn

**Other possibilities**

If space permits plant a Victoria plum. Also, if the school is planting a native hedgerow include blackthorns for sloes.

Did you know?

- ✶ The word 'straw' in 'strawberry' could derive from straw which is used to protect the fruit from getting wet and dirty or from the word 'strew' which means to spread wide.

Suitable fruits to grow**Strawberry**

LATIN / IRISH	<i>Fragaria ananassa</i> <i>Sú talún</i>
POSITION SOIL & SPACING	Sunny; add well-rotted manure or compost to soil. Plant 35 cm apart; 75 cm between rows.
PLANTING	September or Mid-April. Don't allow latter to fruit in first year. Add general fertilizer before planting. Crown level with soil.
FRUITING	June. Cut back to 7.5 cm above ground after fruiting. Cut off dead leaves. Remove straw.
AFTER-CARE	Plants are productive for about 3 years. Mulch in early spring with well-rotted compost. Propagate new ones from runners.
NOTES	Water well when fruit is forming. Remove runners in May. Feed with fertilizer high in potash when fruits begin to form. From late May place straw under fruits. Hardy during winter. Not hardy when new growth starts in spring.

**Raspberry**

LATIN / IRISH	<i>Rubus idaeus</i> <i>Sú craobh</i>
POSITION SOIL AND SPACING	Sunny; dig shallow trench c. 30cm wide; add plenty of well-rotted manure or organic compost to soil. 45cm between each cane and 1.5m between rows.
PLANTING	Plant autumn-fruiting ones from November to March. Try 'Autumn Bliss'. Soak root-ball for about an hour before planting. Keep old soil-mark on stems level with soil.
FRUITING	Late August until October. This only applies to Autumn-fruiting varieties.
AFTER-CARE	Prune in February. Cut canes back to 5cm from ground. Remove any new unwanted ones to prevent them becoming invasive.
NOTES	Feed in spring with fertiliser high in potassium. Lightly rake it into the soil around plant and then water.

**Apple**

LATIN / IRISH	<i>Pupillam</i> <i>Úll</i>
POSITION SOIL AND SPACING	Sunny aspect. Well-drained.
PLANTING	Dig in plenty of well-rotted compost before planting from October to December. Plant 2 or 3 different varieties. Have graft union between apple rootstock and upper part at least 10cm above soil. Apply balanced fertiliser when planting. Place layers of damp newspaper around base and cover with bark mulch.
FRUITING	Sept/Oct.
AFTER-CARE	Prune in winter. Remove dead or diseased branches. Maintain a pyramid shape with an open centre.
NOTES	Soil must be rich in organic matter. When planting mix this with topsoil and general fertiliser. Plant heritage apple trees if possible with M26 rootstock. Produces a small tree that children can reach. Apple trees are often damaged by lawnmowers and ties left on too long. Mrs Perry Keegans crab (not actually a crab). Kilkenny Pearmain, Cavan Rose and Bloody Butcher are loved by children.



Cavan
Sugarcanes –
Seedsavers



Aherne beauty –
Seedsavers



LoughTree
of Wexford –
Seedsavers

Blackberry

LATIN / IRISH	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> <i>Smear Dubh</i>
POSITION SOIL AND SPACING	Sunny, sheltered spot.
PLANTING	Dig in plenty of well-rotted compost before planting. Put 2 fence-posts into the ground 2.4-3m apart. Tie wires between posts at c.30 cm intervals and tie the stems onto these. Choose 'Oregon Thornless' or 'Loch Ness'. Soak root-ball for an hour before planting. Spread out roots.
FRUITING	Mid-August to September.
AFTER-CARE	They fruit on one year old stems. Cut these back to ground level after fruiting. Place layers of wet newspaper around plants. Cover this with bark-mulch to retain moisture. These thornless blackberries are not invasive.
NOTES	



Literacy/Litearthacht

✎ **Rootstock/Fréamhstoc:** The part of a grafted plant from which the roots grow. Apple varieties are often grafted on to less vigorous rootstocks to control their size. *An chuid sin de phlanda beangaithe óna bhfásann na fréamhacha. Déantar cineálacha úll a bheangú go fréamhstoc nach bhfuil chomh tréan chun a méid a shrianadh.*

✎ **Crown/Coróin:** The plant crown is where the stem of the plant meets the roots. Usually this is level with the soil. *An áit a dtagann gas an phlanda agus na fréamhacha le chéile, is í sin an choróin. De gh-*

náth, bíonn sí ar aon leibhéal leis an ithir.

✎ **Sloe/Airne:** The fruit of the blackthorn. *Toradh an draighin.*

✎ **Pruning/Ag Prúnáil:** The practice of cutting away dead or crossing branches to increase flowers and fruiting. *An cleachtas ina ngearrtar craobhacha (atá marbh nó atá ag trasnú ar a chéile) chun líon na mbláthanna agus na dtorthaí a mhéadú.*

Buíochas do Marie Whelton (MIE) don aistriúchán. Also thanks to Aine Ní Fhlatharta from www.irish-seedsavers.ie for her advice on apples.

Glenstal
Cooker -
Seedsavers



Resources

✎ www.irishseedsavers.ie/ Based in Scariff, Co Clare, Seedsavers grow and sell over 50 heritage varieties of apple tree.

✎ www.gardenorganic.org.uk
Growing fruit in the school garden.

✎ <http://scoilmhuiregnslucan.scoilnet.ie/>
Growing fruit in a Dublin school.

✎ <http://gardening.about.com/sitesearch.htm?q=Strawberries&SUName=gardening>
Growing strawberries.

✎ www.paulamee.com/paulamee/main/Video-Jan2.htm Videos on fruit and nutrition.

✎ www.rhs.org.uk/Gardening/Grow-Your-Own/Fruit-A-to-Z/Strawberries
Growing strawberries.

✎ www.youtube.com/watch?v=56j_3cYjpwY
Thinning apples in June.

✎ www.videojug.com/search?keywords=Pruning+apple%20trees%20in%20uk
Pruning apple trees.



Not all these fruits are suitable for the school garden

The first
Irish School
Gardening Conference
will be held in MIE
on 5 October. See
www.schoolearthed.ie
for application form
and details.



PADDY MADDEN lectures on SESE in the Marino Institute of Education. He also gives short courses to whole staffs on school gardening. His book **Go Wild At School**, has recently been reprinted. Available for €18 from paddy.madden@mie.ie (Includes p&p). Photos of apples: Eoin Keane.