



## Working In Tandem With The Seasons

Paddy Madden's first in a series of articles with SESE tips for throughout the year

# September

## OUTDOOR



**4** If wheat is available sow this in a bed. A useful activity if the children are studying the first farmers in Ireland.



Cornfield plot, St. Thomas's Sen. National School, Jobstown

**1** Sow hardy annuals such as candytuft, Californian poppies and marigolds in a well-raked sunny bed. Also sow the cornfield annuals such as cornflowers, poppies and corn marigolds in a similar bed. Sow wildflower seeds such as oxeye daisy in trays or a small wildflower meadow. See [www.blackrockec.ie](http://www.blackrockec.ie)



**2** Mulch vegetable beds. Put plenty of compost or manure on top of vegetable beds and cover with black polythene. Worms will work on this over the winter. See 'Make your bed and grow in it', *InTouch*, November 2007 on how to construct bed. Go to [www.into.ie](http://www.into.ie) and click on *InTouch Archive*.

**3** Alternatively sow a green manure crop such as broad beans in vacant vegetable beds. Dig this in when spring comes.



Design for the Daffodil Maze

**5** Sow bulbs. Make a daffodil maze. Lay out a 20m rope in a spiral pattern on a grassy area leaving a 120 cm gap between coils. Lay out another rope 25m long parallel with the first one about 25 cm from it in a spiral pattern as well. (This maze will be c.5m in diameter). Dig a trench about twice the depth of bulbs in the 25cm gap between ropes. Lay the bulbs side by side along the trench and cover with soil. The maze will be spectacular in spring.

**Strand Units covered this month:**  
Plant and Animal Life; Materials and Change; Environmental Awareness; Science and the Environment; Caring for the Environment.



**PADDY MADDEN** lectures in SESE in Coláiste Mhuire, Marino. The monthly nature and gardening activities which will appear regularly this year in *InTouch* are based on very successful workshops which he organised in Marino from September 2009 to June 2010. The objective of the course was to connect teachers and their pupils with the world around them on a seasonal basis. 18 practising teachers participated on one Monday each month from 4-6pm. This course will commence this year in the Blackrock Education Centre on the 27th of September from 4-6pm. Enquiries to [catherine@blackrockec.ie](mailto:catherine@blackrockec.ie)

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**1 Make a caterpillar viewer** using the caterpillars of the Large Cabbage-White Butterfly.

See [www.blackrockec.ie](http://www.blackrockec.ie)

**2 Grow hyacinth bulbs in a container of water.** Cut a circular hole around the top of a 1.5 litre clear plastic bottle. Position the hyacinth and fill with water to within 5mm of the bulb. Leave in a cool, dark place such as a cupboard. (Leave the door slightly ajar for ventilation). When the stem is c.5cm tall remove from cupboard and place in a shady part of room. Gradually, bring it towards the light. Eventually, place it on a sunny windowsill. Observe the growth of root, stem and flowers. After flowering, plant it outside.



Above: Caterpillar viewer.  
Right: Compost Column

**3 Grow daffodil bulbs using pebbles and water.** Fill a dish with clean pebbles and a few pieces of charcoal to keep the water fresh. Place 'Paperwhite' narcissi bulbs snugly on top. Fill the dish with water so that it just touches the base of the bulbs. Place on a windowsill and keep the water topped up.

**4 Study the process of composting by using clear 2 litre plastic bottles.** Make a compost column from 4 similar empty 2 litre clear plastic

bottles. See [www.saps.plantsci.cam.ac.uk](http://www.saps.plantsci.cam.ac.uk) for detailed instructions on making them. Fill with organic material such as tea-bags, apple cores, egg shells, pencil shavings, banana skins etc. and let the children observe how quickly decomposition takes place. Set up a fair test with 4 columns: Fill one with orange skins, one with tea-bags, one with apple cores and one with carrot skins. Get predictions from the children and draw up a chart to record results over 4 weeks. Challenge them to come up with more fair tests using the compost columns.

**5 Study the life-cycle of the wasp.** Emphasise their usefulness: they feed their grubs with harmful aphids and caterpillars and pollinate flowers.

**6 Sow shamrock seeds.** See [www.raringtogrow.com](http://www.raringtogrow.com)

