



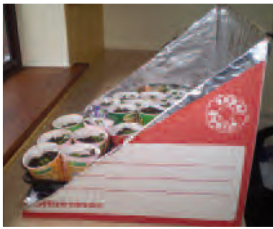
Working In Tandem With The Seasons

Paddy Madden continues with the series on SESE tips for throughout the year.

January/February

INDOOR

1 Construct a light box for growing seedlings indoors: Seedlings in the classroom will tend to grow towards the window light and can quickly become long and straggly. A light box will ensure that they all get an even amount of sunlight. Now is a good time to prepare a light box for the busy growing season. All you will need are the following: a strong cardboard box about 40cmx40cmx25cm, scissors, roll of tinfoil, non-toxic glue, pencil. Mark diagonal lines on the sides of the box and cut across the lines. Remove the off-cuts. Line the inside with tin foil and glue it to the box. Place a tray in the bottom and put the little pots of seed on the tray. Place it facing the window sill in the classroom. See www.blackrockec.ie. Click on Paddy's School Garden.



Light box

2 Continue studying birds: See www.birdwatchireland.ie for 18 activities to do in school when studying birds. Also take part in their bird survey once a week.

3 Observe what is happening around the school and submit records: See www.ispynature.com for information on how to monitor biodiversity around your school. Report sightings of buff-tailed bumblebee, hazel catkins and snowdrops to www.phenology.biodiversityireland.ie. This site gives a list of insects, plants and birds where first sightings can be reported. Also check www.greenwave.ie. On the latter site you could send in sightings of 6 plant species from February onwards. This site also has useful information and activities on how to monitor wind, temperature and rainfall around the school.

4 Collecting and analysing data is an important skill in science and geography: By participating in the five surveys mentioned above in January/February the children will be very much engaged in this skill.

Survey 1: Bird Survey

Survey 2: Plant survey
Survey 3: Rain, wind and temperature
Survey 4: Lichens
Survey 5: School grounds survey

5 Make an ecology tank to study the growth of tadpoles. See www.blackrockec.ie. Click on 'Environmental Activities' and then 'Make and Do'.

6 Sprout potatoes in the classroom. Purchase c.5kg of early seed potatoes in late January or early February such as Home Guard or Colleen. Place them in empty egg cartons, making sure the sides with the most eyes are facing upwards. Position the tray in the shadiest part of the classroom so that they will develop strong sprouts.

7 Daffodils and hyacinths that have finished flowering indoors. Remove dead flowers. Leave them in place for about a month until the leaves have turned brown. Clean the bulbs at this stage and leave them in a cool place until the autumn. They can be planted outside then. 🌱



Sprouting spuds



Hazel catkins

OUTDOOR

1 Check to see are the school grounds bird-friendly with this survey:

Are the school grounds bird-friendly?

Food

Shrubs with berries?

- Pyracantha Cotoneaster Holly Privet
 Viburnum opulus Honeysuckle Ivy

Native shrubs with berries?

- Holly Wild privet Honeysuckle Bramble
 Hawthorn Elder Bird cherry

Trees with fruit and seed?

- Alder Rowan Crab apple

Shrubs with insects?

- Hawthorn - 149 Blackthorn - 109 Hazel - 73
 Holly - 7 Dog-rose - 100

Trees with insects?

- Oak - 284 Willow - 266 Birch - 229 Crab - 93
 Scots Pine - 91 Alder - 90 Elm - 82 Ash - 41
 Lime - 31 Sycamore - 15

Flowers with seeds?

- Sunflower Teasel Snapdragon Asters

Rotting logs?

Heap of leafmould?

Bird table with food?

Nuts in a feeder?

Apples strewn on grass?

Suet or lard balls?

Water in container?

Health

Bird Bath?

Hollow place with sand?

Muddy place?

Shelter

Thick hedge?

Evergreen shrubs?

Wooded area?

Nesting

Stone wall with crevices?

Hole in tree trunk?

Native hedgerow?

Nesting boxes (facing east or south-east)?

Trees of different heights?

Evergreen shrubs and trees?

Wide eaves for swifts, starlings and sparrows?

String bags with feathers, wool, hair and moss for nests?

Honeysuckle?

By Paddy Madden and
Marian Rollins



2 Make a scarecrow: This is a good time to make a scarecrow before the busy planting season begins. You will need: a 2m piece and a 1 m piece of 7cm x 3cm wood; 3 5mm x 50mm screws; screwdriver; old jumper; trousers; pillow case; straw or bubble-wrap used in packing; twine; old mop-head; permanent marker; saw. See www.blackrockec.ie. Click on 'Paddy's School Garden' on 'How to make a scarecrow'.



Scarecrow in Jobstown SNS, Tallaght

3 Make a cultivation bed: See the above link on how to do this. Ideally each class should have one of these. Also on www.into.ie check the November 2007 issue of *InTouch* p47.

4 Begin studying trees in the school grounds. Children in senior classes could get the height of a tree by following the link above. All you need are equilateral, right-angled isosceles triangles made from cardboard. Children should work in pairs at this activity. Get them to estimate the height of the trees first. Buds can be identified with a simple key: see www.irishtimes.com/timeseye/trees/pdf/classroom.pdf. Follow the instructions there on how to have a bud race in the classroom.



Beds in Tymon Park, Tallaght

5 Investigate your garden soil: Put a handful of soil from the garden in a jam jar. Cover it with water. Shake the jar and wait for the contents to settle. The biggest and heaviest particles will sink to the bottom (sand); the smallest and lightest will settle on top (clay). Silt will settle in the middle. Humus will float on top of the water. Take samples from different parts of the garden. If the soil is too sandy it will require humus to hold the nutrients. If it has too much clay it will also require humus to open it up so that drainage can be improved. A loamy soil is ideal: it contains a good balance of sand, silt and clay particles.

6 Plant snowdrop plants in a shaded area. 🌱

Strand Units covered this month: environmental awareness, caring for the environment, science and the environment, plant and animal life, light, properties and characteristics of materials, weather, climate and atmosphere, rocks and soil.

Acknowledgements: Marian Rollins (RIP) for helping with audit on bird-friendly school grounds.



PADDY MADDEN lectures in SESE in Coláiste Mhuire, Marino Institute of Education. The monthly articles, 'Working in tandem with the seasons', are based on the very successful course of the same name which was pioneered in Marino in 2009. This year the course will take place in the Blackrock Education Centre on one Monday every month from September to June commencing on 27 September. Enquiries to Catherine@blackrockec.ie. The Centre will also produce 5 short videos every month based on the monthly sessions. They can be downloaded from www.blackrockec.ie. Click on 'Paddy's School Garden'.