



# St. Luke's Newsletter

May 2022

# Green Spaces

## Principal's message

Dear Parents/Guardians,

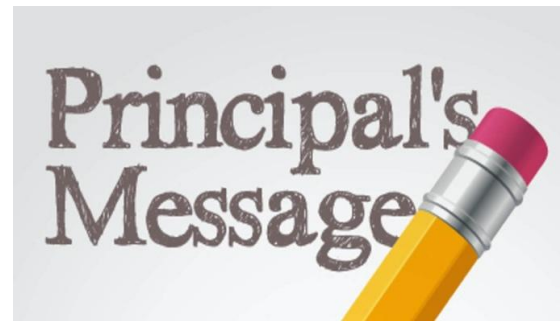
Over the last few years the staff and students in St. Luke's have been making a huge effort to create green spaces within our school. Our aim is to encourage biodiversity, create green spaces for the children to explore and learn from and most importantly to promote an interest in caring for the world around us.

Please join us on our journey to reach out to the smallest creatures, may it be plants, animals or humans to make this planet a better one.

I would like to thank all the staff and students involved and an extra special thanks to John for always being there to help and advise us.

Vivienne Bourke

*There are no gardening mistakes, only experiments. - Janet Kilburn Phillips*



# Wildflower Garden

Did you know we have a "Wildflower garden" in St. Luke's? Our Wildflower garden was inspired by the All Ireland Pollinator Plan (Junior). We began this project in 2021 by setting up a biodiversity committee of; Ms. Lennon, Ms. Omojola and John. The Committee had many discussions on where best to locate the wildflower garden, three areas were selected with the corner of the front yard being the most sustainable.

The area was cleared by Ms. Lennon's Fifth class (now Mr. Lowther's Sixth class). A variety of wildflower seeds were sown and a beautiful garden followed shortly afterwards. A picket fence was purchased and painted by Ms. Omojola and her students. Ms. Omojola worked tirelessly to erect the fence as the ground was extremely difficult to dig into. Fingal County Council sent us a sign to display in the area. Ms. Lennon continues to maintain this area and reseeded it with her Fifth class in April 2022.

We are looking forward to soon seeing a variety of beautiful flowers growing where our insect pollinators can survive and thrive.



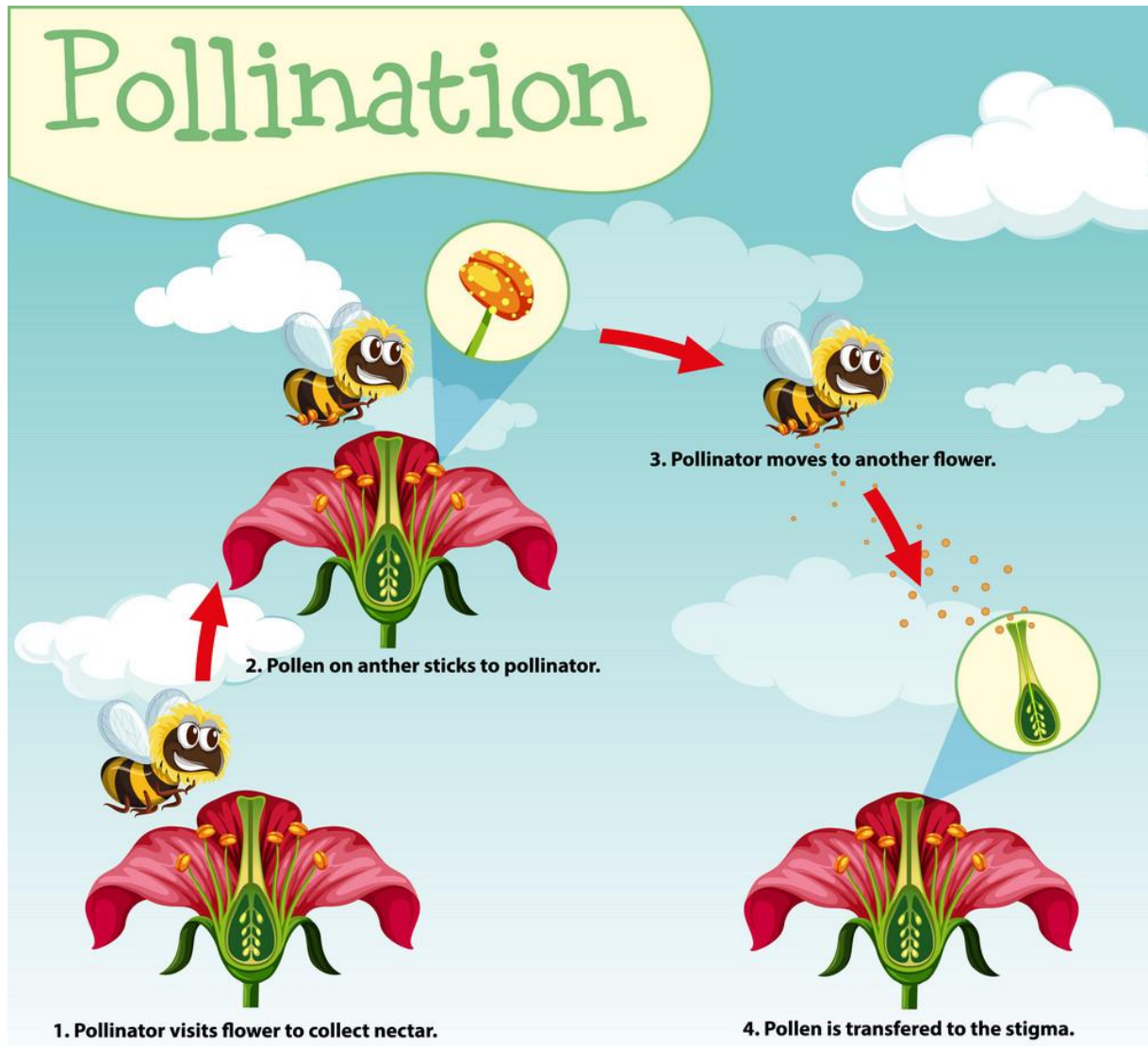
## Why did we plant a Wildflower garden?

As well as variety of beautiful flowers to look at, our Wildflower garden invites birds, bees, butterflies and even rabbits into our yard and provides them with a diverse place to live and eat.



## What is insect pollination?

Insect pollination is where the pollen of plants is spread by insects. Without pollination, plants will not make seeds or fruit. People and animals need fruits and seeds to survive.



# WHO ARE POLLINATORS?



Insects

AND



Birds



Rodents



Reptiles



Squirrels



Monkeys



...and even people pollinate

## In Europe, pollinators are:



Butterflies



Beetles



Bees



Hoverflies



Moths



Wasps

## Bees, the greatest pollinators

2,000 wild species in Europe

Europe hosts **10%**  
of the world's bees species



**Apis mellifera** (or western honeybee):

- The best-known bee species
- Managed by beekeepers for honey production and other beehive products

**Pollination** is the transfer of pollen (male gametes) between the male and female parts of flowers to enable plants to reproduce.



Self-pollination



Wind-pollination

Sources:  
European Commission  
European Red List  
United Nations



europarl.eu

# St Luke's School Garden



Our school garden was created in 2016 by Ms. Callaly and John. It started with a drawing of the proposed garden design. Wanting to ensure that the garden was accessible to all staff and pupils, the plan contained two raised beds at a height suitable to somebody with reduced mobility. Ms. Callaly and John decided to construct a wattle fence around the boundary of the garden. A wattle fence was chosen because of its use of sustainable materials and because this type of fence could be constructed by the pupils themselves.

And so, one cold winter's morning in 2016, Ms. Callaly, John, the garden team and pupils from the 5th and 6th classes set about constructing a traditional wattle fence at the front of St Luke's National School.

This was the first step on our ongoing journey to create a sustainable, educational and working school garden for the pupils and staff of St Luke's. The wattle fence took about a week to construct and was made from willow rods grown in County Tipperary.

Six years later, our little wattle fence is still standing but in serious need of repair. With



sustainability in mind, we have decided to do some research into growing our own willow. This way, we can continue to replenish our wattle fence over the years and perhaps even have some willow left over for a bit of basket making too! Watch this space....

Over the last 6 years, countless classes, children and staff have been involved in growing their own vegetables and flowers in our school garden. We have had pumpkin and scarecrow competitions, painting projects and lots of fun along the way.

The garden has become a haven of activity over the years and has become a space for pupils to reconnect with nature and experience the calming effect that this can provide. The school garden has also unearthed more than a few green fingered staff members who have given their time, energy and expertise to develop the space into what it is now.

Inevitably, there were times when crops failed us and the odd project didn't go to plan. However, as is often the case, we learnt more through our failures than through our successes.

We are now in the middle of another growing season and as the vegetables begin to grow, new ideas begin to flow and we look forward to the further development of our school garden over the coming years!



# Bug Hotel

In the Autumn of 2021 students and staff started work on our first "Bug hotel". They collected pallets and a diversity of materials including; twigs, dead wood, hollow stems, stones, tiles, straw, dry leaves, loose bark and dry sticks. John constructed the shape of the bug hotel and Ms. Lennon's Fifth class (now Mr. Lowther's Sixth class) carefully filled the space in between each pallet. The bug hotel was named "Buglantis" by Tadg Ferguson. The bug hotel gives shelter to insects, wildlife and solitary bees. Our bug hotel is a wonderful asset in our garden as it encourages insects to stay on our yard and they then pollinate our garden.

## Why do insects need shelter?

Just like us, insect pollinators need a variety of food and a safe place to live. Our staff and students created and continue to maintain our "Bug hotel" and "Wildflower garden" so that they have a safe place to stay, a variety of plants to eat and in return they pollinate our garden.



## Raised Beds

In Spring 2022 Ms. Lennon and Ms. Omojola discussed the possibility of sowing daffodil bulbs to provide further diversity for our pollinators.

Ms. Lennon and her Fifth class attempted to dig into the earth to sow the bulbs. This proved too difficult and so it was decided that raised beds would be made.

Mr. Neary with the help of Ms. Lennon's Fifth class made the raised beds and placed them at the front of the school. Ms. Cullinan, Ms. Omojola, Ms. Lennon and their students then filled the boxes with compost and sowed daffodil and tulip bulbs.

The daffodils came to life in the Spring, although it looks like the rabbits may have eaten some of them!

Not only are we feeding the insects, we are feeding the rabbits too!





## Mobile weather station

Ms. Quinn applied to MET Eireann for us to host a mobile weather station! This station tracks the temperature, wind speed and rain fall on the school grounds.



This real time information can help us predict weather patterns. The staff and students have been able to use this information to help us manage our garden and help the wildlife around our school.

Visit [WOW.MET.IE](http://WOW.MET.IE) and you can see the information from our weather station!

## Litter picking

All our students are responsible and do not litter in the school but litter from around Tyrrelstown often finds its way into our yard.

Each week a different class from 1st class to 6th class take responsibility for litter picking around our school. This along with John's help, keeps our play and green spaces safe and tidy.

# National Spring clean

In May, Mr. Molloy's class participated in 'National Spring clean' around the perimeter of our school, in the car park and on the road to Lidl.

We were very impressed by how the children worked as a team and took responsibility for our environment through this litter picking activity.

The children collected 8 bags of rubbish. There is a rubbish problem around our school and Mr. Molloy's class have written to Minister Leo Varadkar and asked him to place more bins outside of our school, they have also spoken with Minister Roderick O'Gorman about the issue.



## Bird boxes

In Spring John added 3 more bird boxes to our front yard, bringing our total to 4. He put them up high away from predators. Some are on trees and some are in our native hedge. Next time you are walking through our front yard, see can you spot all 4?

### Why did we put up so many bird boxes?

They provide shelter for bird families and in return the birds get rid of weeds and insects and sometimes pollinate flowers. They help the environment and they add more diversity of animals to our yard.



## Bird Feeders

Ms Cullinan's class created bird feeders from recycled materials to try to entice some more feathered visitors to our school garden.



## Trees and Native hedges

Over the years we have planted a number of trees and native hedge around our school. We have 7 different types and over 100 trees! These include; Birch tree, Conifer tree, Apple tree, Oak tree, Elder tree, Cherry blossom tree and Lime tree, as well as; native hedges containing Ivy, Hawthorn and Blackberries.

### Why are these hedges and trees important?

The trees and native hedge provide shelter for animals such as insects, birds and squirrels and also provide them with food. Trees help us humans by providing oxygen and improving our air quality.



### Herb garden

We are growing lots of herbs in our garden. Planting herbs will also attract a variety of pollinators into our garden, which in turn, attract birds and small mammals looking for food.



## Polytunnel

We are very lucky to have our own polytunnel in St. Luke's. Our polytunnel absorbs the sun and protects growing plants from rain, frost, snow, hail and gales.



## Wormery

Ms. Quinn and Ms. Lennon have been busy getting our composting programme ready for September 2022. Our plan is to compost food waste from our staff room and put it in our very own worm bin! Students will need to feed and turn the worms, as well as measure the temperature and moisture level of the wormery. Over time the worms will turn our food scraps and garden waste into healthy compost for the garden. This will also ensure that we have variety in our school. Thank you to "An Taisce" and the "Stop food waste" initiative for providing us with training in this area. Go to [www.stopfoodwaste.ie](http://www.stopfoodwaste.ie) to find out more.

