



Ours to Protect on Sunshine 106.8 – October 23rd 2023

On this week's show we talked about pollinators with Kate Chandler from the National Biodiversity Data Centre

Here's some things that you can do to help:

1. Don't mow, let it grow!

Reduce mowing to allow native wildflowers like Dandelions, Clover and Birds-foot Trefoil to naturally return over time.

Why? This action helps to restore species-rich grasslands: a vital habitat providing food and shelter for pollinators. Species-rich grasslands have been decimated in Ireland in recent decades. By reducing mowing – even to once a month – you will help them to slowly return, one pocket at a time

2. Manage native hedgerows for biodiversity

The more blossom your hedgerow has in spring, the better it is for biodiversity. Allow hedges to grow into a natural A-shape profile rather than a neat box shape. Flowers grow on older wood, so avoid cutting annually – cut on a three-year rotation instead to allow them to flower in spring.

Why: Native hedgerow plants such as Hawthorn (also called Whitethorn), and Blackthorn flower early in spring, providing vital food for wild bees when they emerge from hibernation. Birds and mammals eat their berries later in autumn. Hedgerows are an important nesting habitat for many creatures, forming vital corridors for nature through our more sterile modern landscape.

3. Plant pollinator friendly trees

Native trees and shrubs such as Willow, Hawthorn, Rowan, Crab Apple, and Holly support huge numbers of insects including pollinators. Plant a young tree in the autumn or winter, or grow them from seed.

Why: Trees that blossom in spring are a low-maintenance, vital source of food for pollinators. Trees contribute to a healthy climate and biodiversity, supporting a rich variety of organisms such as lichens, mosses, birds, mammals, and insects.

4. Avoid using insecticides, fungicides and herbicides

These potent chemical cocktails are designed to kill various organisms. One of the best things you can do for pollinators is avoid using them. If you buy plants at a garden centre, ask if they have been treated with chemicals. Even 'bee friendly' labelled plants may have been treated with pesticides.

Why: Insecticides have been found to kill, harm, and disorientate pollinators. Herbicides kill the 'weeds' that provide them with important food.

5. Create nesting habitats for pollinators

Wild pollinators nest in hedgerows, wild areas, dry stone walls, and even in the ground. To make a nesting habitat for them, just scrape back some bare earth, leave some areas to grow wild, or simply drill holes 10cm deep in unvarnished wood for solitary bees.

Why: Wild pollinators need safe nesting habitats for shelter and protection from predators in order to survive and thrive, and to allow next year's pollinators to grow and develop.

Where: Choose areas that are close to flowers. Bumblebees need food within about one kilometre of their nests, and solitary bees will only travel a few hundred meters. You could also protect an old stone wall, a south facing earth bank, a hedgerow, or reduce mowing.

Remember, **Ours to Protect** is broadcast every Monday evening at 7pm on **Sunshine 106.8**.

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