

Mí an Mheithimh – Gairdín Scoile na bhFéileacán

Paddy Madden continues his series of SESE tips

# June

Hands-on: the school butterfly garden

**What is it?**

A sheltered, sunny area on the school grounds with two types of plants:  
 ↓ ones full of nectar to attract adult feeders; and  
 ↓ ones that are food-plants of different types of caterpillars.

**Did you know?**

- ↓ There are 33 species of butterfly that are resident or regular visitors to Ireland.
- ↓ Butterflies are in decline all over the world because of loss of habitat and the use of pesticides
- ↓ Since 1984, 50% of butterfly species in Ireland have declined drastically.
- ↓ Ireland has the lowest butterfly count in the EU.
- ↓ 2013 was a good year for butterflies in Ireland because of the good weather-populations were up by 32% in comparison with 2012.
- ↓ The Pearl-Bordered Fritillary is the most threatened species in Ireland.
- ↓ No Irish species is protected by law.
- ↓ Brown butterflies such as the Wall Brown, Grayling, Gatekeeper and Small Heath are in decline because of the loss of meadow grasses.

**School gardening news**

- ↓ SEED will have a school garden at Bloom for the fourth time.
- ↓ The Second Annual School Gardening Conference will take place in MIE on 4 October 2014.

**Spring: nectar plants**

<b>Aubretia</b> ( <i>Aubretia deltoidea</i> )	Small perennial for front of border.
<b>Honesty</b> ( <i>Lunaria annua</i> )	Hardy biennial. Interesting seed heads.
<b>Sweet Rocket</b> ( <i>Hesperis matronalis</i> )	Perennial. Fragrant.
<b>Wallflower</b> ( <i>Cheiranthus cheiri</i> )	Hardy biennial. Plant in October.
<b>Yellow Alyssum</b> ( <i>Alyssum saxatile</i> )	Rockery perennial. Trim back after flowering.
<b>Primrose</b> ( <i>Primula vulgaris</i> )	Native. Needs the dappled shade of a hedgerow or woodland edge.
<b>Elephant Ears</b> ( <i>Bergenia cordifolia</i> )	Perennial. Easy to grow.
<b>Candytuft</b> ( <i>Iberis umbellata</i> )	Annual. Thrives in poor soil. Sow seeds in September or April.

Sweet Rocket



**Summer: nectar plants**

<b>Catmint</b> ( <i>Nepeta mussinii</i> )	Perennial. Full sun.
<b>Thyme</b> ( <i>Thymus drucei</i> )	Perennial. Full sun.
<b>Marjoram</b> ( <i>Origanum officinale</i> )	Perennial. Full sun.
<b>Globe-thistle</b> ( <i>Echinops sphaerocephalus</i> )	Perennial. Full sun. Stems and leaves prickly.
<b>Buddleia</b> ( <i>Buddleia davidii</i> )	Shrub. In March cut back to within 5cm of old wood.
<b>Hebe</b> ( <i>Hebe spp.</i> )	Shrub. Long-flowering evergreen.
<b>Lavender</b> ( <i>Lavandula spicata</i> )	Full sun. Well-drained soil. Cut back after flowering.
<b>Selfheal</b> ( <i>Prunella vulgaris</i> )	Native. Perennial. Grows well in flowering lawn.
<b>Bramble</b> ( <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> )	Native. Needs a hedgerow.

Bramble

**Autumn: nectar plants**

<b>Ice-plant</b> ( <i>Sedum spectabile</i> )	Perennial. Full sun.
<b>Michaelmas Daisy</b> ( <i>Aster novi-belgii</i> )	Perennial. Full sun.
<b>Hyssop</b> ( <i>Hyssopus officinalis</i> )	Perennial. Full sun.
<b>Helenium</b> ( <i>Helenium autumnale</i> )	Perennial. Sun or part-shade.
<b>Petunia</b> ( <i>Petunia x hybrida</i> )	Half-hardy annual. Dead-head regularly.
<b>Verbena</b> ( <i>Verbena bonariensis and venosa</i> )	Perennial. Former self-seeds.
<b>Phlox</b> ( <i>Phlox paniculata</i> )	Perennial. Sun or light shade.
<b>Sweet Scabious</b> ( <i>Scabiosa atropurpurea</i> )	Hardy annual. Long-flowering.

Michaelmas Daisy



Peacock Butterfly

**Growing caterpillar food-plants on the school grounds**



Hedge Garlic



Lady's Smock

Wild grasses such as Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*) Annual Meadow Grass (*Poa annua*), Couch Grass (*Elymus repens*)  
**Nettle** (*Urtica dioica*)  
 Painted Lady

**Birdsfoot Trefoil** (*Lotus corniculatus*)

**Hedge Garlic** (*Cardamine pratensis*) and **Lady's Smock** (*Pulicaria dysenterica*)

**Holly** (*Ilex aquifolium*) and **Ivy** (*Hedera helix*)  
**Nasturtium** (*Tropaeolum spp.*) and **Cabbage**

Brown butterflies such as Speckled Wood, Ringlet, Gatekeeper, Small Heath, Wall Brown, Meadow Brown and Grayling lay their eggs on these. An uncut area on the verge of a hedge or a wild flower meadow will attract them.  
 The caterpillars of the Red Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and

feed on this plant. Plant in a container sunk in the ground so that they don't spread. The caterpillars of the Small Blue, Wood White, Dingy Skipper and the Common Blue feed on this plant.

The caterpillars of the Orange Tip and Green-Veined White feed in these plants.

Caterpillars of Holly Blue feed on the flowers of these. Caterpillars of Large White and Small White feed on these.



Painted Lady



Small Tortoiseshell on Buddleia



Green-Veined White

**Possible design of a garden**

- ↓ A raised bed or planter surrounded with stone facing south filled with a mixture of soil and compost would be ideal.
- ↓ Place a flat stone on the bed for basking butterflies.
- ↓ Place tall plants at the back; medium plants in the middle; small plants at the front.
- ↓ Grow larval food-plants in separate containers.

Right: One type of planting scheme in butterfly garden. This will cater for 15 butterfly species.



**Maintenance**

- ↓ Caterpillars of peacock, red admiral, small tortoiseshell and painted lady like young, tender nettle shoots so it's a good idea so sections should be cut in rotation starting in June to ensure the growth of young shoots.
- ↓ In late autumn cut back the dead stems of perennials.
- ↓ In May weed and feed the perennials; apply a mulch of garden compost or well-rotted manure.
- ↓ Leave a section of meadow grass uncut for over-wintering pupae.

**Resources**

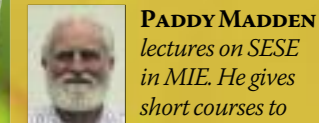
- Websites mentioned plus:
- ↓ [www.ecolandscapes.ie](http://www.ecolandscapes.ie) Good for habitat creation.
  - ↓ [www.irishbutterflies.com](http://www.irishbutterflies.com) Good for identification.
  - ↓ [www.butterflyireland.com](http://www.butterflyireland.com) Good for identification.
  - ↓ [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie) Good for conservation.
  - ↓ [www.blackrockec.ie/node/129](http://www.blackrockec.ie/node/129) Video on how to make a butterfly patch.
  - ↓ [www.butterflies.biodiversityireland.ie](http://www.butterflies.biodiversityireland.ie) Good for monitoring butterflies.
  - ↓ [www.schoolearthed.ie/pdf/intouch/WorkingInTandem\\_Sept11.pdf](http://www.schoolearthed.ie/pdf/intouch/WorkingInTandem_Sept11.pdf) Zoom in on butterflies from InTouch archives.
  - ↓ [www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/documents/Education%20Resources/EduRes\\_ButterflyGarden.pdf](http://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/documents/Education%20Resources/EduRes_ButterflyGarden.pdf) Setting up a butterfly garden.
  - ↓ Chapter six of *Go Wild at School: A Bee, Butterfly and Hoverfly Patch*.

Common Blue Butterfly



**Literacy/Litearthacht**

- ↓ **Larval food-plant/Biaphlanda larbha:** A plant that the larvae of a butterfly eats. All caterpillars have their favourite plants. Planda aitheann larbha d'fhéileacán. Bíonn a rogha phlandaí ag gach bolb.
  - ↓ **Nectar-plant/neachtar-phlanda:** A plant with a good supply of nectar to feed butterflies. Planda a bhfuil soláthar maith neachtair ann chun féileacáin ná chothú.
  - ↓ **Butterfly larva/Larbha féileacáin:** Another name for a butterfly larva is a caterpillar. Ainm eile ar larbha féileacáin ná bolb.
  - ↓ **Meadow grass/cuise:** Grass that is cut twice a year in late June and late September. Féar a ghearrtar dhá huair sa bhliain go déanach i Mí an Mheithimh agus go déanach i Meán Fómhair.
- Buiochas do Marie Whelton (MIE) don aistriúchán*



**PADDY MADDEN** lectures on SESE in MIE. He gives short courses to whole staffs on school gardening and also visits schools through the Heritage in Schools Scheme. His book, *Go Wild at School*, has recently been reprinted. Available from paddy.madden@mie.ie for €18 (includes p&P).