

Welcome to our lesson booklet for the
Tairseach Tree Trail of Maynooth University
We hope you enjoy the activities...



Information for Educators

Fáilte! Welcome to the *Tairseach Tree Trail*.

The Froebel Department, Maynooth Green Campus, Geography Department and Grounds Supervisor Stephen Seaman have been collaborating on the *MU Project Live* teaching and learning project *Tairseach*. Grounded in a pedagogy of community-engaged learning, it helps to embed the Sustainable Development Goals across the Maynooth University curriculum encouraging protection and nurturing of the natural environment. *Tairseach* shines a light on the rich diversity of trees and the rich biodiversity of the magical campus we are lucky to experience at Maynooth University. Fáilte roimh chách!

Teachers are invited to familiarise themselves with the GIS of the *Tairseach Tree Trail* before introducing it to the children. This trail includes 9 native trees of Ireland, including a hedgerow! There are images and facts about the trees including folklore too. This content can be used for enquiry-based learning, artistic endeavours, and rich integrated curricular work. The activities outlined are not age specific as they can each be altered to suit your class. They are suitable for infants to sixth, with adjustments made by individual teachers. We hope you will use them as a catalyst for individual class work! The booklet encourages two visits to the trail, one as an introductory visit and the second as the artistic adventure, where the children as artists, illustrate a chosen tree on paper. The trees are spaced a distance apart hence the group illustrating a chosen tree together. Alternatively, a number of trees can be illustrated for shorter periods of time at each stop.

There is a song that can be taught to the children before the trip to campus, which is easily sung to the tune of Old MacDonald! The lyrics of the song can be discussed also, as there are many messages therein. There is also a poem included for the second trip. It is strongly encouraged that the children would listen to this poem read aloud, as they lie down on the grass and ground themselves to the earth. The children will have the opportunity to engage all of their senses on the tree trail, in order to have a rich sensory experience. They are welcome to gently and respectfully touch the trees and feel the natural bark and grasses around them as they venture through the trail. Junior classes will enjoy spotting the numbers 1-9 on posts at the base of each tree. There are also many bird boxes and bat boxes scattered around the trail, the children can discuss why these boxes are very

different! 'I wonder' questions are very effective for the trail for all class levels! There is excellent opportunity for habitat study in the hedgerow. It is also useful, when the children are more familiar with the native trees in full bloom, to return to the trail throughout the seasons, and observe the changes of the native trees. We encourage all visitors to be mindful of the trace they leave, and to bring their wrappers and packaging with them. The children can reflect on their experiences through a variety of subject areas after and/or during the trail. For example, through drama or music, or English/Irish writing.

There is additional information at the end of the booklet, to support teachers in the integration of Gaeilge with the activities. If highlighting your visit on social media, we invite you to include #TairseachTreeTrail #IrishFroebelNetwork and share your experience with us! We hope you enjoy these activities and ideas but most importantly, we encourage you to get outside and enjoy the Tairseach Tree Trail!

Míle buíochas,

Máire & Laoise,

Roinn Froebel don Bhun-agus Luath-Oideachas, Ollscoil Mha Nuad

Click on the following link to engage with the digital Tairseach Tree Trail:
[Tairseach Tree Trail.](#)

Subject(s): SESE Integration: PE/An Ghaeilge/Visual Art/Maths/Drama	Title of Lesson: The Tairseach Tree Trail
Class: All levels – please moderate for ability/understanding where necessary	Duration: 60-90mins each session
Strand(s): Living Things Environmental Awareness and Care	Strand unit(s): Plant and Animal Life Environmental Awareness
Skills in Development: Questioning, Observing, Estimating & Measuring	

General Learning Objective(s):

1. Observe, identify and examine the animals and plants that live in local habitats and environments
2. Recognise that there is a great diversity of plants and animals in different regions and environments
3. Group/compare living things into sets according to their similarities and differences
4. Enjoy the local environment, engaging in a sensory experience of the trail and the living things along the way

Lesson 1

An Introduction to the Tairseach Tree Trail by GIS

Resources/Materials/Equipment:

Interactive whiteboard

The GIS of the *Tairseach Tree Trail* on the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, Maynooth University Website

The Tree Council of Ireland website. www.treecouncil.ie

SESE copies

Pencils and colouring pencils/materials

Learning Objective:

Discuss trees and explore the *Tairseach Tree Trail* GIS

Introduction:

Elicit what the children know about trees. Discuss trees with the children. What are trees? Are they good for the environment? If yes, why? You may wish to use a picture book to open the conversation about trees. Take a nature walk outside to see the trees in your school garden or yard. Depending on the class level, the children may or may not be able to name some of the native trees of Ireland. This is a good opportunity to engage in exploration of trees. Avail of the Tree Council of Ireland website for excellent information for both the

children and the teacher! Can the children draw a tree in their SESE copies? Older children may like to label the parts of the tree in pairs. With younger children, invite them to be 'in role' and move like trees in the wind, stretch like trees towards the sky.

Development:

Ask the children if they can use their imaginations to see if they understand why the tree trail was called the *Tairseach Tree Trail*?* Introduce the GIS of the *Tairseach Tree Trail*. Advise the children that the class will be visiting the trail in the next lesson, but for now, familiarise yourselves with the trees you will be looking out for. Explore the GIS. Discuss how many trees are highlighted on the tree trail. Why were these trees chosen? What does native tree mean and why is this important? Invite older children to explore these important questions. They may wish to do their own research on the class iPads or class computer and conduct some independent research in small groups. Ask the children what they think they need to find out? Prompt ideas for questions if necessary!

Conclusion:

After considerable independent work for older classes, and talk and discussion with younger classes, explore the GIS together in more detail. Read some of the points of interest. Older children may read it with you. Ask the children to try and remember what the 9 trees of the trail look like for the next lesson. They may like to sketch aspects of them in the SESE copies, and then take the SESE copies to the trail in the next lesson for comparative work. If the technology is available, invite the children to explore the GIS themselves in pairs. Conclude with a brief recap from the children on what the *Tairseach Tree Trail* is about, what they will be exploring and any questions they may have before they depart on *Tairseach Tree Trail* day! Display artwork/conduct a gallery – inviting the children to leave their open copies on display at their desks, push in their chairs and stroll around the classroom admiring the work of their classmates.

***An Tairseach** – The title 'An Tairseach' was carefully chosen as it is the word for 'threshold' in Irish. We are eager to bridge the threshold between the classroom with walls, and the classroom without walls of the natural world. It symbolises a new start and a more sustainable view of how we interact with nature. It represents an exciting new step into a community approach between all living things, both human and non-human.

Lesson 2

Experiencing the Tairseach Tree Trail

Resources/Materials/Equipment:

Outdoor clothing to be ready for all weather and good walking shoes
A foldable plastic/durable material shopping bag for each participant to be used as a seat
SESE copies
Pencils/Pens
Class/School camera
Binoculars
Magnifying glasses
Picnic lunches and water!

Learning Objective:

Visit the *Tairseach Tree Trail*, using the GIS and enjoying the activities outlined

Introduction:

Having discussed the adventures ahead, including safety measures when on tour outside of the school grounds, arrive at the *Tairseach Tree Trail* of Maynooth University. The children are encouraged to make notes if they wish in their SESE copies, younger children might like to make notes through illustrations. Beginning on the North Campus at the first tree marked no.1, sit or stand in a little circle at the tree and discuss. Read the sign in place at the base of the tree. Can the children recognise the tree? Why do they think it is called Alder? Do they know the Irish name for the tree? Ask “Cén crann é seo”? (see Irish language list below). The children are welcome to gently hug the trunk. Depending on the class level, vary your questions from closed to higher order questions. For example: where is the bark? Does the alder have big leaves or small leaves? Does it have small little pinecones on its branches? Investigate! Why does the alder mitigate floods? Why are trees commonly known as the lungs of Mother Earth? Open the GIS on your phone or invite another adult with you, to do this, and assist you in guiding the children along the trail.

Development:

Proceed through the tree trail, inviting the children to question as they proceed - which way should we go next? Pay extra attention to the children as they cross over to the south campus to continue the trail. Remind them of road safety as they wait at the traffic lights to cross. Invite the children to open their eyes and spot the next tree on the trail. Either, you can tell them they are to find a Scots Pine or you can ask them to spot the number and see if they can identify the tree when they reach it. Use the GIS as you move along the trail. Arrange the children in little groups as you reach each tree. Always remind the children to gently and respectfully hug each tree of the trail should they so wish. Discuss the trees and why are they so named at each point of the trail. Explore the folklore on the GIS. Ensure there is time for questioning from the teacher, the adults present on the trail with you, but also from the children too. A culture of enquiry throughout the trail is strongly encouraged.

Conclusion:

At the last tree of the trail – the Yew, invite the children to sit for their lunch/refreshments.

Ask the children why they think the trunk of the Yew is so wide? How old do they think it is? Did they read about it in their independent learning sessions? If we did not have a measuring tape, and we didn't want to cut into the tree to see if we could measure it, could we measure it in a different way? What if with younger classes, they joined hands and wrapped around the tree. How many children would they need to reach all the way around? Would they have needed fewer hands joined together if they measured the ash tree like that? Why? Discuss with the children what they think of the trail, and advise them that there will be an opportunity to return to the trail again. This time, they will return to the trail as **artists**, and sketch/draw/paint a chosen tree on the trail. Democratically vote for the tree the class will illustrate together. Discuss the materials they might use, the living things they might see, the role the chosen tree plays in the wider ecosystem of the planet. Level the questions and discussions appropriately for your class. Before leaving the trail, thank Mother Yew for her time and for all the good work she does for the planet by virtue of being there on the *Tairseach Tree Trail*!

Lesson 3

Artistic explorations on the *Tairseach Tree Trail*

Resources/Materials/Equipment:

Outdoor clothing to be ready for all weather and good walking shoes!
A foldable plastic/durable material shopping bag for each participant for use as a seat
Paper
Clipboards/Hardback books with clothes peg or bulldog clip to hold pages in place
Pencils/pens/paints for art materials
Class/school camera
Binoculars
Magnifying glasses
The poem 'When I am among trees' by Mary Oliver
Picnic lunches and water!

Learning Objective:

Return to the *Tairseach Tree Trail* and draw/paint/sketch the chosen tree
Engage in a poetry meditation

Introduction:

Discuss with the children that you will be returning to the *Tairseach Tree Trail*. Recall what they remember from last week. Invite the children to discuss what they know of the native trees of Ireland now. Explore their notes/sketches/photos from the previous visit in their groups. Advise the children of their safety procedures before they proceed to the trail. Remind the children that this time, they are returning to the trail as artists! The whole group will proceed to the chosen tree.

Development:

The children will sit on their foldable plastic bag, using their paper and clipboard/book, they will be invited to draw the chosen tree. They can add colour or paint, depending on the materials available. They may need the binoculars to look at higher points on the tree. They may use the magnifying glasses to examine the tree up close. When the children have completed their artwork, they may wish to add text or information to their pages. This is optional and age dependent. When the art is done, invite the children to stand in a large circle with their artwork facing outwards in their hands. They can then admire each other's work from various angles of the circle. Encourage positive and observational comments between the children.

Conclusion:

Invite the children to sit for their lunch/refreshments as their artwork fully dries (if necessary). Encourage the children to discuss the experience. Before departure, invite the children to lie back on the grass and listen to the poem 'When I am among trees' by Mary Oliver is read slowly and gently by the class teacher. This can be read for all levels from Junior Infants to Sixth Class. The smallest might roll a little and not settle as the poem is read, and that is ok! To help settle them, advise them that this poem is a very special poem and the poet is talking about when she too, is among trees and how it makes her feel. After this meditative experience, discuss the poem for pleasure with the children.

When I am among the trees

When I am among the trees,
especially the willows and the honey locust,
equally the beech, the oaks and the pines,
they give off such hints of gladness.
I would almost say that they save me, and daily.
I am so distant from the hope of myself,
in which I have goodness, and discernment,
and never hurry through the world
but walk slowly, and bow often.
Around me the trees stir in their leaves
and call out, "Stay awhile."
The light flows from their branches.
And they call again, "It's simple," they say,
"and you too have come
into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled
with light, and to shine."

Mary Oliver



'Thankful For The Trees' (Song)

(The Tairseach Tree Trail song to the tune of 'Old McDonald'!)



This is the *Tairseach Tree Trail*
Full of lovely trees
We're thankful for the air we breathe
We're thankful for the trees

We'll find each one as we walk by
Searching low and searching high

Holly and silver birch are here
Blackbirds flying around
Scots pine, ash and willow too
Growing from the ground

We might see birds, we might see crows
We might see the campus cat if she shows

Peep inside the lovely hedgerow
Berries, and bees and more
All so selfless, all so kind
Follow the map and folklore

There's a hazel here and an alder too
Helping us, with Mother yew

This is the *Tairseach Tree Trail*
Full of lovely trees
We're thankful for the air we breathe
We're thankful for the trees!

Tuilleadh eolais

Ainmneacha na gCrann:

1. Fearnóg - Alder
2. Péine Albanach - Scots Pine
3. Saileach - Willow
4. Beith Gheal - Silver Birch
5. Fuinseog – Ash
6. Fál Sceach- Native Irish Hedgerow
7. Coll – Hazel
8. Cuileann – Holly
9. Iúr - Yew

www.duchas.ie - The importance of Native Irish Trees in Irish folklore is evident from the stories the children in 5th and 6th class collected in the 1930s in Ireland for *Scéim na Scol*. Direct links to the copybooks are included below.

1. Fearnóg - Alder <https://www.duchas.ie/en/src?q=alder&t=CbesTranscript>
2. Péine Albanach - Scots Pine
<https://www.duchas.ie/en/src?q=scots+pine&t=CbesTranscript>
3. Saileach - Willow <https://www.duchas.ie/en/src?q=Willow&t=CbesTranscript>
4. Beith Gheal - Silver Birch <https://www.duchas.ie/en/src?q=Silver+birch&t=CbesTranscript>
5. Fuinseog - Ash <https://www.duchas.ie/en/src?q=Ash+tree&t=CbesTranscript>
6. Fál Sceach- Native Irish Hedgerow
<https://www.duchas.ie/en/src?q=hedgerow&t=CbesTranscript>
7. Coll - Hazel <https://www.duchas.ie/en/src?q=hazel+tree&t=CbesTranscript>
8. Cuileann - Holly <https://www.duchas.ie/en/src?q=holly&t=CbesTranscript>
9. Iúr – Yew <https://www.duchas.ie/en/src?q=yew&t=CbesTranscript>

Gaeilge Neamhfhoirmiúil

Cuirigí oraibh bhur gcótaí
An bhfuil sibh réidh?
Fanaigí i mbeirteanna le bhur dtoil.
Ar aghaidh linn a pháistí!
Fanaigí a pháistí!
Tagaigí anseo a pháistí!
Tógaigí amach bhur lón!
Suígí síos ar an bhféar.
Osclaigí bhur súile!
Éistigí leis na héin!
An bhfuil aon cheist agaibh?
Táimid anois in Ollscoil Mhá Nuad. Seo é an Tairseach!
Cén crann é seo?
Seo uimhir a haon - Fearnóg!
Seo uimhir a dó - Péine Albanach!
Seo uimhir a trí - Saileach
Seo uimhir a ceathair - Beith Gheal
Seo uimhir a cúig - Fuinseog
Seo uimhir a sé - Fál Sceach
Seo uimhir a seacht - Coll
Seo uimhir a hocht - Cuileann
Seo uimhir a naoi - Iúr
Siúlaimí a pháistí!
Tabhair barróg don chrann!
Luígí síos ar an bhféar, dúnaigí na súile agus éistigí go géar!
Nach bhfuil an crann seo go hálainn!
Féachaimí ar na beacha!
Féachaimí ar an gcat!