

Pollinators: Raising Awareness through Botanical Art



Like many botanical artists, I have a keen interest in conservation, and really wanted to do something to help raise awareness about the alarming decline of our pollinators. I got involved when I attended the Pollinator Symposium in Waterford two years ago, where I met some very passionate and inspiring people, like Zoe Devlin and Dr. Una Fitzpatrick.

I was thrilled that I could put my skills to use by painting an image for the Pollinator Plan logo. People always respond well to images, and a painting can have more impact than a photograph, as the artist can isolate the subject on the page.

Botanical artists are taught to observe and record all the tiny details, and this training helped when I painted the garden bumblebee, *Bombus hortorum*, concentrating on getting the colour, markings and fluffiness on the bee just right. The bee was painted on *Centaurea nigra*, a favourite food source.

Everyone who supports the Pollinator Plan is encouraged to display the logo on their website, or on their pollinator-friendly land. It's exciting to see the signs appearing in parks, gardens and meadows throughout Ireland – it shows the growing awareness and interest. Of course, I am thrilled to see my bee appearing in unexpected places!

Following on from this, I was asked to design a series of stamps on native Irish bees for An Post. After consulting with the Pollinator Plan Committee, I decided to focus mainly on solitary bees. They are far more numerous than honey bees or bumblebees, and even more efficient at pollination (one little solitary bee can do the work of 100 honey bees), and yet we know so little about them. The stamps will come out in the summer of 2018.

As artists, we can raise awareness by including bees, hoverflies and butterflies in our artwork. After all, without these little creatures, there simply would not be flowers to paint.

Shevaun Doherty

About the All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015–2020

One third of our bee species are threatened with extinction from Ireland. We know it's because we have drastically reduced the areas where they can nest and the amount of food our landscape provides for them. We can stand back and watch the problem happen, or we can try to do something. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is about all of us, from farmers to local authorities, to schools, gardeners and businesses, coming together to try to create an Ireland where pollinators can survive and thrive.

The plan provides an important framework to bring together pollinator initiatives from the North and South, and is the start of a process by which we can collectively take positive steps to protect our pollinators and the service they provide into the future. It is a shared plan of action. By working together we can reverse pollinator losses and help restore populations to healthy levels. Over the next five years this Plan aims to build a foundation to bring about a landscape where pollinators can flourish.

The Plan proposes taking specific actions across five objectives. Within each objective, targets have been set and actions have been identified to help achieve that target.

- Making Ireland pollinator friendly (farmland, public land & private land)
- Raising awareness of pollinators and how to protect them
- Managed pollinators – supporting beekeepers and growers
- Expanding our knowledge on pollinators and pollination service
- Collecting evidence to track change and measure success



IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT OUR POLLINATORS, THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO HELP. YOU CAN PLANT POLLINATOR FRIENDLY PLANTS, OR BECOME A BEE MONITOR, WHERE YOU GO FOR A MONTHLY WALK AND RECORD THE BEES THAT YOU SEE.

<http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/projects/irish-pollinator-initiative/get-involved/>

The National Botanic Gardens supports the Pollinator Plan as a Pollinator Plan Partner