SUPPORTING INFORMATION FOR THE WOODLAND LEAGUE “FOREST IN A BOX” PROJECT.

PROJECT COORDINATOR :

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PROJECT DETAILS :

The Woodland League "Forest in a Box" project involves receiving a "Know Your Native Trees" introduction to Native trees, as a one and half hour presentation using the classroom whiteboard, after which we will present the school with a Forest in a Box, the children will assist in setting this up, applying the layers of leaf mulch in a hands on sensory experience, involving touch, feel, and smell, casting the acorns and hazel nuts supplied by The Woodland League into the leaf mulch, this will take one to one and a half hours. To break up the time the Know Your Native Trees presentation/theory part can be organised before lunch and the practical hands on, “Forest in a Box”, part after lunch.

During lunch break we can find a suitable space to house the box preferably in an existing Green education area. The box will assist schools involved in the Green Schools programme to achieve their Biodiversity flag as native trees are the bedrock for native biodiversity and the leaf mulch growing medium provides an opportunity to study fungi and how they collaborate with trees in a symbiotic way, which is the way of nature.

PROJECT COSTS :

We are currently in the Pilot phase of the project and have received Local Agenda 21 funding from three County Councils, Fingal County Council, Clare County Council, and Offaly County Council, to deliver the project to nine national schools in 2017 to April 2018. After which we will be seeking other funding sources to continue the project, however as this is uncertain, we would hope that some schools will provide their own funding, sponsorship or fund raise, in which case the full cost of the project to supply the box, seeds, leaf mulch, and gravel for the base, including school visit will be approximately 450 euros to 500 euros depending on distance to travel.

HOW DOES THE PROJECT FIT THE GREEN SCHOOLS BIODIVERSITY FLAG CRITERIA :

Native woodlands and trees are the most valuable land based habitats for our Native biodiversity, in fact they form the bedrock for biodiversity on land, as well as conferring stability on Soil, Water, and Air.

We already mentioned the opportunity to study fungi above via the leaf mulch growing medium inside the boxes, listing the birds, mammals, herbs,mosses, and lichens connected with native woodland is another option, see below additional biodiversity educational opportunities.

CREATING SPACE FOR NATURE TO FUNCTION

In support of the fact that our native trees and woodlands, with their deeply penetrating heart-roots, can also turn liquid to vapour and send it into the air (evapotranspire) sending approximately 38% of rainwater back into the atmosphere (during the growing season) and store (capture) moisture in the deep litter (during the dormant season), highlighting another invisible but extremely valuable function performed by our Native woodlands and trees.

Here is a list of the associated number of insect species, hosted by different native trees.

Oak 284 Willow 266 Birch 229

Hawthorn 149 Aspen 97 Scots Pine 91

Alder 90 Hazel 83 Rowan 28

Sycamore 15 Horse Chestnut 4 (D.A.N.I. 2000)

In a Woodland Trust publication of 2001 we discover that in one acre of native woodland, we find the following volume of different essential life forms living in symbiosis within the woodland community/society, all busy building themselves from carbon and sustaining local biodiversity.

Bacteria 4 tons

Fungi 1.5 tons

Field Plants 0.5 tons

Earthworms 500lbs

Protozoa 340lbs

Slugs

and snails 90lbs

Spiders 50lbs

Beetles 9lbs

At the Broadford Community Native Woodland Arboretum, initiated and led by Ted Cook of The Woodland League, in Broadford, County Limerick, the bulk of the 770 native tree and shrub species, representing each of Ireland’s indigenous ‘Pillars of Nature’ (26) have been sourced within a 10 mile radius with a view to preserving local genetic character (provenance), underpinning local bio- diversity.