

FORESTRY

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The value of taking a walk

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Regardless of the scale, trees form the basis of one of Ireland's most popular amenities. Many appreciate the sense of 'escape from the daily grind' that woodlands can offer, and of course, a walk in the woods is something we can all still enjoy, even when other social activities are not recommended. Beyond the very basic walk in the woods, our woodlands are very versatile – being suitable for many activities like picnics, cycling, paint balling, or camping. An estimated 18 million visits are made to forests in Ireland every year. This is mainly in the estates of Coillte and the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS), but does include a number of private woodlands. The development of forests for recreation is seen as an important aspect of sustainable forestry, and there is an increasing recognition of the wide-ranging benefits that forests provide to society.

Creating an income from recreation in a privately owned forest can be challenging. There

is no doubt that most people love to spend time recreationally in a forest. Fáilte Ireland indicates that walking 'tops the poll', as opposed to any other activity, from both the domestic and overseas markets. However, with Coillte's open forest policy how can a private forest owner attract visitors to their forest? Is it possible to create a business from it? Walkers are rarely willing to pay to walk; however, they do require services to enable them to enjoy a walking holiday, such as quality accommodation, wholesome food, and other activities. It is known that tourists usually spend 30% of their budget on accommodation, 34% on food, and 7% on activities (the rest is made up of shopping and travel). Therefore, if a forest recreation business can provide either accommodation and/or food, together with a particular activity, it might be the basis for a successful enterprise.

If you are planning a new woodland with



recreational use as a future objective, here are some tips:

- good secure access along with well-planned internal paths are essential;
- species choice is important – variety is key, but suitable trees that will happily grow together should be chosen with the help of a professional forester;
- visit similar successful projects to see what works;
- talk to local development groups/Fáilte Ireland for tips and potential help; and,
- consider the NeighbourWood Scheme, which supports the development of woodland amenities.

Seasonal management tips

Walk your plantations regularly to monitor the progress of the crop. If you have any questions on any aspect of its management, please contact Teagasc Forestry staff.

Young plantations

- It is necessary, both for optimising your crop and grant compliance, to have a sufficient number of trees evenly spaced through the plantation. The stocking density can be checked by counting the number of trees in

an 8m radius circle (50 trees in a plot for most conifers/66 trees for broadleaves). Filling in should be carried out as soon as possible (before end of April), in order to give the new trees a chance to keep up with the main crop.

- Monitor the colour/general appearance of your trees. If you think that there is a nutrient deficiency, plan for foliage samples to be taken and analysed in an approved forestry laboratory. Foliar sampling should be carried out in August for broadleaves and between November and December for conifers.
- Ensure that all fences are stock proof to avoid damage to the plantation. As livestock are let out after the winter, crops are most at risk. Rabbits and hares can also do a lot of damage, especially to young trees. If tree shelters are in place, ensure that they are secure. Ensure that all drains and silt traps are in good working order.
- Fire can be a hazard at any time of the year, but especially in the springtime. Ensure that all firebreaks are in good working order. All flammable vegetation, if present, should be removed. Ensure that your forest is insured.
- Vegetation control in plantations is required until trees grow beyond it. Grass and weeds

BPS and forestry – main points

1. Eligible forestry land planted since 2008 can continue to be eligible for the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) – conditions apply; see www.teagasc.ie/forestry.
2. The BPS applicant's name(s) must appear on both the herd number and forestry contract number.
3. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine's (DAFM) forestry division must be notified in advance if there is a change of ownership of a grant-aided plantation during the term of the forestry contract.
4. New for 2020 – the retention of 3ha/10% of eligible farm land is no longer required to ensure continued eligibility for the BPS on forested land.

can be controlled either mechanically or by chemical methods. Careful use of herbicides according to the manufacturer's instructions is essential.

Older plantations

■ As conifer plantations' canopies close, the installation of inspection paths allows good access. Paths should be put in at 100m spacing. The facing branches between two rows of trees should be removed up to your own height. Remember to abide by all health and safety guidelines.

- If considering thinning or harvesting, ensure that you have a felling licence in place. All licences take a while, so apply in good time. All harvesting should be carried out with appropriate contracts in place to cover all aspects of the felling operation.
- All ash plantations should be checked for ash dieback. An awareness of the percentage damage within the crop may be advisable.
- Timely thinning is important in all broadleaf woodlands too. A Woodland Improvement Scheme grant may be available for the first and second thinning of broadleaves.

Keep in touch!

Following HSE advice, Teagasc's Forestry Development Department has cancelled all face-to-face meetings. This includes office consultations, site visits, forest walks, and classes.

In the meantime, we are still very much available to assist you with any forestry-related query you may have. During these difficult times, we will continue to provide you with independent and objective information through the following sources.

Advice: We can be contacted by phone, text, email or post. We will continue to support you if you are considering establishing a forest, or you have a question on how to better manage your forest. Full contact details can be found on the back page or visit www.teagasc.ie/forestry.

Printed newsletters: A total of 40,000 Teagasc clients receive this quarterly newsletter: a valuable source of information providing technical advice, relevant forestry news, and research project updates.

Website: The forestry section of the Teagasc website (www.teagasc.ie/forestry) is packed with useful information such as technical advice, detailed information on forestry grants, research project updates, staff contact details, and much, much more.

Teagasc Forestry e-news: Thousands of people receive Teagasc's forestry e-newsletter free of charge directly into their email inbox: keeping you informed of the latest Irish forestry news, forestry grants, valuable forest management tips, and much more. Subscribing is very easy – visit www.teagasc.ie/forestry.

YouTube: The Teagasc Forestry YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/teagascforestryvideos) has dozens of useful videos, ranging from technical how-to videos to taxation topics.

Social media: Our various social media platforms are a great way to keep in touch. You can follow us on:

Twitter: @teagascforestry;

Facebook: [forestry.teagasc](https://www.facebook.com/forestry.teagasc); and,

Instagram: [teagasc_forestry](https://www.instagram.com/teagasc_forestry).

For all your forestry advice and training needs

Contact your local Teagasc Forestry Development Officer:

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