

## Virtual Forest Walks 2021

*Find out why it is essential to care for young forests.*

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Teagasc is organising a nationwide series of virtual forest walks via Zoom from April 12-23 focusing on the management of young forests. Each forestry advisor will host a webinar in their area focusing on local forest management needs and demonstrating why it is essential to care for young forests.

New forests require several years of active management to become well established, regardless of the woodland or species type. If a forest is not well maintained, the overall health of the forest could be compromised, affecting both future timber revenue and biodiversity value. It is therefore very important that all forest owners understand the needs of a young forest. This is also true if the management of the forest has been subcontracted out for the first four years. After all, it is the owner that will benefit most from well-looked after trees.

Correct and timely forest management is also essential for payment of the second instalment of the Afforestation Scheme (four-year maintenance grant) and the forestry premium is subject to the forest successfully achieving certain standards.

These events will be a visual 'walk through' of management issues that may occur when a new forest is developing. This will allow forest owners to recognise potential problems and how to address them. These issues include vegetation control, damage from browsing animals, nutrient needs, shaping of broadleaf trees, and reducing the risk of fire damage.

These online forest events are aimed at landowners who have established a new forest in the last few years and at landowners who are considering planting some land. They will be held through Zoom. Following registration, you will be sent an access link a few days prior to the event.

See **Table 1** for details of dates for these local events. It is recommended that you attend your 'local' event, as discussions will be more relevant to

the location of your forest site. Registration before your local event is required. See: [www.teagasc.ie/virtualforestwalks](http://www.teagasc.ie/virtualforestwalks).

**Table 1: Virtual Forest Walks 2021.**

Counties covered	Day and date	Advisor	Time
Donegal	Monday April 12	Steven Meyen	7.00pm
Cavan, Leitrim, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Sligo	Monday April 12	Kevin O'Connell	7.00pm
Galway, Mayo, Roscommon	Wednesday April 14	Noel Kennedy	7.00pm
Carlow, Dublin, Wexford, Wicklow	Wednesday April 14	Frances Mchugh	7.00pm
Kildare, Laois, Longford, Offaly, Westmeath	Thursday April 15	Liam Kelly	7.00pm
Clare, Kilkenny, Tipperary	Thursday April 15	Michael Somers	7.00pm
Cork, Waterford	Monday April 19	John Casey	7.00pm
Kerry, Limerick	Wednesday April 21	Jonathan Spazzi	7.00pm

## Frost damage awareness in new forests

Last year on May 11-12, there were two nights of very low temperatures, getting down to -3.0°C in some places. This happened at the worst possible time, as it coincided with young trees putting on new growth. Both broadleaf and conifer trees were affected, particularly young Sitka spruce and oak, resulting in the new foliage being 'burnt' and appearing blackened and/or dead.

In most cases, young trees will survive and re-flush later in the season. However, the quality of severely damaged trees can be compromised. Damage to the side shoots is not as serious as damage to the leading shoot. A damaged leading shoot will result in the tree forking from that point on and failure to formatively shape these trees will severely affect



*Frost damage to two-year-old Sitka spruce (leader intact).*

their quality. Formative shaping is the process of removing dead leaders and resulting forks, as well as large competing side branches, in order to improve the form quality of the trees. Remember frost damage can occur, not all trees die, most trees recover, and it is less of a problem as the trees get taller.

## Good for you and your forest

Regular walks through your forest allow you to enjoy the benefits of your growing forest, but also allow you to monitor the progress of your trees. The following outlines basic things to look out for; each of these will be discussed at the upcoming virtual forest walks.

### What to look out for in young forests:

- ▶ ensure you have enough trees evenly spaced throughout the plantation – filling in should be carried out as soon as possible (before the end of April);
- ▶ monitor the colour/general appearance of your trees – if you suspect a nutrient deficiency, plan for foliage samples to be taken;
- ▶ check that all fences are stock proof and that tree shelters are in place to avoid damage to the plantation;

- ▶ ensure that all drains and silt traps are in good working order;
- ▶ all firebreaks should be managed – all flammable vegetation (if present) should be removed; and,
- ▶ assess vegetation competition with trees.

### What to look out for in older forests:

- ▶ if your conifer forest has a closed canopy, the installation of inspection paths allows good access;
- ▶ timely thinning is important in both conifer and broadleaf forests; if light is limited to the forest floor, thinning may be due;
- ▶ all ash woodland should be checked for ash dieback; and,
- ▶ fence, drain and firebreak maintenance is also important for older forests.

## Forestry courses in Ballyhaise

The Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)-certified Level 5 forestry major award is a good place to start for someone considering a career change, or to start a career in forestry as a forest supervisor or self-employed contractor. It also provides graduates with progression routes to forestry higher education. Students can progress to the Advanced Certificate in Forestry (Level 6) and the BSc in Forestry at Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT).

The cost of the course includes practical skills training in chainsaw operation, pesticide application, first aid response, etc.

You can apply for the forestry course online through the Teagasc website at:

<https://www.teagasc.ie/education/going-to-college/apply-online/>.



*Level 5 student Brian O'Ferrall planting on a reforestation site.*



*You can still avail of the BPS and forestry premium on the same land.*

## BPS and forestry 2021

It's that time again when attention focuses on the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) application. For qualifying applicants, the opportunity to continue to avail of the BPS as well as the forestry premium on the same land in 2021 is highly attractive. However, it is important to check all eligibility requirements are met. For example, farmers who wish to benefit from the BPS on afforested land must be the person (or persons) named as the forestry scheme beneficiary, or joint beneficiary. This means that you must be the person or persons eligible for payment of the forestry premium. Note: this also applies to members of the same family.

### A few tips when completing the application

- Ensure all parcels are included and correct

parcel areas apply. If the maximum eligible area (MEA) and/or claimed area is pre-printed as 0 for any eligible forestry parcel, it must be changed to the appropriate area to ensure eligibility.

- Once the period of premia payments under your afforestation measure has concluded, these parcels will remain eligible for the BPS once you maintain your commitment to that particular afforestation measure. This includes agroforestry and is a welcome clarification.
- Where parcels will be transferred in the future, advanced planning, appropriate timing and a co-ordinated approach between the transferor and transferee are essential to help ensure continued eligibility and avoid issues arising. Check in advance with the BPS section and plan accordingly.

For further information, contact your local Teagasc forestry advisor or log onto: [www.teagasc.ie/forestrybps](http://www.teagasc.ie/forestrybps).