Teagasc
Advisory
Newsletter

FORESTRY

April 2023

Spring forest walks 2023

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Exploring forest types

Teagasc, in association with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), is organising a nationwide series of spring forest walks from April 12-28. The walks will explore the opportunities for new forest creation in the proposed Forestry Programme 2023-2027.

The forest creation element in the Forestry Programme 2023-2027 encompasses 12 types of forest options, with afforestation grants and annual premiums for farmers and landowners.

During the walks, forestry experts from Teagasc and the DAFM will explain different forest types in terms of their objectives, design, management, and environmental and practical characteristics. Forest types (FT) will include native forests (FT1), agroforestry (FT8) and mixed high forests with mainly spruce and 20% broadleaves (FT12).

People plant forests for a host of very different reasons and considerations. But whatever forest type you would like to plant, all new forests require active management to become well established and begin the journey to maximising their potential. If a young forest is not well looked after, the achievement of your objectives – economic, environmental, social and practical – risks being compromised.

Attending forest events is a great opportunity to see tree planting in action, meet with forest owners and understand different forest types and management based on specific objectives.

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The spring forest walks will provide guidance to farmers and landowners considering planting a new forest, and those who have already planted, on the practicalities of planting and establishment, later management and financial supports in the proposed Forestry Programme 2023-2027. Planting trees and forests is more important than ever and there is a forest type to suit everyone. If you are interested in planting a new forest, don't miss the Teagasc spring forest walk in your area! See **Table 1** for location and walk details. These are outdoor events; please wear suitable clothing and footwear. Walks will take approximately two hours. Register at www.teagasc.ie/forestwalks or using the QR code on page 3.

Table 1: Spring forest walks 2023 (all walks start at 11.00am unless stated).

County	Nearest town	Date	Forest type(s) visited
Cavan	Cavan	Saturday, April 15 *10.00am	Native forests Mixed high forests of conifers and broadleaves
Cork	Mallow	Wednesday, April 19	Young oak broadleaf establishment Mature woodland conservation area
Donegal	Ramelton	Thursday, April 20	Native forests Mixed high forests of conifers and broadleaves
Galway	Headford	Thursday, April 27	Agroforestry Native forests
Limerick	Caherconlish	Friday, April 28	Continuous cover forestry
Tipperary	Cappawhite	Wednesday, April 12	Mixed high forests of conifers and broadleaves
Westmeath	Mullingar	Wednesday, April 19	Mixed high forests of conifers and broadleaves
Wicklow	Avoca	Tuesday, April 18	Mixed high forests of conifers and broadleaves

Marteloscope forest management workshops

New "marteloscope" forest management workshops are available for spring 2023. Forest owners and other interested landowners willing to learn more about sustainable, multifunctional forest management will be able to participate, this spring, in specially designed outdoor workshops. These will take place in Teagasc's new forest training facility installed in Teagasc Oak Park Research Centre, Carlow. Each one-day workshop will involve practical exercises and aims, such as:

- to inform on different forest management scenarios;
- to practice the key skill of selecting trees by their quality, vigour and biodiversity value; and,
- to demonstrate in practice how management can help integrate production with biodiversity and the other many important services that forests can provide to owners and society.

Through a facilitation-style format, each participant is encouraged to learn by doing, leading to group discussions and valuable peer-to-peer learning. Tree species identification, tree selection skills and relaxed group discussions are all part of Teagasc marteloscope workshops.

What is a marteloscope?

A marteloscope is a specially prepared forest plot, which is commonly used across Europe for training purposes. Touch-screen tablets will be used to carry out thinning simulations while in the forest, allowing participants to practice new skills and test out in real time different management options, ranging from conventional clear fell to continuous cover management systems.

Come and learn at Teagasc's marteloscope workshops.

Is it for me?

If you are interested in the multipurpose value of forests, and want to learn more about a range of forest management systems, while meeting other forest owners, you will find our marteloscope workshops of great interest.

To secure a spot on one of our upcoming spring workshops you will need to register online through our Forestry Events 2023 webpage www.teagasc.ie/forestry or scan the QR code here.

Available dates for spring workshops are:

- April 19;
- May 3; and,
- May 17.

RESEARCH UPDATE

Fighting a threat to alder

EMMA FULLER and DHEERAJ RATHORE report on the Irish Research Council-funded ExAl project.

Common alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) is a native tree species with remarkable ecological importance, particularly within wetlands. Alder has the ability to promote diversity due to its soil nutrient enrichment qualities and colonisation abilities to fix nitrogen (N). Alder trees can be frequently found alongside rivers, providing stability to the banks, preventing soil erosion, as well as providing a valuable habitat and food sources to diverse wildlife.

Throughout Europe, alder has suffered from decline due to the infection of a waterborne pathogen known as *Phytophthora alni*. The infection typically causes root and collar rot, as well as severe dieback and/or death in some cases.

Alder dieback remains an issue within alder stands, and its continuous spread potentially threatens the species across Europe. It is likely to threaten alder within Irish landscapes in the near future.

The Exploiting Alder (ExAl) microbiome project started in September 2022 with an overall aim of investigating the microbiota of alder trees and their associated rhizosphere to identify potential bio-agents that could help improve the disease tolerance against *Phytophthora alni*. Research shows that the beneficial microbiota can promote plant health directly as bio-stimulants, and/or indirectly as biocontrol agents against pests and pathogens. This research project will:

Alder seed stand in Co. Cork.

1. Study the core microbial composition of alder trees.
2. Culture the cultivable microbes that can potentially be used as bio-agents.
3. Perform antagonistic studies of these cultivable microbes against the pathogen.

In addition, the ExAl project will investigate the microbiome of susceptible versus tolerant alder genotypes, isolate culturable microbes to test for antagonistic activity against *Phytophthora alni*, and exploit potential bio-agents to enhance disease tolerance in susceptible alder genotypes.

This is a collaborative project with Dr Kieran Germaine, South East Technological University (SETU) Carlow and Dr Dheeraj Rathore, Teagasc.

The research for this project is funded by the Irish Research Council's Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship Programme.

For more information, please visit: https://www.teagasc.ie/crops/forestry/research/exal-project/.