



# coming home to nature

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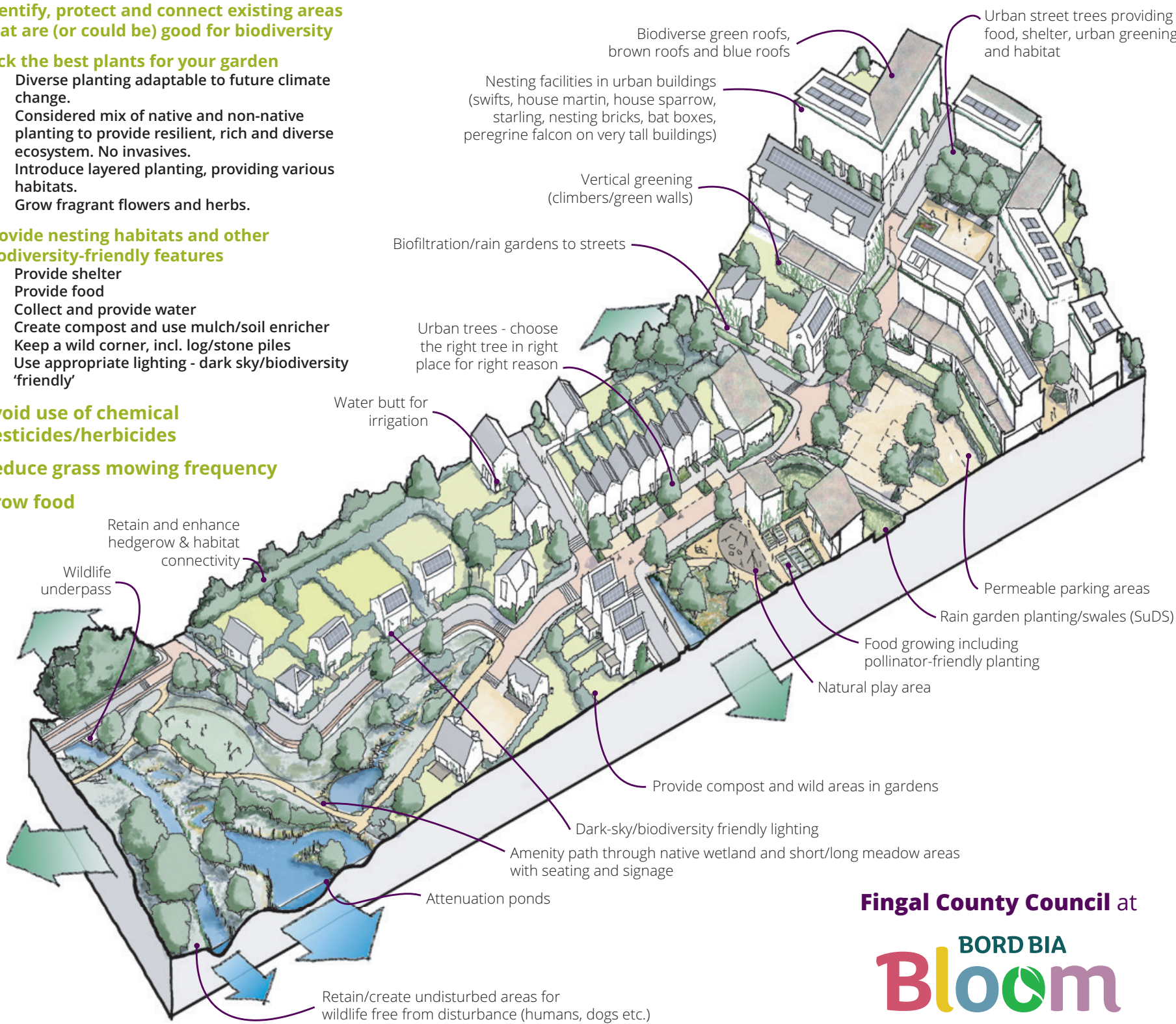
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# Biodiversity and the Built Environment - Giving Space to Nature

- 1. Identify, protect and connect existing areas that are (or could be) good for biodiversity
- 2. Pick the best plants for your garden
  - A. Diverse planting adaptable to future climate change.
  - B. Considered mix of native and non-native planting to provide resilient, rich and diverse ecosystem. No invasives.
  - C. Introduce layered planting, providing various habitats.
  - D. Grow fragrant flowers and herbs.
- 3. Provide nesting habitats and other biodiversity-friendly features
  - A. Provide shelter
  - B. Provide food
  - C. Collect and provide water
  - D. Create compost and use mulch/soil enricher
  - E. Keep a wild corner, incl. log/stone piles
  - F. Use appropriate lighting - dark sky/biodiversity 'friendly'
- 4. Avoid use of chemical pesticides/herbicides
- 5. Reduce grass mowing frequency
- 6. Grow food



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## Biodiversity in New Developments - Coming Home to Nature

Biodiversity is in rapid decline, both globally and in Ireland<sup>1</sup>. At the same time there is a significant demand for new houses. Although new housing developments may lead to the loss of natural habitats and species, there are various species that can be found in the urban environment, such as swifts, house sparrows, frogs, hedgehogs and many insects such as beetles, bees and butterflies.

<sup>1</sup> National Biodiversity Plan 2023-2030

Fingal County Council is working on developing a guidance document for developers on how to protect and incorporate biodiversity into new housing estates. This guidance document will cover topics such as nesting facilities in building facades, green roofs, green car parking, and managing

rainwater run-off from roads and roofs using swales, ponds, wetlands and raingardens. The document will also cover the many ways open space can support a wide variety of plant and animals by planting trees and pockets of scrub, managing wildflower meadows and catering for dead wood.



# Play YOUR Role - Enhance Biodiversity Where YOU Live

Everyone has a role to play in enhancing biodiversity wherever we live. Ireland's gardens already provide important homes for wildlife, but the value of these areas for biodiversity could be improved. No matter the size of your garden, whether you have a window box in a flat or a large country garden, with a little consideration this space can be a haven for insects, birds, and other animals.



## Steps that Will Enhance Biodiversity in YOUR (New) Home

### 1. Identify and protect existing areas that are (or could be) good for biodiversity

- The most important first step in creating a biodiverse garden is to identify and protect what you already have.
- This means protecting soils, hedgerows/trees, dry stone walls and earth banks, as well as grasslands and ponds/damp patches. Even small areas can be important.

### 2. Pick the best plants for your garden

- **Diverse planting:** As the word 'biodiversity' suggests, it's all about diversity - the more variety you have the better. The more plant species there are in a garden the more biodiverse it will be, and this will in turn attract a greater variety of insects and wildlife.
- **Choose native/near native plants:** Native, locally grown plant species are already adapted to your local climate and soil conditions. They provide food and shelter for local wildlife and are invaluable for foraging insects. There is also nothing wrong with carefully chosen non-native plants, once they are appropriate to the site and are not invasive species. Further guidance is provided in the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.
- **Include variety and structure:** Plant a mix of trees (including fruit trees), shrubs, perennials, and annuals to attract different insect species and to provide cover for wildlife. Consider flowering plants, grasses, and herbs which flower across the year - not just the summer.

### 3. Provide nesting habitats and other biodiversity-friendly features

- **Provide shelter:** Install nest boxes of different designs (for robins, blue tits and even sparrows and swifts), bat boxes, and insect hotels. Leave leaf litter, logs, and brush piles for small animals like hedgehogs. An old rotting log pile, tucked away from sunlight to prevent it from drying out, will make a perfect home for many insects and species of fungi. Create rock piles or crevices for insects, lichens, mosses etc.
- **Provide food:** Provide as many flowers as you can, to attract a wide variety of insects. In turn, these insects are food for birds and bats. A bird feeder is also a good

addition to your garden, especially during the winter months when food sources are scarce.

- **Provide water:** A pond of any size can provide a valuable habitat for frogs and newts as well as insects such as Dragonflies. Even a birdbath, or shallow dish will provide water for birds to drink and wash themselves in.
- **Create compost:** Heaps of cuttings and garden waste can provide the ideal habitat for many insects and fungi, as well as enhancing soil fertility for planting.
- **Keep a wild corner:** In the wild, an untidy woodland is a healthy woodland. Apply this idea to your garden and let a section or corner of it grow wild. Designate a "wild corner" where native weeds like nettle can grow.. This area doesn't have to be neat, trimmed or tidy, as its wildness is great for biodiversity. If you think these biodiversity-rich piles look a little untidy, try locating them in corners out of sight.
- **Use appropriate lighting:** Avoid over-lighting your garden. Floodlighting and bright, unfocussed lighting will deter bats and other fauna. Instead choose warm, directional lighting - and only turn it on when it's needed.

### 4. Avoid chemicals

- **Eliminate pesticides and herbicides (and chemical fertilisers):** These products can harm beneficial insects and disrupt the natural balance of your garden.
- **Instead use natural pest control:** Encourage natural predators like ladybirds, lacewings, and birds to control pests.

### 5. Reduce grass mowing frequency

- If you have a lawn, reduce the frequency of mowing in some areas of your garden and allow wildflowers to grow naturally. Follow the excellent guidance from the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan/National Biodiversity Data Centre - Gardens: actions to help pollinators, with guidance on short- and long-flowering meadows.
- **If you can, leave some areas entirely undisturbed:** Leaving some areas of undisturbed long grass provides a safe place for insects such as beetles and spiders to over winter.

