

Special Feature

The People's Millennium Forests



A long time ago, Ireland was almost covered in forests of mixed native trees, such as oak, ash, elm, Scots pine, yew and birch. Over thousands of years, these forests were gradually cleared to make way for agriculture land. Twenty years ago, to celebrate the beginning of the third millennium, The People's Millennium Forests project was set up to help restore the native woodlands of Ireland for future generations to joy. The project was, and is, the largest ever carried out to restore these woodlands, and is being managed by Coillte, in partnership with Woodlands of Ireland, and sponsored by AIB, the National Millennium Committee, and The Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture, Marine and Food.

Sixteen sites around the country were chosen. Some are known to have been the remains of native Irish forests of ancient times. Other sites are old natives woodlands that are located in areas in which people can appreciate them.

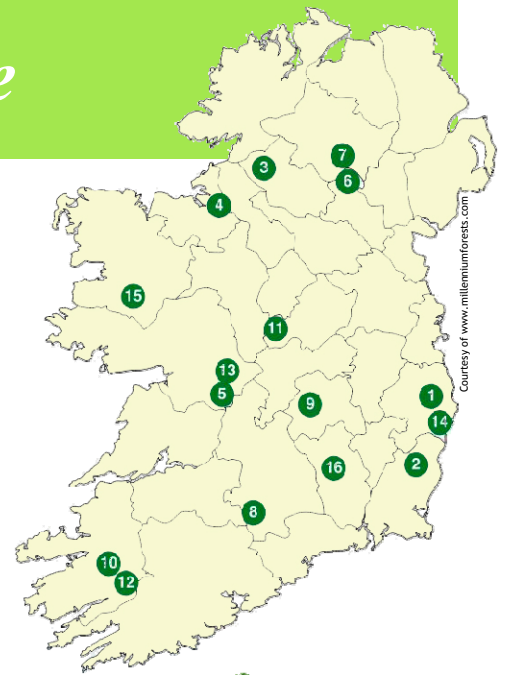
To mark the millennium, a tree was planted for each household in Ireland and a certificate issued to let us know in which forest the tree was planted. Though

these trees are not individually marked, as over time some have to be thinned out to allow others to grow, each household can identify with a forest.

This project is a long-term one. Time is needed to allow these native woodlands to mature. They will look wild because that is how woodlands would naturally grow — developing freely with all the plant and animal life you would expect to see in a natural forest.

These forests are dedicated forever to the people of Ireland.

www.millenniumforests.com



16 sites of the People's Millennium Forests

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| 1. Ballygannon, Co Wicklow | 9. Lacca, Co Laois |
| 2. Camolin, Co Wexford | 10. Muckross, Co Kerry |
| 3. Castle Archdale, Co Fermanagh | 11. Portlick, Co Westmeath |
| 4. Cullentra, Co Sligo | 12. Rossacroo na loo, Co Kerry |
| 5. Derrygill, Co Galway | 13. Rosturra, Co Galway |
| 6. Derrygorry, Co Monaghan | 14. Shelton, Co Wicklow |
| 7. Favour Royal, Co Tyrone | 15. Tourmakeady, Co Mayo |
| 8. Glengarra, Co Tipperary | 16. Woodlands, Co Kilkenny |

Some of the work carried out on the woodlands

- ❁ Non-native conifers, which had been planted at some of the sites, were removed.
- ❁ Seeds were collected from native woodland trees in Ireland and were grown at Coillte nurseries until they reached sapling stage (i.e. young tree or shrubs).
- ❁ Saplings of 1.3 million trees and shrubs were planted to expand the native woodlands.
- ❁ Fencing was erected to around the woodlands to prevent grazing animals (mostly deer and livestock) from damaging the saplings.
- ❁ Invasive shrubs, such as Rhododendron and cherry laurel, were removed from the woodlands.

The Yew Woodlands of Reenadinna, near Muckross, Killarney National Park



Reenadinna is also known as the Mossy Wood.

Reenadinna Wood in Killarney National Park, is situated near Muckross Lake, and is part of the People's Millennium Forests. It is the largest area of Yew woodland in Ireland and Western Europe, covering an area of about 60 acres. The soil on the forest floor is very thin but fertile and the yew trees root into fissures in the limestone. Yew is slow-growing and can live for up to 2000 years. Those in Reenadinna Wood are between 200-250 years old.

A dense canopy stops light getting down to the woodland floor. Because of this, vegetation in the wood is limited to a few species: mostly mosses, lichens and liverworts, creating a special atmosphere in the wood. Visitors can access the forest on a 6km looped trail, taking you along paved paths with mountain and lake views, before heading into the woods.

This forest has special status in Ireland, including being a Special Area of Conservation and a Natural Heritage Area.