

FIVE STEP GUIDE TO GARDEN POCKET FOREST



change 

WELCOME

“Welcome to Pocket Forests. We want to help your school or community group create a native pocket of biodiversity on your doorstep. Collaborate with friends, colleagues or neighbours to bring a forest to your part of the city. Here you’ll find out more about how it works.”

Ashe Conrad-Jones and Catherine Cleary
Co-founders of Pocket Forests



Introduction to the Idea

What is Pocket Forest?

A Pocket Forest is a small area of densely planted native trees, shrubs and ground cover plants, to create a woodland ecosystem in the heart of towns and cities. Working from the soil up we prepare the ground with people who live, work or learn beside the forest.

A Garden Pocket Forest is planted in an area of at least 6 square metres and involves planting 5 trees with an understory of 6 native shrubs. The ground layer is made up of Irish wildflowers grown from wild Irish seed.

Pocket Forests are based on Miyawake-style forests and combine this concept with proven permaculture methods to further evolve the idea to include recycled local materials and bring a circular economy idea to a green use for city waste. This method produces fast growing multi-layered forests which enables people who plant them to enjoy the fruits of their labour quickly. Planting diverse species guarantees biodiverse mini ecosystems are created in the urban areas where they are most lacking.

Pocket Forest allows communities to restore the wellbeing that comes from connecting with nature and to create healthy resilient ecosystems using recycled waste materials and native plants.

Why is it important?

Pocket Forests is a nature-based enterprise tackling nature deprivation in urban communities. In our neighbourhood we have the lowest amount of green space per person and the number of trees per person is less than half that in the rest of Dublin. As cities become more dense in population the need for healthy natural spaces becomes more acute. Children, the elderly and people in low socio-economic groups have been shown to suffer most from unequal access to quality green spaces. We also tackle a lack of knowledge about native plants and the soil restoration needed to grow healthy ecosystems. Our aim is to make all this learning fun and empowering.

The Background

Ashe Conrad-Jones and Catherine Cleary are two friends who founded Pocket Forests in response to finding themselves on a 2k lockdown in Ireland’s most nature-starved neighbourhood. The original concept of Miyawake-style forests captivated them as it seemed the perfect solution to this problem. They combined the concept with proven permaculture methods to further evolve the idea to include recycled local materials and bring a circular economy idea to a green use for city waste. It has been successfully implemented in three schools and eleven private gardens where more than 720 trees and shrubs have been combined to form native forest ecosystems.

STARTING A POCKET FOREST

EVERYTHING YOU NEED

TIME



Soil preparation and planting will take approximately a half day each and you'll need to dedicate a couple of hours a week to planning out the area, ordering your trees and building your team.

PEOPLE



You'll need at least 2 people who can volunteer and work on the soil preparation and planting.

FUNDING



You can get funding of €400 which covers the cost of trees and materials need to plant a Garden Pocket Forest in your community.

Who typically starts a Garden Pocket Forest?

Someone who:

- is looking to increase biodiversity and green space in a local community
- has at least 6-square metres of land available for planting
- can build a small team of volunteers and will collaborate with the Pocket Forest team to design and plant a forest

5 Step Summary

- 1 Complete the 30 Day Challenge
- 2 Find a suitable site & Gather some volunteers
- 3 Check your soil & explore tree types
- 4 Design your Garden Pocket Forest
- 5 Schedule your soil preparation day & orders trees

Support and Additional Resources

Email: hello@changex.org

More info at: <https://www.pocketforests.ie/>

STEP 1: COMPLETE YOUR 30 DAY CHALLENGE



The 30 Day Jumpstart Challenge has been designed to get your project off to the strongest possible start by building momentum in the first month.

Understand the challenge

Watch the short welcome video on your ChangeX page and read this page.

Learn more about the idea you're starting

This '5 Step Guide' includes all you need to know about the specifics of starting your project.

Find 4 other interested people

You already have your own project page on changex.org. Use it to share the project with others and recruit your first supporters.

Set up a casual kick-off meeting

Host a meeting at your home, in a pub or in a café and come up with an action plan along with your team. You can use your ChangeX page to set up an event and invite people.

Give us a heads up that you are up and running

At your event, take a team picture and agree the first step you will take as a group to get started.

STEP 2: FIND A SUITABLE SITE & GATHER SOME VOLUNTEERS

Find a suitable site in your local community

Is there space in your school or local community that could benefit from more biodiversity and green space? Do you have at least 6 square metres that could be dedicated to a Garden Pocket Forest? If so, this is the project for you! Garden Pocket Forests are often planted in schools, on the grounds of nursing homes or community centres or in any community space that is in need of more biodiversity and green space.

In identifying a suitable space, here are some important factors you should consider:

1. You need to ensure there are no pipes under the soil or overhead power lines, so it can be best to check with your local authority about the services in the area.
2. The site should be at least 6 square metres to accommodate 5 trees and 6 native shrubs.
3. You'll need permission from the owner of the site to plant a forest. Make sure to clearly communicate the benefits the forest will bring when asking for permission
See below for just some of them!

Benefits that a Pocket Forest can bring to your community:

- **A burst of biodiversity.** These forests can be 100 times more biodiverse than a lawn and require less maintenance in the long run.
- **Placemaking.** Because communities are involved from the soil up, Pocket Forests become unique amenities with lasting connections to the people who helped plan, plant and keep them.
- **Accessibility.** We have created a system where the work is light and manageable by people of all physical abilities, genders and levels of gardening experience.
- **Breathing space.** This is a regenerative model of planting which grows in richness over the years and can contribute to soil regeneration,

ameliorate flooding, absorb heat, pollution and noise, while sequestering carbon in the soil.

- **Health, wellbeing and equality.** The health benefits of community access to healthy ecosystems are both physical and mental. Those communities who need these spaces the most are often the most nature-deprived.

Gather some volunteers

A small team of people will be needed to prepare the soil and plant the trees. Community involvement is one of the key pillars of any Pocket Forest. It's so important to involve the people whose home, school or business is alongside the forest from the beginning. People can then feel invested in the Pocket Forest and learn about the benefits of woodland ecosystems. The collaboration of the trees is reflected in the collaboration of the people who plant them. People with no experience of gardening or forests can participate in soil preparation, planting with low-maintenance and high-enjoyment of the forest!

You'll need at least 2 volunteers but of course the more the merrier! There are two main stages to the forest: soil preparation and planting. You can find two separate teams to do each one or have the same volunteers do both. Check if you need public liability insurance to work with volunteers and also Garda clearance if you're working with a school.

STEP 3: CHECK YOUR SOIL & EXPLORE YOUR TREE TYPES

Take a good look at the soil in the area where you're planning to plant. See how deep it is, whether there is a lot of life in it - earthworms, beetles, etc. Is it very gluey and full of clay or will it be well-draining soil? Have a look around and see what's growing well in the area and research native trees and shrubs.

Peter Wyse-Jackson's book 'Irish Trees and Shrubs' is a great starting point. The National Tree Council's Our Trees is also a real bible. [You can also take a look through their online resources to find out more about Irish native trees.](#)

All trees are wonderful but Irish native trees are a richer resource for our native flora, fauna and fungi. We plant a minimum of 11 different species in a Garden Pocket Forest.

Now's the time to get in touch with Pocket Forests and we will schedule an online video call with you to talk through the nitty gritty of your site and what you will need to do for the next stage.



STEP 4: DESIGN YOUR GARDEN POCKET FOREST

We will talk you through the options for designing your Garden Pocket Forest.

Once you've done this and you have a plan in place for the area you can ask your team to gather some of the materials you will need for the soil preparation. These include:

- used cardboard (with tape removed) bike shops are a great source as they have plenty of large heavy duty plain cardboard from bike boxes
- small untreated logs and sticks a local tree surgeon or arborist can be happy to donate these
- compost
- farm manure (only from organic sources to avoid antibiotic contamination) horse and donkey manure is very suitable
- grass cuttings and leaf mulch
- coffee sacks - find your local roaster and ask for their empty jute sacks. They should be happy to supply these.
- wood chippings from unprocessed wood - again a local tree surgeon or arborist will be happy to donate

STEP 5: SCHEDULE YOUR SOIL PREPARATION DAY & ORDER TREES

Your Soil Preparation Day

This will ideally happen in mid to late summer. The Pocket Forest Team will be onsite on the day to help you and will support you in planning.

A little more about how it works:

We use a “no dig” soil preparation method using a layering method to prepare and nurture the soil for planting in winter. In as much as possible we repurpose waste materials from the surrounding area: cardboard from local bike shops, horse manure from city stables, food waste composted locally, spent coffee grounds and used coffee sacks to add life to city soil. Once the soil is aerated and mulched it is “put to bed” by a covering of coffee sacks to rest while an army of soil life gets to work.

Planting

Once you’ve prepared the soil, you can begin to think about your planting day which can take place between November and March. This is another day of community engagement led by the Pocket Forests team. You can also order your trees directly from the Pocket Forests team.

All trees and plants are bare root plants so they are easy to distribute and plant in. There are roughly 3 saplings per square metre. All of the trees, shrubs and ground cover plants are planted and covered with a layer of organic straw or woodchips. We finish with an edge planting of woodland wildflowers.

Once planting is done, it won’t be long before you can begin to enjoy the benefits of your new Pocket Forest. The team will give you some handy resources to look after and maintain your trees and plants, ensuring that they thrive.

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