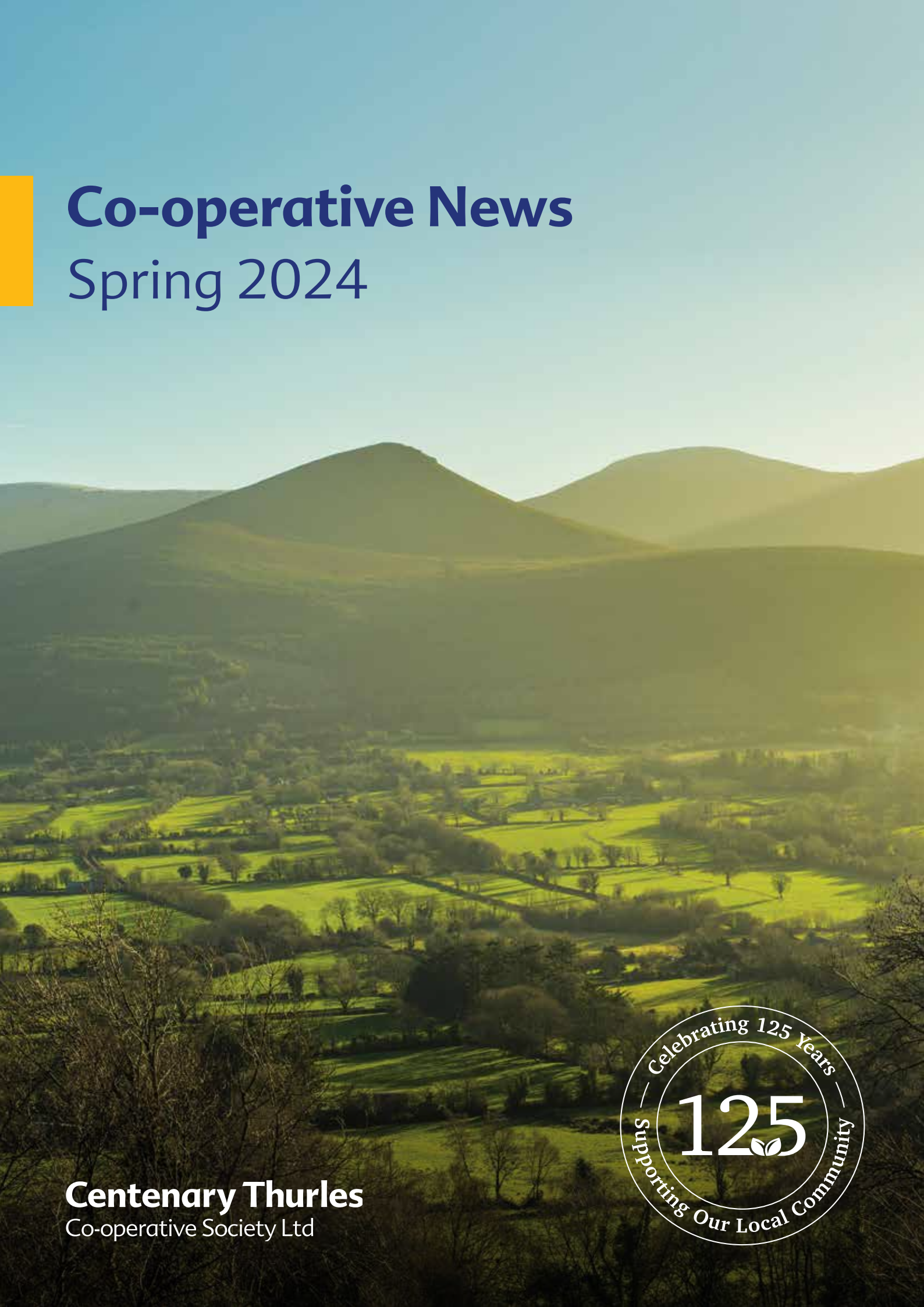
Co-operative News

Spring 2024



Centenary Thurles
Co-operative Society Ltd

Welcome to the April edition of Co-operative News!

With this newsletter we are committed to giving you updates in Centenary Thurles every quarter. We want to keep you informed of what's going on in the Society – whether that is new developments in the technology we use, new products we are launching or challenges we are helping our stakeholders with. We also want to give advice on topical issues in agriculture and encourage a sustainable practice within our community.

If you would like to see some specific content in these newsletters or give us some feedback, please contact us on **(0504) 91932** or email **cholmes@centenarythurles.com**

Follow us for all the latest news in Centenary Thurles:

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Recent Milk Price Improvements

2023 saw huge milk price volatility, mainly in a downward direction. 2022 had seen the basic price reach 58.08c for the last four months of that year.

By August 2023 however, the price had collapsed to 33.08c per litre, a full 25c per litre in just eight months. Thankfully, from November a glimmer of light has been seen with a recovery of 6c per litre to reach 39.08c for February milk. Seasonality bonuses were paid in addition to the basic price for the months of November, December and January. We are hopeful that the milk price will continue to edge forward in the coming months. Global supply is constrained and whilst demand remains sluggish, the tightness in supply should feed into milk prices.

It is worth noting that the average price paid for 2023 still reached 43.84c and whilst it represented a reduction of 17.1c per litre on 2022, it was nevertheless our second highest milk price ever. Costs however, whilst reducing across the year, remained at elevated levels.

Milk Price Volatility Fund Release

All milk suppliers will have received a payment during the month of March of the equivalent of 1c per litre VAT inclusive on their supply to ourselves during 2023. The Committee of Management made this decision last Autumn in recognition of the potentially tight cash flow position that may pertain on many dairy farms this Spring. The total payout amounted to €1.8m and represented a release from the Milk Price Volatility Fund built up by the Committee of Management since 2017.

Dairy Cube Bonus

Included with our February milk payment was an amount of €55,648 to 200 suppliers who purchased dairy cubes from our standard range over the winter period and met the qualification criteria.

Tips & Events

Follow us on Instagram @centenaryagritipperary for all the latest updates, tips, events and giveaways.

Management of calving during the grazing season, by Howard Stanley, Centenary Agri's Animal Nutritionist

With the finish line for calving in sight on most farms, the next job to take place will be weaning and transitioning these animals off milk to the outdoor environment. If weaning is done correctly, it lays a good foundation for calves in their first grazing season.

Weaning calves

Calves can begin to be weaned once they consistently consume 1kg of concentrates per day. To ensure constant growth rates, weaning should be gradual, with the volume of liquid feed declining gradually over a period of 7-10 days and, as the milk volumes decline, concentrate intake will increase. Calves should be at least 80kg before weaning. By rule of thumb a calf should be double their birth weight at weaning, e.g. a 50kg calf at birth would need to be 100kg at weaning.

Transitioning to the outdoors

If calves underperform during their first season at pasture, it's difficult for them to hit their target weight gains and prevent these animals from hitting their full genetic potential. Failing to hit an average daily gain target of 0.7-0.8kg/day results in dairy heifers not developing to their genetic potential and by the time they are ready to be presented for breeding, they are smaller than expected and underdeveloped. From a beef calf point of view, it means delayed slaughter, the production of lighter carcasses and/or the introduction of additional concentrates to try and recover the loss in performance recorded over the first grazing season. Ensuring calves perform to their optimum over the first 12 weeks of life is important.

In an ideal scenario, when transitioning calves, it is good practice to let calves out grazing during the daytime to ease the transition. This well help to get the calf used to fresh grass. Feeding concentrates before, during and after weaning should limit the level of growth check experienced at turnout. Calves should be offered concentrates (1-2kg/day) for 4-6 weeks prior to turnout. If grassland management is poor, this period will need to be extended. Rumen in the calves are able to digest high quality fresh grass and concentrates and thus maintain growth rates.

Faecal egg counts and Dosing/Animal Health

After the quality of the available grass, it is the health of the calf that holds back growth rates. Routine dosing was always the traditional choice of management but now farmers need to prevent resistance with doses and start looking at what dose is required. The use of faecal egg counts is the go-to tool. A faecal egg sample taken in conjunction with your vet will determine if a dose is required. The weather (damp) and grazing strategy (being asked to clean out paddocks / paddocks grazed annually by young stock) can have a major influence on the parasite burden. An animal health protocol is recommended, and it is always worthwhile having a conversation with your vet regarding disease prevention such as RSV, PI3, Mannheimia (Pasteurella) haemolytica and IBR, as well as regarding parasite control and prevention.

The **use of faecal egg counts** as a guide to the worm burden will allow calves to build up some level of resistance to the worms pre dosing. Overdosing of calves in the first year of grazing can lead to calves being unable to deal with worm challenges in the second grazing year.

Over-use of drugs will lead to resistance to the mode of actions of the different drug types leading to poor health and ill thrift amongst stock.

The current advice is not to move dosed stock to fresh clean pasture immediately post treatment. Instead, stock should be returned to existing paddocks. This is to avoid any resistant worms being deposited in fresh clean pasture where they can further develop unchallenged.

Grassland management

Excellent grassland management is essential to achieve the desired level of performance from calves over the first 12 weeks following turnout.

Calves can be selective grazers and providing quality grass must be a priority. Don't force calves to graze out paddocks like older stock.

Concentrate supplementation provides the calf with adequate time to become accustomed to grazing before an all-grass diet is offered. It is also worth mentioning, in all Centenary calf feed we include a high spec mineral package which boosts calf immunity to help prevent illness in time of stress. It also includes a buffer and yeast to help to minimise digestive upset. Reducing digestive upset means better live weight gain and better rumen development. How long should I feed my calves on concentrates is a question I am asked a lot, and the answer is influenced by weather conditions, grassland management and calf performance. I am always slow to cut off feed to calves during grass, simply because it is a way of supplying vitamins, minerals and the included yeast / buffer will improve feed conversion efficiency.

When settled, or when grass is a large percentage of the diet, the ideal pre-grazing grass covers for calves are 1,000-1,400kg DM/ha. When covers get beyond this point, target for bales. Offer fresh grass regularly.

Calves should be offered fresh grass every 3-4 days which gives rise to issues:

- The number of calves and the paddock size — need to be flexible.
- Grass growth — bursts of strong growth lead to grass becoming too strong for grazing (covers of more than 1400 kg dm / ha). Paddocks need to be skipped for bales.
- Fibre needs to be available when grazing very leafy pastures.

Monitoring performance

Weighing of cattle is critical and should be carried out at a minimum of three times a year to determine if cattle are hitting weight gain targets. Animals should be weighed at turnout, mid-season and again at housing. Dairy-beef calves are typically turned out to grass at approximately 85-100kg. Completing a mid-season weighing will provide you with information to see if calves have reached the desired weight gain targets over the first 12 weeks at pasture.

At 6 months of age (July / August for early spring born calves) calves should be at 30% of their mature weight.

ICOS Code of Corporate Governance

The Committee of Management is currently reviewing the recently published ICOS Code of Corporate Governance. There are many interesting provisions in the Code and Centenary Thurles has a high compliance rate. The Code will be well-debated at Committee Level and recommendations arising therefrom may require shareholder approval in due course.

Redeemable Bonus Shares

Shareholders are reminded that, at their own option, they can apply for the redemption of the redeemable bonus shares issued last year. At the end of March 2024, we had redeemed 268,000 shares from 40 shareholders.

Templemore Extension

We have recently received Planning Permission for a small extension to the front of our Templemore Branch. We hope to have this built and fitted out in the coming months.

National Fertiliser Database - Are you registered?

If not then register on **www.agfood.ie** for the purchase of fertiliser and lime for 2024.

Your Co-op will require your herd number also when purchasing fertilisers and lime.

Anyone with a stocking rate greater than 130kg/Ha will need to know their fertiliser allowance for 2024.

Tirlán Council

At a recent Committee Meeting, Michael Delaney of Kilclareen Templemore was elected to the Council of Tirlán, succeeding Denis Brereton previously who had been elected to the Dairy Committee of ICOS.

Mary Purcell of Kilrush Thurles was also elected to the Tirlán Council filling a new seat allocated to the Corporate Members of Tirlán — Centenary Thurles, Callan and Mullinahone Co-Ops.

Tirlán Board

On the 1st of June next, James Finn of Ballinahow, Thurles will succeed Paddy Whyte of Ballystanley, Roscrea on the Board of Tirlán Co-Op. Paddy had completed the maximum term allowed by Centenary Thurles and had served both our Society and the Tirlán organisation in a most efficient and productive manner. James is wished well in his new role.

Peter Quealy

Joined us in January of this year as a Milk Quality Advisor. He has a Bachelor of Science degree from TUS and previously worked with AHV Ireland and Agridata. Peter is responsible for providing technical advice to our milk suppliers with the aim of improving milk quality both on-farm and throughout the collection / delivery process. He will also advise on improving herd health by reducing Somatic Cell Count levels in milk and Bord Bia SDAS queries.

Peter can be contacted by email at **milkquality@centenarythurles.com** or on **087 9090570.**

South Eastern Cattle Breeding Society Ltd.

At a recent Committee Meeting, Ned Ryan of Loughmore was re-appointed to the Board of South Eastern Cattle Breeding Society for a further four year term.

Committee of Management Retirements

2024 sees the departure from the Committee of Management of four long-serving members, Philip Kinane, Michael Maher, Tim Maher and John Cahill. All four will retire in the coming months following service of 100 years combined to the Society, each having made a solid contribution representing their electoral areas with distinction.

Freddie Chute

Our distributor of Thurles Fresh Milk products in the Thurles, Templemore, Roscrea, Borrisoleigh and surrounding areas retired from business in March. Freddie spent 42 years delivering milk, the last 17 of which through his own distribution business. The business has been taken back in-house and will continue to be serviced in an excellent manner by our own directly employed staff. We wish Freddie all the best for the future.

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Spring ESSENTIALS

Silage as a key nutrition choice, by Howard Stanley, Centenary Agri's Animal Nutritionist

Silage makes up a big portion of the diet on every farm. Silage quality was variable last year, and poorer silage meant increased feed bills and poor intake leading to poor milk results.

1. **Decide on silage quality needed:** The first step to improving silage quality is to decide how much and what type of silage is needed. Always remember what worked and what didn't work in previous years.
   - For spring calving suckler herds, dry cows will need about 6 bales (1.1 tonne DM) per cow 68 DMD silage with all remaining silage at higher quality (72+).
   - Dairy herds (spring calving) need about 0.8t DM of 68 DMD silage with 100% of the remainder as high quality (72+). At least 50% of total silage will need to be high quality.
   - Calf-to beef-systems need 100% of silage at 72+ DMD.

2. **Cut at the right growth stage:** Grass growth stage at harvest is the most important factor deciding silage quality. Once seed heads appear DMD will be around 70% at most and will drop by 1 point every 2-3 days after that. Lodged crops with dead material at the base will have 3-4% lower DMD still. The main step to improve average quality is cutting from mid-late May rather than into mid-June. Leafy grass will increase the feed intake of the cows, which will increase animal performance.

3. **Do not sacrifice quality for bulk:** Well-managed silage swards closed from late March should have good yields of 5.5 to 6t DM per ha (9-10 tonnes per acre fresh) ready for cutting by late May. Using a 'one big first cut' approach to make silage increases the risk of fodder shortages, because second cut yields and annual grass production are reduced by pushing first cuts into mid-June. Given the somewhat slower growth this spring, the advice is to aim for late May with no more than a 4—5-day delay.

4. **If in doubt, test sugars:** High sugar content allows the crop to ferment quickly in the pit/bale, reducing pH and preserving the crop correctly. Centenary offer a pre-cut testing service to measure both sugars and nitrogen content in grass. This can help the farmer to decide if sugars are high enough for the grass to ferment. If sugars are over 3%, then the crop will ensile readily; at 2-3% wilting will be beneficial, while below 2% an additive will be required. Mow in the evening when sugars are highest, if possible.

5. **Wilt for a day:** Sugars and Nitrogen are both very water soluble, so wilting/ drying grass to a dry matter percentage of 20-28% is very beneficial for good preservation and helps to avoid losing the sugars needed for fermentation as effluent. This is even more important if you get a low sugar test on the brix refractometer, or your test results show nitrates somewhat elevated. Tedding out for 24 hours is the recommended approach; grass will not dry enough in large rows even if left for 36 hours.

6. **Choose additives based on need:** In general, if sugars are 3% plus and conditions are good, additives are not usually required. If weather and sugars are marginal, adding a direct source (molasses at approx. 10-15 litres per tonne) will improve preservation. Consult your adviser in relation to the need for an additive in specific circumstances.

7. **Reduce post-harvest losses:** Work done at Teagasc Grange has shown that farms can lose up to 20% of DM post-ensiling through poor management. This can be a combination of effluent losses, failure to fully seal pits, and damage to bales. Seal pits quickly and completely and monitor regularly for damage by vermin.

8. **Plan for a good second cut:** With earlier cutting there is a great opportunity to make a cost-effective second cut of silage in July. Speak to your adviser about a feed budget and proper fertiliser plan for second cut silage.

9. **Health and safety**: Silage time is a very busy, pressurised time on farms. It is also an exciting time for younger family members who like to see large machines in operation. This is a dangerous combination. Keep all non-essential people well away from yards and working fields. Have a traffic plan in operation and place warning signs at exits to public roads.

Staff Training

Centenary Thurles continues to invest in upskilling our staff and we rolled out the following training programmes in the first quarter of this year.

Garden centre management
We held three training sessions on Garden Centre Management which included discussions around creating your vision, atmosphere and appearance, marketing, products and suppliers and garden centre economics. The sessions also covered training on plant species and varieties, plant maintenance, chemicals and fertilisers.

Topstart Calf Milk Replacer
The training covered the principles of a successful calf rearing programme with particular focus on calf digestive system, colostrum management, liquid feeding — skim vs. whey, feeding schedules and mixing milk replacer, TopStart overview and features and benefits of the health technologies.

Management Development
Managers from every part of the organisation attended five days of training covering a range of topics including emotional intelligence, diversity and inclusion, conflict resolution, facilitation skills, mentoring and coaching, as well as communication, decision-making, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

Dulux Colour Consultant
Over a period of five months, staff are attending training sessions covering topics such as handling an interior and exterior colour consultation, principles of colour theory and advanced colour to become Certified Colour Consultants.

Dulux New Starter Session
A training day was held in the Dulux Academy in Cork which provided staff new to paints with an introduction to the world of paint and colour, and how to manage everyday paint and technical challenges.

Artificial Intelligence Workshop
Staff attended a workshop to learn the core concepts of artificial intelligence and generative AI functionality and how these can be applied to everyday work functions.

Continuous Training Programmes
Along with specific training programmes, staff have also taken part in ongoing training programmes such as Forklift training, First Aid and Retail Sale and Supply of Animal medicines.

Staff also received training on fertiliser, including the sustainable use of fertiliser, and the National Fertiliser Database.

Updates on the veterinary medicine regulations were also included. Additional training included the Sustainable Use of Pesticides, Signpost Farming, Animal Nutrition, Reseeding and Soil Sampling.

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Get your garden Spring ready

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Tippland Multi-Purpose Compost with added John Innes 56L
3 for 2
€9.99 each

Tippland XXX Seaweed Enriched Compost 60L
3 for 2
€9.95 each

Tippland Multi-Purpose Compost 75L
2 for €14
(or €8.99 each)

Gardening tips from horticulturist,

Terriesa Torode

Hello everyone, here are a few jobs to be done this month.

April Gardening Tips

It's a busy month in the garden with many plants flowering in fusions of colour. One of the most important jobs we need to accomplish is to fertilise the garden. Sprinkle a granular fertiliser around the base of any shrubs, trees and perennial plants. For vegetables that have not have fertiliser added to the soil in January, use a liquid feed once a week over the coming months.

Spray
Your roses with a fungicide to prevent black spot.

Prune
Your spring flowered shrubs like Forsythia, Ribes, Chaenomeles (Japanese Quince) and Viburnums.

Shrubs like Sambucus (Golden Elder) and Cotinus (Smoke bush). The foliage will be stronger and more colourful this way.

Clip
Lightly clip into winter Heathers and Lavenders to produce strong growth with no bare center of the plants.

Plant
As the soil is warming up, it is a good time to plant out evergreens and also evergreen hedges. These dislike winter wet and often just sit in the soil awaiting spring, so plant out any evergreen plants now and it will produce a strong root growth which will help it grow healthy and quickly.

Tie
Tie in shoots of all climbers especially Clematis. These plants put a huge amount of growth in the next couple of months so tying in is essential, otherwise a rather large scraggly mess can be created if this job is forgotten.

Clip
Some perennials grow straight from the ground and now is the time to take basal cuttings if you wish to increase your plants. Cut down low on the shoot and once you have gathered several cuttings, insert them into a pot with fresh compost. Place a plastic bag over the top, secure it with an elastic band and place on a windowsill. Within six weeks you will have new plants.

Top 3 to dos:

1. Prune your shrubs

2. Sow hardy annuals

3. Grow tomatoes, cucumbers, celery

Top Dress

Top dress any gravel in the garden that has been washed away by the constant rain of winter.

If you have a sheltered garden that does not receive frost then plant out your Dahlias (town houses are usually warmer and more sheltered) but leave until next month if you live out in the countryside.

Dead head

spent Daffodils and if you have these planted out amongst the lawn then do not cut back but leave them to naturally die down. When there is no sign of them (usually after around six weeks) then strim the area. Mow as usual the week after and the grass will continue to grow as normal. If you see that many of your Daffodils have not flowered, then dig these clumps up. Split and divide them individually and replant in drifts to keep that natural feel to the garden.

Sow

Start sowing hardy annuals outside in prepared ground. If you want biennials like Wallflowers, Dianthus or Digitalis (Foxglove) sow these either in trays or outside in raked fine soil. Sprinkle Cornflowers directly into the soil. These will grow and create colourful displays in gaps in the garden and for biennials this year a fine spread of leaves will be produced and next year many flowers.

Mow

the lawn regularly lowering the blades over the coming weeks. Use a spring fertiliser to add nitrogen to the ground and thus a healthy sward of green will develop. Some lawn fertilisers have weed killer too which you can purchase but if you keep the lawn strong then weeds shouldn't be a problem.

With moss one can use a treatment to kill the moss but drainage is the problem. The soil gets more compact as the mowing and walking or playing on the lawn happens. The grass starts to die back, and the moss thrives so either treat the lawn, scarify the lawn and ideally aerate the lawn using spikes. If you have a large lawn hire the equipment and follow the instructions.

Grow

Many vegetables can be sown now and it's the heat loving vegetables especially that need to be sown. When you grow your own from seed you will find a wider selection available than plug plants. Sow tomatoes, cucumbers, celery, celeriac, sweetcorn, courgettes, and aubergines inside in modules ideally in a warm position. Vegetables like carrots and parsnips can be sown direct into the soil.

May Gardening Tips

May madness and in every garden, colour abounds with trees bursting, perennials flowering in brilliant displays and the summer plants grow rapidly ready to take over the show in June and July.

Weed
Keep on top of weeds by hoeing amongst your flowers, in between vegetables and keep the grass away from fruit trees and bushes. If you have planted out any new plants, you must water them for a few weeks until their roots have established in the soil and are able to support themselves. When planting out your newly purchased plants always sprinkle some fertiliser whilst planting.

Clip back
Lightly clip back Box plants and sprinkle fertiliser around each plant. Never clip Buxus when it is raining only in dry weather. Remove all cuttings afterwards.

Cut
Cut back spring flowering alpines like Aubretias, Alyssum and Arabis. This will prevent the plant from growing leggy or woody.

Harden off
summer bedding by placing outside in fine weather and bringing back inside during the night. The plants will grow strong and be more able to survive against all weather conditions.

Train
Train your sweet peas but only liquid feed when they are starting to produce flowers.

Thin
Thin out any annuals sown last month.

Weed
This is a good time to deal with weeds in the lawn. Use a liquid weedkiller on small lawn and granular on large lawns.

Sow
Many vegetables can be sown every couple of weeks to provide a continual supply over summer. Vegetables like lettuce, beetroot, salad onions, cabbage, peas, broad beans, radishes, and turnips.

These can be given their own space in the vegetable plot or used as in between plants grown in a row to save space and cover the soil. Thin out sowings from last month to allow each individual vegetable to grow with space around the plant.

Protect
Place a barrier around carrots or plant between a tall crop.

Nourish
Use straw underneath strawberry plants to prevent the fruit going rotten. If you have many fruit trees use a mulch around the base of the plant to keep moisture in and weeds away but always water well before you cover the soil with well-rotted manure, spent mushroom compost or your own compost.

Train
Check the garden regularly for diseases or aphids and other harmful insects.

Happy gardening folks!

Terriesa

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