Co-operative News

Winter 2024

Centenary Thurles
Co-operative Society Ltd

Welcome to the December 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.

Follow us for all the latest news in Centenary Thurles:

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CellCheck Awards

Congratulations to Paddy and Ann Campion, Drom, Templemore, who were Centenary Thurles Co-op winners of the AHI CellCheck Milking for Quality Awards held recently in Naas.

Pictured (L-R): Kevin McConnell, CEO AHI, Michael Berkery, Chair FBD Trust, Paddy and Ann Campion, John Cahalan, FBD, John Martin, Centenary Thurles Co op and James Lynch, Chair AHI.

Fodder Transport Scheme

We recently received the sum of €213,481 in respect of the Fodder Transport Scheme introduced earlier this year. This sum has been distributed individually to our eligible applicants and will go some way to alleviating the additional costs incurred.

Investment in Thurles Dairy Plant

Buoyed by the success of our Tipperary Fresh non-GMO product, the Board of Thurles Fresh Milk made a decision to upgrade our dairy production facilities. Over recent months, we have installed a new resin floor, new PVC cladded walls, two new shrinkwrappers; and a new stainless steel ladder with other stainless steel works. This investment will position us well for the future expected growth in production.

Centenary Thurles Co-op Young Farmer Scholarships

Each year Centenary Thurles Co-op offers a financial bursary to the children and grandchildren of shareholders, who attend a full-time course in an Agricultural College.

There are four students receiving this support of €1,000.00 each in 2024.

Micheál O'Mahoney, Ballyduff
Evan Nagle, Roscrea
Michael Gayson, Cashel
Kayleigh Bevans, Shinrone

The awards were presented in early December, and mark our commitment towards the education of the Farmer of the future.

Should you or someone you know qualify for a scholarship next year, please contact **Tom Nyland** in Ballyduff, Thurles for further information.

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T: (0504) 34038

Veterinary Medicine Regulations

The Department of Agriculture has confirmed a mandatory electronic prescription date of 13th January 2025, with the exception of anti-parisitics, which will be mandatory from 9th June 2025. In conjunction with this, the effective date for requiring a prescription for anti-parisitics is also 9th June 2025.

The following is a statement from ICOS following the signing of the Statutory Instrument by the Minister.

Co-op sector 'aggrieved' by Minister McConalogue's decision on new veterinary medicine regulations. The Minister's failure to amend veterinary medicine regulations rewards scare-mongering by Veterinary Ireland and hands the veterinary profession a near-monopoly on the sale of products.

Agriculture Minister Charlie McConaolgue has ignored the legitimate concerns of the co-operative farming sector in his decision to sign the statutory instrument enacting the new EU regulations on veterinary medicines and medicated feed, without adjusting the regulations to ensure fair and reasonable market competition, the Irish Co-operative Organisation Society (ICOS) has stated.

In its statement, ICOS said, "We express our deep frustration and disappointment with the Minister. His decision will directly damage licensed merchants across Ireland, severely inhibiting their businesses, disadvantaging farmers and undermining a key pillar of rural commerce.

"The Minister's refusal to allow co-ops and licensed merchants to continue retailing Prescription Only Medicines (POM), and non-prescription medicines including anti-parasitics, will result in significant economic damage to our businesses.

"To date, these medicines may be sold by a veterinary practitioner, pharmacist, or for certain specific products, by a responsible person from a licensed retailer, thereby ensuring a balanced supply chain and a level of open market competition.

"Licensed merchants will now be forced to operate within a high-cost supply route for a market that is predicted to shrink over the next decade, while being completely frozen out of supplying essential products to farmers. This doesn't just undermine our industry — it directly affects the livelihoods of livestock farmers, who will bear the brunt of reduced competition, reduced accessibility to veterinary products and higher prices.

"Over four years of engagement and negotiations with the Minister and his officials, we have always sought a fair and practical approach to the implementation of these regulations; one that ensures farmers retain access to essential veterinary medicines through multiple channels. Instead, the Minister's decision rewards scare-mongering by Veterinary Ireland and hands the veterinary profession a near-monopoly on the sale of these products.

"It is incomprehensible that the Minister has cited his reluctance to disrupt current supply routes as the basis for his decision, while simultaneously disrupting the very foundation of licensed merchants' operations. His approach has favoured a regulatory structure that ensures over 70% of veterinary medicinal products remain directly controlled by veterinary channels, with this number now set to increase further under the new rules.

"This lack of competition is not in the best interest of farmers, who rely on affordable and convenient access to vital products.

"We are particularly aggrieved that, after years of dialogue, the voices of the co-operative farming sector and licensed merchant community have been ignored. The Minister's approach will unfortunately lead to the potential closure of merchant stores across the country, further limiting farmers' access to these essential products. This goes against the future sustainability of livestock farming in Ireland.

"This decision will have far-reaching consequences, and its true cost will only become apparent in the years to come. We call on the Minister to consider how the impacts of this unfortunate decision by him can be mitigated before it contributes to irreparable damage to local businesses that directly serve the interests of rural communities."

The Irish Co-operative Organisation Society (ICOS) is the policy and representative body for co-operatives in Ireland, providing guidance, support, and advocacy for co-operative enterprises across the country.

With a commitment to fostering economic and social development, ICOS works closely with co-operatives to ensure their success and sustainability. **www.icos.ie**

Farming for Water Quality

Centenary Agri held an autumn workshop on the 8th and 16th of October. This very informative talk took place in Clonakenny village. Topics covered were the current water quality status in The Nore catchment area.

The aim of the workshop was to support and accelerate the adoption of actions on all farms to improve all water bodies. The objective is to support farmers to reduce the loads of nitrogen, phosphate, sediment and pesticides entering our river networks.

We spoke about the role of Tipperary County Council in water quality improvement and on-farm inspections; slurry/soiled water management, yard water management, the implications of Nitrates and the EIP funding availability.

Many thanks to all who attended and contributed on the day - **Clare Mooney** and **Padraig Costigan**, Teagasc Farming for Water, **Mags Morrissey** and **Áine Donnellan**, Local Authority Water Programme, **Gillian Delahanty**, Tipperary County Council, **Maura Brennan**, Nore Vision and **John Martin**, Centenary Thurles Co-operative.

Dairy Cube Bonus

A milk bonus equating to €15 per tonne on 16% and €25 per tonne on 18%+ will be paid on all dairy cubes from our standard range, purchased by and delivered to our milk suppliers between 25th November and 25th January. Qualification criteria apply to the eligible tonnes.

Animal Health Certificates

Milk Suppliers must submit an animal health certificate to the Society by 31st December each year. Collection of milk will not take place from 1st January where a health cert has not been submitted for 2024. Additionally, if a €100 penalty has been applied for non-submission, it will only be refunded if the health cert is received by us by 31st December 2024.

Loyalty Bonus Cheques

The Committee once again approved the issuing loyalty bonus cheques during the first week of December. Calculations were based on trade and milk supply for the calendar year 2023. We would like to acknowledge the loyalty of all our milk suppliers who qualified for this payment.

Harvest 2024

2024 Harvest saw an intake level of 17,325 tonnes, 10% up on last year but still significantly short of historical norms. Difficult sowing and growing conditions restricted yields and acreage sown. Quality in general was good with Barley Bushels averaging 65.7 and Moistures 18.8%. Wheat busheled at 74.1, mainly due to high proportion of winter wheat in the intake, with average moisture at 19.8%. The corresponding figures for Oats were 55.2 kph and 17.4%.

A feature of this year's harvest was that 1,900 tonnes or 11% of our intake was Rye. A feature of our pricing system was that we continued to pay Barley Price for Rye, with other major buyers opting to pay €10 less. Our harvest prices declared were once again at the top end of the scale. We agreed to pay €205 for Barley and Rye;€217 for Wheat; €200 for Oats and €255 for Beans, all at 20% Moisture. Transport and VAT payments were extra where applicable.

It is likely, given the current demand for feed from our mill, that during 2025, we will need to purchase native grain on the market, similar to earlier this year. Our commitment is maintained when buying barley, wheat and/or oats on the open market, that we purchase native only, when available. This commitment applies even, as this year, the market price is at a premium to imported product.

Pictured: John Martin Agronomist Centenary Thurles Co-operative. Photography Claire Nash©

Tillage Day Conference

John Martin (pictured above) attended the Tillage Day Conference on the 7th of November in the Killashee Hotel, run by the Irish Farmers Journal.

This farmer focused event proved to be very informative for all those attending, with a panel of Agronomists on hand to discuss solutions to the problems encountered in the fields throughout the year. Topics John discussed were the practicalities of livestock and tillage farmers working together and Tipperary Fresh milk, which is made from animals that are fed non-GMO feed.

New Committee Member Elected

We are pleased to welcome Thomas Dwan from Lisnagonogue, Thurles to the Committee of Management representing the Thurles Electoral Area. Thomas previously served on the Committee and we wish him well and look forward to his contribution.

Tirlán SGM

On the 4th October 2024, Tirlán Co-Op shareholders voted to remove the cap on the minimum shareholding it holds in Glanbia plc. This will in effect permit the Board of Tirlán to dispose of some or all of its holding as it sees fit. In conjunction with the removal of the cap, 15m Glanbia plc shares will be transferred directly to Tirlán shareholders, including to our Society. Our expectation is that we will receive slightly in excess of 400,000 plc shares in the second quarter of 2025. In due course our Committee of Management will consider making a recommendation to shareholders arising from the receipt of these shares.

Audit Committee

Paddy Whyte was recently appointed to our Audit Committee to join Noel O'Connor, John Hogan and Padraig Costigan. This Committee provides a vital function for the shareholders in liaising on an ongoing basis with the Society's Auditors. Paddy replaces Mervyn Stanley who retires by rotation and who served as Chairman of the Audit Committee for the last eight years.

Staff Training

Well done to our Centenary Thurles staff who completed their First Aid Training programme on 5th Nov. (Back row L-R) Ciarán Hackett, Derek Patterson, Howard Stanley (Front row L-R) Yvonne Kennedy, Jennifer Jones and Ava Moloney.

Fuel Essentials

CENTENARY
Home & Garden

centenarythurles.com Cashel | Littleton | Templemore | Thurles | Roscrea

2 FOR
€12.50

Waxies Firelighters
30 pack

2 FOR
€11.95

Willow Warm Carbon
Neutral Wood Briquettes

2 FOR
€27

Homefire Supertherm
Smokeless Fuel 20kg

6 FOR
€9

Firebloc Fire Log 1kg

Offers instore while stock lasts. Also available at Centenary Agri stores.

CENTENARY
Agri

Customer Events

On Friday the 8th of November we had Eugene Ryan from Grassland Agro in our Mealstore in Thurles, chatting to our customers about Grassland products and their benefits. Thank you for spending the day with us. Pictured (L-R) Ciarán Hackett and Eugene Ryan.

Dúrlas Óg GAA Club

We were delighted to sponsor a race at the Dúrlas Óg Family Race night club fundraiser at Thurles Greyhound Stadium, Saturday 26th October.

Looking at a few areas to promote animal performance over the winter, by Centenary Agri's Animal Nutritionist, Howard Stanley.

1. **Animal health plan:** It is always a worthwhile and cost-effective exercise to speak to your vet prior to housing animals and have a herd health plan in place. Your vet will give the best options for external and internal parasite control along with which vaccination programme will suit your needs. This should be the first step in housing animals, as it will provide a good foundation for efficient performance throughout the winter period. It will also reduce any health issues and therefore improve animal performance.

2. **Ensure correct mineral supplementation:** Minerals are a very important supplement for the winter period, as forages naturally have a lower mineral profile than fresh grass. Minerals are important to support growth and the immune system of the animal and care should be taken when choosing a suitable mineral pack. Farmers who choose to feed some level of concentrate to animals over the winter will be getting a suitable mineral package in the feed, as all the minerals supplied to Centenary Feed and Grain contain an appropriate level of chelated (protected) copper, zinc, and selenium. For the farmers that feed only silage, it is advisable to top dress a mineral pack on top of silage to supply minerals and vitamins.

3. **Housing facilities:** Animals must always have free access to water. It is important to check at least once a day that water is clean, and the animals can access the water troughs. Having no water will greatly reduce feed intake and therefore affect animal performance. Having good airflow is also important. If a shed has poor air flow, then there is high risk of sickness. Similarly, animals don't like a draught. The ventilation can be assessed by lighting a newspaper inside a shed and watching where the smoke goes and how long it takes to clear out of the shed. Having feed barriers at the correct height is also another area that may be

overlooked. Barriers should be both high and wide enough that each animal can eat feed without being impeded. A typical sign of a feed barrier being too low is when an animal has a lump on its neck. If this is the case, the feed barrier needs to be adjusted.

4. **Feed management:** By feed management, I am referring to the way a farmer feeds their animals and how clean feed troughs are kept etc. All categories of animals will have better feed intakes when feed is kept fresh. Feed troughs should be cleaned out regularly to stop any spoilage and feed going off.

5. **Monitor animal behaviour:** Animals should be assessed from a health point of view at least once a day. The purpose of a daily health assessment is to keep any illness/ viral outbreaks to a minimum, any sickness or lameness will have a big impact on profitability. There are numerous behaviour signals that animals can be monitored for daily. The first is to monitor intake. This is done by noting what the animals will eat everyday but by also looking at the animals to see if the rumen is full. This can be done by looking at the triangular area on the left on side of the animal. Monitoring animals 2-3 hours after feeding is also key. There should be at least 70% of the animals lying down chewing the cud. If you have a diet feeder it makes it easier to measure intakes, due to the machine having a weighing scales on it. If you don't have a diet feeder available, it would be a good idea to weigh a bucket of silage/ bale of silage. Any ration or any other feed can be weighed via a diet feeder or finding out a weight on whatever else might be included. Monitor animals dungs in the shed. A very loose dung will indicate digestive upsets and this will give poor weight gains; if dungs are too stiff it might indicate lack of protein in a diet or it can be an indicator of too much fibre in the diet. Also look out for bullies, this might be an area of concern for a farmer that purchases cattle for the winter. Mixing animals can be a tricky task so careful monitoring is required to make sure no bullying takes place.

6. **Ensure correct mineral supplementation:** Minerals are a very important supplement for the winter period, as forages naturally have a lower mineral profile than fresh grass. Minerals are important to support growth and the immune system of the animal and care should be taken when choosing a suitable mineral pack. Minerals such as phosphorus might be required if you are feeding maize or beet, young bulls on adlib feeding will also have a small phosphorus requirement. These young bulls will have the potential to get high weight gains and both phosphorus and calcium is required to ensure the animal's bones are strong enough to carry the weight of the animal. It is always recommended to speak to a nutritionist about mineral requirements. Before selecting pre-calving minerals farmers will need to consider what has worked historically on farm and most importantly what hasn't worked. Pre calving/ dry cow minerals should contains a high level of vitamins and minerals and feeding the correct level is vital to prevent milk fever

7. **Get the diet right:** There has been numerous trials carried out across different continents, in many different feeding scenarios and they all have results to prove animals that have high daily live weight grain will have a better killout % at slaughter and have a better confirmation grade. Hence the importance of having a correct diet for the finishing period. I would always recommend to a farmer finishing cattle to start animals off on a transition diet for a 3-week period. This is usually 50%-60% of the finishing diet and it's a great way of introducing high starch feeds. By offering a transition diet, it gives the bacteria in the rumen a chance to adjust to a change in the diet. After this 3-week period, feed levels can be increased slowly. Getting the diet right is the key to success and that will depend on what else is in the diet. For example, a farmer feeding good quality silage with a high DmD silage + fodder beet will need to have a different feed specification in comparison to a farmer feeding silage and concentrate only. Therefore, when it comes to feeding dairy cows that have been dried off and due to calve in 8 weeks it is important to group these animals according to body condition and calving date. Good silage and perhaps a blend might be the feed of choice for some thin cows in poor body condition. Average silage and 4kg of straw may be the diet of choice for cows that have a high body condition score. I would always recommend talking to a technical sales advisor to talk through different feeding options. Every year brings a different challenge but I am a big advocate of simplicity.

Cabragh Wetlands Part 2: The Early Days

By Tom Grace, Founder, long-time Chairman and currently Life President of Cabragh Wetlands Trust.

One of the first undertakings was to realign and replace the roadside fence and deal with the problem of overgrazing by horses.

Soon thereafter attracted the investment of Shannon Development Co. which saw the Wetlands as a tourist attraction and commissioned a report by RPS Cairns. This proved of little benefit to our plans except for a survey of the botany by Roger Goodwillie and the discovery of rare Caddis flies by Dr Ken Bond S.B. Subsequently we employed Gordon Darcy to prepare a Development Plan with an engineering and environmental emphasis. This resulted in the excavation of two wildlife ponds, the erection of a bird hide, and the creation of a carpark.

Financial support was received from Tipperary Leader Group and the workers were provided under the FAS scheme. Both schemes were introduced around that time, but we also received massive help and support from Denis Keane and his FAS workers from Thurles Urban Council. Denis and his crew also erected a smaller bird hide overlooking the pond at Fertiana. John J Ryan excavated the ponds with paths on their perimeter and we wondered how we would fill them, but nature took over and torrential rain over an August weekend solved the problem. Sometime later the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS) was introduced by the EU, and we were one of the early applicants, and succeeded in having the greater part of the wetland area included. That meant it could be protected from detrimental practices, and the plants and flowers began to reappear and the birds and small animals which had been absent for so long returned to the sanctuary which the area provided for them. The land owners involved received annual renumeration.

Having sorted out the overgrazing problem the natural beauty of the area became apparent. We later created walkways to allow the public to enjoy the sights and sounds of the natural world, which had appeared in abundance as the number of visitors increased and school tours came to the wetlands. It was decided to erect a single-story building to serve as a centre for recreational and

educational purposes. With a LEADER grant and some energetic fundraising, the building was erected and our income benefitted as its potential was recognised. It also meant that the group had now established a permanent presence and created a base and facilities in which the growing workload of its helpers could be managed efficiently.

Around this time Michael Long and Adam Tozar joined our voluntary work group and a greater impetus began to develop. As Marlene Harney, an Entomologist, also became involved, we now had a permanent presence to deal with daily events. All these gave generously of their time and talents to develop and realise the potential of the place, as the activities increased and began to attract the attention and support of many.

Throughout all those years we were fortunate to have the benefit of the FAS scheme, supervised by Bill Cooke, and much was achieved in developing the outside structures' and topography.

Proudly Supporting Cabragh Wetlands | Tipperary Centre for Environmental Learning

Official Launch of the Tipperary Centre for Environmental Learning at Cabragh Wetlands

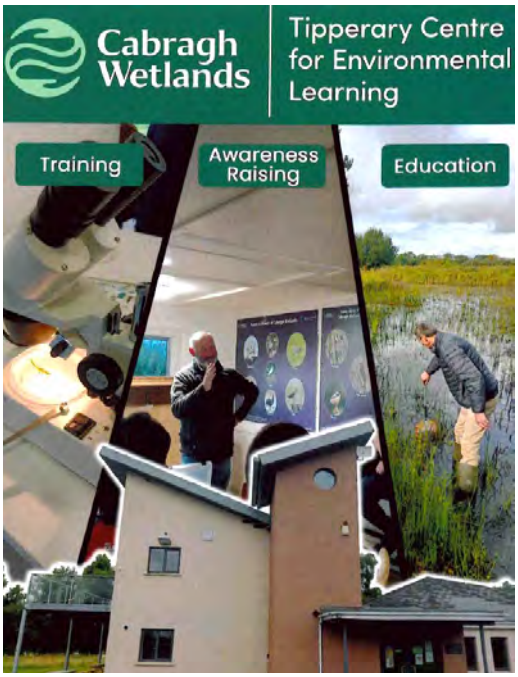
On Friday the 15th of November we had the pleasure of attending the official launch of the Tipperary Centre for Environmental Learning.

This marks an exciting new chapter for the future of Cabragh Wetlands. The Tipperary Centre for Environmental Learning will play a key role in offering programs and initiatives that focus on nature conservation and biodiversity.

The centre will also provide great opportunities for visitors and locals of all ages to engage with nature and deepen their understanding of environmental issues affecting our region.

Listening to those who spoke on the day it was clear to see their dedication and passion shine through!

We are proud to support Cabragh Wetlands and Tipperary Centre for Environmental Learning, and we would like to wish all those involved in this new venture every success, your vision and dedication is to be commended.



Emissions Profile 2023: Signpost Programme by Liam Quinn Teagasc

John and Debbie Sheridan milk 130 cows in Killoskehane, Borrisoleigh, Co. Tipperary, supplying Centenary Thurles Co-op. The farm has sold an average of 450kg of milk solids per cow over the last three years while feeding 980kg of meal per cow.

John and Debbie are Teagasc/Centenary Thurles Signpost demonstration farmers, and aim to reduce emissions, improve water quality, and enhance biodiversity while maintaining profitability.

Agriculture has a 25% reduction target in greenhouse gases (GHG) to achieve by 2030. Significant progress has been made on this farm with total GHG emissions reducing by 5% since joining the signpost programme in 2021. Key to this success has been a 30% reduction in chemical nitrogen fertiliser, a 76% increase in the use of protected urea and 70% of slurry applied in the spring using Low Emission Slurry Spreading (LESS). It is important to note that while chemical nitrogen has reduced, clover has been incorporated to maintain grass growth, and while there is a high adoption of protected urea on the farm, there is also focus on maintaining and building soil fertility by using low emitting compounds such as 18-6-12 and 10-10-20. Slurry spread in spring means that there is a higher recovery of nitrogen, by in the region of 50% compared to a summer application, and this is further increased by up to 65% by applying the slurry through LESS.

Watercourses intersect the farm at four different locations. A combination of measures including fencing, buffer zones, targeted application of organic and chemical fertiliser and building soil fertility are implemented on the farm to reduce impact on water quality. The farm also has a low nitrogen balance per hectare figure of 145kg and a high Nitrogen Use Efficiency Figure (NUE) of 33%. A low nitrogen balance figure reflects a low risk of nitrogen loss per hectare while a high NUE figure indicates more nitrogen retained in the farm system therefore reducing losses.

A biodiversity assessment of the farm took place on the farm in May. The result from the assessment showed 61% of the hedgerows on the farm were treeline hedgerows and 39% of the hedgerows were topped. All hedgerows are being managed to a height of at least 1.8m high throughout the farm. A mix of both hedgerow types are beneficial in supporting a greater range of biodiversity. There is also good connectivity throughout the farm with an average field size of 6.4 hectares. Connected biodiverse boundaries support the movement of biodiversity throughout the farm.

Small changes have made a big impact on this farm, both from a financial and environmental perspective. Emission data is available for all farmers through AgNav once a Bord Bia sustainability report is complete. It is important that the data in the survey is accurate and it is well worth making contact with your local Signpost advisor to establish baseline figures and create a plan for your farm to reduce emissions.

SIGNPOST
Farmers for Climate Action

Centenary Opening Hours

Merry Christmas from all of us at Centenary.

CENTENARY
Home & Garden

Open

December
Tuesday 24th (till 4pm)
Saturday 28th
Monday 30th
Tuesday 31st

(Normal Saturday hours apply. Each branch may vary)

Closed

December
Christmas Day
St Stephen's Day
Friday 27th

January
Wednesday 1st

CENTENARY
Agri

Open

December
Tuesday 24th (till 4pm)
Saturday 28th
Monday 30th
Tuesday 31st

(Normal Saturday hours apply. Each branch may vary)

Closed

December
Christmas Day
St Stephen's Day
Friday 27th

January
Wednesday 1st

Christmas gardening special

Terriesa Torode

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

December Gardening Tips

December is the beginning of some very special shrubs that only flower in the heart of winter and what is so special you ask. Fragrance, exquisite scents that hang gently in the air. Plants like Clematis Armandii 'Apple Blossom', Viburnum x bodnantense 'Dawn', Mahonia x media 'Charity', Lonicera fragrantissima, one of my favourites is Chimonanthus praecox which have tiny sweetly scented dusky yellow flowers. Sarcococca, Mahonia's, Daphnes and Hamamelis mollis which depending on the weather will flower earlier or later. So, look out for these shrubs in your garden or in garden centers to lift the spirts on grey days of winter.

One of the other delightful things to behold in the garden during winter are colourful stems which really do seem to glisten with dew nearly all day long. Add some bulbs to flower from January through to May and you have an excellent flower bed but do add over the years a few more points of interest like grasses, heathers, box plants or even a small tree that keeps its berries or fruits for a decent amount of time. Think about structure, that is adding height in the middle or to one side, bringing the plants down in height until you are thinking about the ground cover plants. Or you can use stems like cornus and willow to be left on their own and pollarded every year to add drama in the garden with brilliantly colourful stems. Think of texture, a variety of glossy evergreen leaves lifts up any planting but especially in wintertime.

So, to recap-use scented plants to bring a surprise, a sense of peace and tranquillity in the garden. Use bright stems to lift a dark corner or use one to add drama in a border near the house. Berries are useful for adding height to the planting but also added interest. Remember the ground and use smaller plants and bulbs to keep the bed looking interesting for six months.

Another tip, think of the front or even back door but the door where you often get out of the car. Get your pots organised, I feel now over the years that pots in winter actually give us more back than pots in summer. This is because we often rush from car to door in winter but seeing a cheerful colourful pot or better yet several pots (but always in odd numbers) leading you to a door feels more beneficial when we stop and notice either a scent or something bright and cheerful. Plants like Sarcococca and Box are both ideal for evergreen glossiness. Maybe a soft grass, heathers, a variegated Holly or Camellia and again use bulbs in layers underneath these plants to bring you through to early summer. Nowadays we have so much choice available, and I never mentioned Hellebores! Everything I have talked about are hardy and easy to grow in your garden but always find out what type of soil is needed whether its acidic or alkaline.

Jobs to accomplish in December

Many jobs can be sorted now as the soil is still slightly warm so many perennials and deciduous shrubs can be lifted and transplanted to a new position, or with perennials dividing up and then planted out into groups in the border.

Outdoor structures and taps

Protect all chairs and tables from winter damage. Clean all gutters from leaves and power wash all paths. Store all tools once they have been cleaned, sharpened and oiled. Protect against frost all outdoor taps and hoses. Protect water pumps. Start to get over the next two months all machinery serviced, like lawn mowers and strimmer's so they are in working order next spring. Check all recent tree ties. Fix any outdoor structures that may not make winter wind conditions, like a trellis that has a climbing rose attached to it.

Half hardy perennials

Bring indoors any non-hardy plants and place on their sides in pots inside a greenhouse or shed with windows.

Forced bulbs

Check any bulbs you are forcing every few days, keep in a cool position until you see around an inch or two of growth then bring into a warmer position but not too warm and keep watering. Water well regularly all indoor Azaleas and Hippeastrum but keep them coolish, it's a fine balance of the gardener to get these plants to flower at the right time, slap bang at Christmas! If they are growing too quickly it's too warm, nothing showing, too cold so take appropriate action.

Pruning

Wintertime is in most cases the correct time for pruning all deciduous plants and this includes deciduous trees like Birch, apples and pears, beech, hawthorn, rowan and many others but do not touch any cherries or prunus family plants. Birch must be pruned early on as the sap rises early in this tree. Many shrubs can be pruned now so wintertime really is a busy but satisfying time. Wrap up and pop outside with a pair of secateurs and loppers or pruning saw and pick a shrub, look at its natural shape and then prune. Often with pruning we are trying to clear away old wood, diseased wood, cross or rubbing wood and to prune for a better shape. If it is a natural weeping habit then prune for that shape, a more upright plant may need its height reducing, a condensed shrub may need thinning out, it really depends on the shrub, when it's been pruned and how it was pruned beforehand, dictates how much work is involved.

Hardwood cuttings

This is the time to take these important cuttings whether from trees, roses or shrubs, you should get great rooting from these cuttings. Each cutting should be around 1ft long and some may have a couple of leaves left on top otherwise no leaves. Insert into trenches the same depth. Label always all cuttings. Roses do particularly well with this method of propagation.

Tubers, bulbs and corms

Check these once every couple of weeks. These must be all kept dry and in cool positions but not without frost. A shed, garage or in a cool room inside the house will suffice.

Winter wash

Winter wash all fruit trees and even roses with this special product. Many pests and diseases will be greatly reduced if you use this product.

Houseplants

Check these throughout winter. Reduce watering to once a month on all cacti except Christmas cactus which will be flowering - keep watering and fertilising whilst in flower. Check for red spider mite on plants. Wash once a month and place pebbles in the base of the saucer, plant holder and keep topped up with water to provide humidity around the plants. Most house plants dislike the dry air and require a moister growing condition.

Vegetables

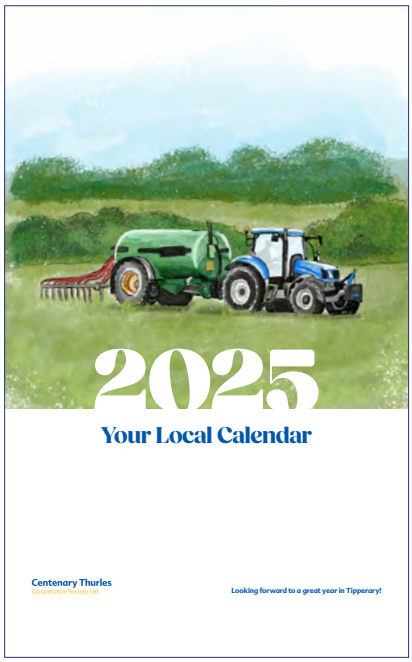
Earth up celeriac which can be harvested all winter long. Net over all brassicas because pigeons will eat the leaves but remove yellow leaves. Check supports for brussel sprout plants. Keep an eye out for the weather conditions because if the weather turns very cold and deep frosts many root vegetables will need to be lifted beforehand and layered in a clamp. Earth up spring cabbages to prevent wind rock.

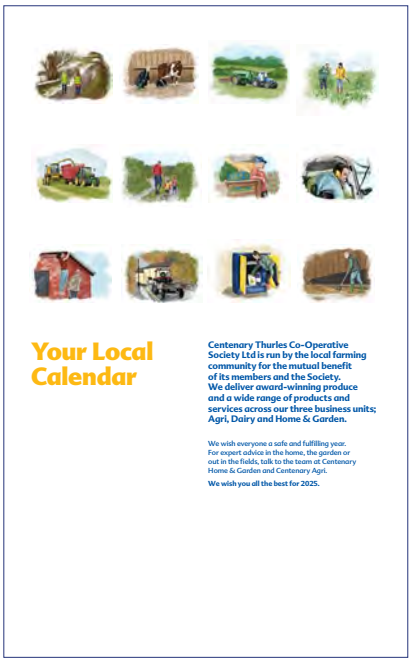
Happy gardening everyone.

Centenary Thurles 2025 Calendar

Our 2025 Calendar is now available at all branches.

The theme for the year is safety. It features friendly reminders and tips to help keep you and your loved ones safe on the farm, around the house and out in the community. These calendars are sure to be in demand so if you are interested in having one for you or for a relative, call to your local branch as soon as possible. We wish all our readers a very happy and safe new year.





Farm Safety First, Always

Tractors and machinery are involved in almost 50% of all farm deaths.

Top Checks:

- Check that brakes and handbrakes are working on all your tractors and other farm vehicles.
- Check that hydraulic lines are working.
- Keep young children supervised and well away from moving tractors and machinery.

Initial Checks:

Ensure the vehicle is in overall good condition,
- it is level on the ground,
- tyres are in good condition and inflated,
- there are no fluid leaks,
- number plates are visible and clean.

In Cab Checks:

- verify that all controls are clearly marked and working,
- the seat is in good condition and adjusted, safety belt is used,
- check that dashboard warning lights, wipers, washers, demister, temperature controls and the horn are all functioning correctly,
- check the fuel, indicators, and PTO drive
- the cab is clean and free of clutter.

Passengers:
- carry passengers only in the passenger seat with safety belts and use high-visibility vests,
- do not allow children under 7 years

External Checks:
- inspect the cab, windscreen, side windows, mirrors, lights, steps, doors,
- ensure your tax and insurance discs are up-to- date,
- check the radiator fluid levels
- hitching equipment and the roll bar

Driver:
- the driver must be trained, competent, fit to drive, follow safety rules, have a valid license and insurance,
- wear appropriate PPE, and not be fatigued. Have a high-visibility jacket.

Safe Parking:
- park in a safe area, apply the parking brake lower attachments to the ground,
- switch off the engine, remove the key, and dismount facing the tractor.

For more information visit: **farmsafety.com**

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