Co-operative News

Winter 2025

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:

@centenaryagri
@centenaryhomeandgarden

@CThurles

@centenaryagritipperary
@centenaryhomeandgarden

Inside this edition:

03 *CellCheck Award Winners*

04 *Dairy Women Ireland Conference 2025*

06 *Milk Price 2025*

07 *Milkflex from Finance Ireland*

08 *Veterinary Medicine Regulations*

10 *Importance of the Dry Period*

12 *Retirement of Eamonn Bergin*

14 *NDC & Kerrygold Quality Milk Award 2025*

15 *Cabragh Wetlands: A Recollection By Liam Byrne*

16 *Winter Gardening Tips by Terriesa Torode*

Animal Health Ireland CellCheck Award Winners

Three of our Milk Suppliers were recently honoured for low Somatic Cell Counts, their herds being in the lowest 500 for SCC in Ireland. Recipients of awards at the Killashee Hotel in Naas on Thursday 27th November were:

John & David Fitzpatrick, Dareens, Clonmore;
Billy Kennedy, Loran Park, Roscrea; and
Dan Walsh, Ballinknock, Couraguneen.

Congratulations to all three Suppliers who each had SCC levels under 70 in 2024. The winner of the lowest SCC in Centenary Thurles and who received a Special Award were John & David Fitzpatrick.

Pictured L-R; Finola McCoy (AHI), James Lynch (AHI), David Fitzpatrick, Michelle Crombie, Michael Berkery (Chairman of FBD Trust) & Peter Quealy (Milk Quality Advisor)

Elected Chairman of South Eastern Cattle Breeding Society

Congratulations to Mervyn Stanley, Committee Member of Centenary Thurles, who was elected as Chairman of South Eastern Cattle Breeding Society (Dovea) on 1st October last. Mervyn had served as Vice-Chairman for the previous five years.

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 2025. A penalty of €100 was applied to October milk for non-submission. This will only be refunded if the health cert is received by us by 31st December 2025.

Deputy Governor Central Bank of Ireland

On 10th November last, we were delighted to host a visit from the Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Ireland, Mary-Elizabeth McMunn, a native of Holycross.

A key part of the Central Bank's work is their ongoing connection with businesses and communities across Ireland. Since 2019, The Governor and Deputy Governors have been travelling across the country as part of their Regional Engagement and Outreach Programme. These visits are used to meet with major employers and economic contributors in a local area, as well as culturally significant businesses

We made the Deputy Governor aware of the challenges faced both in business and in farming. Particular reference was made to the current labour shortages and the burden experienced from the imposition of excessive regulation on our sector, often from Europe.

Pictured L-R; John Martin, Mark Bourke, Mary Elizabeth McMunn (Deputy Governor of the Central Bank) Joe Kerrigan (CEO Centenary Thurles Co-op), Paddy Daly (Chairman Centenary Thurles Co-op) and Pat Kennedy (Vice Chairman Centenary Thurles Co-op)

Dairy Women Ireland Conference 2025

By Katie Gleeson

@katieinthecountry
Dairy farmer and DWI Steering Committee Member

When your conference to-do list includes sire selection, employment law and finding a sparkly dress, its makes you very aware that dairy women are rewriting the script!

That was the mood at the Dairy Women Ireland Conference 2025 in the Charleville Park Hotel, our annual flagship event that as multi-faceted as our membership. As a part of the DWI steering committee, we are well used to seeing women doing the graft on farms. What still stops me in my tracks is walking into a room and seeing hundreds of us together, including plenty of familiar Centenary Thurles faces.

Outgoing President Dr. Mary Kinston opened the day by reminding us that our work is about more than litres and milk prices, it's also about families, communities and leaving something better behind.

Our joint keynote with MEPs Cynthia Ní Mhurchú and Maria Walsh, guided by Áine Connell, was one of those sessions where you catch yourself nodding along. They spoke honestly about fear, setbacks and learning to use your voice even when you're not the obvious person to speak. I think a lot of us recognised that feeling whether it's at a discussion group, an AGM, a parliamentary meeting or the kitchen table.

The breakout sessions were where we rolled up our sleeves. Margaret Kelleher and Mella Briscoe dug into sire selection and smarter breeding. Cara Jane Walsh, Deirdre Walsh and Mary Cronin made employment law and payroll feel a bit less terrifying. Ger Cusack, Ned Dunphy and Michelle McGrath tackled the issue of lameness with real clarity. Mary Kinston and Elaine Hickey spoke honestly about the juggle of family, career and farm life. And I hosted Bord Bia's head of Communications Roz O'Shaughnessy and National Dairy Council CEO Emma Walls for our breakout session "From Parlour to Public", looking at our social licence to farm, a topic that may sound abstract but has very real world implications in our farmyards (animal welfare and environmental stewardship are some examples) to our markets, and how we tell our story as dairy farmers online and offline in our communities and to the wider world.

We also heard from Toomevara's Michael Berkery of FBD Trust, who spoke about the importance of backing farmer organisations, investing in education and making sure women's voices are heard in rooms where decisions are made.

For the first time, we didn't just grab the car keys and head home afterwards. We had a gala dinner and fashion show, with workwear like Portwest sharing the catwalk with the sparkly dresses. It was great craic, but it also said something important: dairy women can be practical, professional and enjoy a party, all at once. Incoming president, Fiona O'Donnell closed proceedings with a promise of growing ambitions and steering Dairy Women Ireland into 2026 on a strong base.

I drove home tired but energised, convinced of one thing: whatever 2026 throws at Irish dairy, a sector that backs each other is far better placed to face it, together.

Find out more at **www.dairywomenireland.ie** and follow us on social media **@dairywomenireland** to keep up to date with our latest news and updates.

Milk Price 2025

Unfortunately, the optimism expressed in our last newsletter in relation to future milk prices was severely misplaced.

Whilst price had eased somewhat from March to July — a combined 2½c per litre — we were totally unprepared for what happened next. In the 3 months August to October, a combined reduction of 10½c per litre was imposed. November price was unavailable at the time of writing, but we are bracing ourselves for potentially a further 4c reduction before year end.

Questions remain unanswered as to how such severe reductions could come out of the blue. Supply and Demand is always rolled out and of course it does have a role to play. It is after all a long-held fundamental economic principle. As of May, US production was up just 0.5% year to date and cumulatively, this has grown to 2% by September. This implies significant month to month growth with additional product placed on international markets. Similarly, we see that whilst EU production is up just 0.5% year to date, September growth alone was 4.3% (growth in the US was 4%). We have seen before where surplus product does impact on buyers' sentiment, and demand drops. History shows that we will eventually bottom out, production will fall, and demand will rise boosting prices again.

Recent evidence of this - in 2022, prices increased rather quickly from 40c to 58c, January to September; the following year falling from 58c to 33c, January to August; and in 2024 rising from 36c to 51c; January to November. 2025 continues this pattern albeit we are now on the downward cycle.

Whilst price today and its outlook appears bleak; we must remain confident that an upward correction will take place. Decisions to invest or indeed exit should not be based on one particular point in time. Simple Average Base Price over the last 12 months was 48c; over 3 years 44c; 5-year average was 43c ; and 7-year average was 40c. It would be prudent to look at those figures in any decision-making process.

Milk Seasonality Payments

As some respite from the falling milk prices, suppliers are reminded that seasonality bonuses are paid for milk supplied over the coming months — December 5cpl; January 7cpl; and February 5cpl. All bonuses are inclusive of VAT and are subject to a minimum average Lactose of 4.35%; average TBC <50; and average SCC <300. Each month is treated separately in the calculation of bonuses payable.

Expiration of Milk Retirement Levy

Since 2022, Tirlán has applied a Retirement Levy on continuing suppliers to support the Milk Retirement Scheme, in which several Centenary Thurles suppliers took part. This levy, charged at 0.075c per litre (excluding VAT), has now come to an end, effective from milk supplied from September 2025 onwards. The levy amounted to €134,000 (+ VAT) over the course of 2024, so its discontinuation is a welcome development for suppliers.

Milk Supply 2025

Since our last update, milk supply has remained reasonably strong. September milk was up 2.2% and October 7.7%. November, however, unsurprisingly and despite a good start to the month finished down 1.6%. Supply growth for 2025 will be in the region of 4.5% at 186m litres+, down from our previous estimate of 187m. Weather and price have both played a part in our reduced estimate, but taking the year as a whole, it will still be a good number when account is taken of the fact that we have approximately 15 fewer suppliers in 2025.

€1000 Dulux Paint Voucher

Our Topline Dulux Colour of the year competition winner was Aisling Cashman. Congratulations to Aisling who was the lucky winner of a €1000 Dulux Paint Voucher.

Our Dulux Colour Consultant Cecelia, will be on hand at Centenary Home and Garden Cashel to offer expert advice and inspiration for your next big paint project.

Fleetwood Paint Academy Training

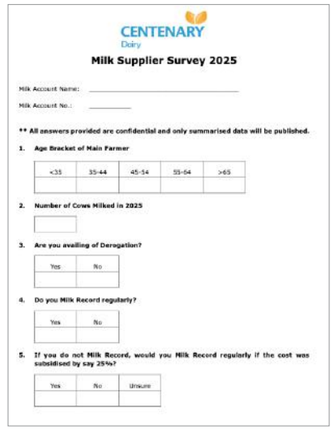
On the 15th of September, Cecelia Ryan and Paula Maher attended the Fleetwood Academy Training Programme in Limerick. Thanks to Fleetwood for sharing their expertise and helping our staff stay at the forefront of Fleetwood product knowledge. This enables us to continue offering dependable advice to all our customers.

Pictured L-R; David McCoy (Head of Sales at Fleetwood) Cecelia Ryan (Centenary Home & Garden Cashel) Paula Maher (Centenary Home & Garden Thurles) Keith Morrison (Fleetwood Sales Rep)

Milk Supplier Survey 2025

Centenary Thurles is carrying out a survey of all Milk Suppliers at present. We will publish the results in full in our next newsletter. Thanks to all who have co-operated to date. We are in a final push at present to complete the survey. The more surveys that are completed, the more accurate the output.

Questions include the age bracket of the main farmer; number of cows milked; derogation questions; milk recording; nitrates banding; future plans; succession; etc.



CENTENARY Dairy

Milk Supplier Survey 2025

Milk Account Name: _____

Milk Account No.: _____

** All answers provided are confidential and only summarised data will be published.

1. Age Bracket of Main Farmer

<35	35-44	45-54	55-64	>65

2. Number of Cows Milked in 2025

3. Are you availing of Derogation?

Yes	No

4. Do you Milk Record regularly?

Yes	No

5. If you do not Milk Record, would you Milk Record regularly if the cost was subsidised by say 25%?

Yes	No	Unsure

MilkFlex

Milkflex from Finance Ireland

Milkflex is a loan scheme designed exclusively for Irish dairy milk suppliers. It has recently re-launched its offering with many enhanced features.

Centenary Thurles Milk suppliers have used the product 148 times since inception and have drawn down a total of €12m, to aid in the development of their facilities. Repayment is convenient over 8 months annually through milk accounts. Trigger points facilitate the adjustment of repayment instalments, based on the prevailing milk price. No security has been required other than a Milk Supply Agreement with the Co-Op.

Some of the enhanced/ new features include:

— 12-year term now available in additional to the previous 8-year term

— Loan amount maximum now at €1m (12-year term only)

— Increase in maximum loan for 8-year term from €300,000 to €500,000

— Land Purchase now qualifies for financing — security will be required over the land being purchased

Further Information is available from Finance Ireland at **(01) 647 0255** or its Agri Business Manager, Aidan Hogan at **(087) 093 6588**

VAT Rate Change

From 1st January 2026, the VAT Rate payable to unregistered suppliers has been reduced from 5.1% to 4.5%. This will take effect from payment for December Milk.

Veterinary Medicine Regulations

The new regulations are now in force and over time will become more visible and more enforced.

We remain extremely disappointed at the decisions made by Government in this regard. Increased costs and lack of competition will be inevitable — there was an alternative decision that could have been made. The additional failure to permit Co-Ops to sell vaccines compounds our frustration. Past lessons have clearly not been learned.

When antibiotics became prescription only, our sales of dry-cow and milking-cow tubes declined year on year. A €200,000 per annum business has now declined by more than 70% to less than €60,000 p.a. Our branches, particularly the more rural branches depend strongly on a medicine business.

There is no doubt in our mind that the sale of antiparasitics is at similar risk. Some merchants/ co-ops have made the decision to exit the business, due to the complexities. We are going to do all in our powers to continue to service the needs of our customers, as we regard the sale of medicines as our core business. The regulations took effect from 1st December last, and prescriptions are now required for antiparasitic animal medicines such as fluke and worm doses. You can get that prescription from your Vet and purchase where you like (so long as the Vet uploads the prescription to the national portal). Should you wish to use the Co-Op for your complete requirement, we will be in a position to do so. We have linked up with Vetpal to enable you to obtain a prescription without a prescription cost involved. Our Responsible Persons are being upskilled, and all our eight branches will be in a position to service you.

How the system will work (in brief) - we will pay a licence fee to Vetpal for each of our eight branches. We will then have access to the Vetpal portal where the Proper Assessment will be completed at our branch. Vetpal is linked to the National Veterinary Prescription Service as are all our branches. Vetpal will issue the prescription and upload it to the NVPS. Our Responsible Person will dispense the prescription from the Vetpal System and apply the label. We would ask you to ring in advance and the paperwork can be completed prior to your visit to the branch. This will help speed up our service to you and hopefully ensure it is as seamless as possible.

We re-iterate our commitment to providing the service for 12 months initially at all branches. We will then re-assess the situation and see whether the cost is warranted at individual branches. Once the demand exists, we will continue to commit to this business. We hope to continue to provide a price competitive solution to meet your needs and would ask you to continue to support your local branch for your requirements.

VetPal

Loyalty Bonus Cheques

The Committee once again approved the issuing of loyalty bonus cheques during the first week of December. Calculations were based on trade and milk supply for the calendar year 2024. We would like to acknowledge the loyalty of all our milk suppliers who qualified for this payment.

In total **€700,000** was paid out to eligible suppliers. This has been made possible through the strong operating and investment income generated by the Society and with your help. Whilst 5 in every 6 suppliers qualified for a bonus, we would remind the other supplier of some of the tangible benefits from supporting the Society's Trading Division:

— strong customer service at each of our 8 branches which have been invested in heavily, to the benefit of your community, including the provision of employment opportunities;

— excellent technical advisory service focussed to your needs and available across a vast range of activities including animal nutrition; milk quality; tillage, grass seed, medicines, etc.;

— bonus shares issued annually at our AGM based on milk supply, trading and grain supply — those who provide the greater support have benefitted also from greater spin-outs, redeemable bonus issues and shareholding bonuses over the years; and

— it is your own local Co-Op in which you more than likely have a growing share of, and which probably stretches back generations.

SAVE BIG!

FUELSAVERS
Everyday Essentials

Ballyduff | Cashel | Littleton | Loran | Montore | Roscrea | Templemore | Thurles

Supertherm Coal
20KG Bag
2 For €27.00

CosyGlo Coal
20KG Bag
2 For €27.00

Zero Wood
Kiln Dried Kindling
€3.50

Willowwarm
Briquettes
2 FOR €11.50

Waxies
30 Pack
€7.50

Firebloc
Multi-Buy Offer
6 FOR €9.00

Premium Wood Pellets
15kg Bag
3 FOR €23.00

Ecoblaze
Hardwood Briquettes
€7.99

To See The Full Range Of Fuel Offers Available
Visit Your Local Centenary Agri Store

Importance of the Dry Period by Animal Nutritionist, Howard Stanley

The dry period is essential for the recovery and regeneration of the cow's udder tissue and overall health.

Proper nutrition during this phase has a significant influence on future milk yield, cow well-being, and calf development. Inadequate management during the dry period can result in reduced milk production and a higher risk of metabolic disorders such as milk fever and ketosis.

Nutritional Requirements

1. **Energy and Protein:** Dry cows need diets that provide sufficient energy without causing excessive weight gain. A low-energy diet is particularly important during the close-up period (the final three weeks before calving) to help prevent metabolic problems. Protein levels in dry-cow diets should typically be maintained at 13–14%. Farmers often benefit from including dietary protein 2-3 weeks prior to calving to boost colostrum quantity and quality. It is advised to speak to your feed advisor on this.

2. **Fibre and Roughage:** High-fibre roughage is essential for stimulating rumen function and maintaining rumen function. Wheaten straw is often considered the best source of fibre for dry cow because it is deemed to contain lower levels of potassium than other straw such as oats and barley straw.

3. **Minerals and Vitamins:** Adequate vitamin and mineral supplementation is crucial for supporting the health of both the cow and the developing calf. A Proper mineral balance also plays a key role in preventing disorders such as milk fever around calving. Where there has been no history of milk fevers on farm 32grams of magnesium per day is adequate. Where milk fever occurs more frequent it is recommended to feed 38-40 grams of magnesium. Vitamin D3 which is important to help cows mobilise calcium at the point of calving. Vitamin E which is an antioxidant and this help with cows' immune system at calving. Where milk fever is very high risk and problematic the inclusion to magnesium chloride is advised but always seek advice before inclusion.

Proud Sponsor of the Senior Scratch Cup at Roscrea Golf Club

Andrew McCormack 69 gross (Castletroy GC) receiving the cup from Michael Ryan, Branch Manager at Centenary Home & Garden Roscrea.

Pictured L- R: Aidan Shanahan (Captain), Angela Talbot (Lady Captain), Andrew McCormack Winner, Michael Ryan (Manager, Centenary Home & Garden, Roscrea) and Johnny McDonnell (President of Roscrea Golf Club)

Milk Price Volatility Fund

The Committee of Management has confirmed that it will allocate a further €250,000 to the Milk Price Volatility Fund for 2025. This fund is used to support milk price at particularly difficult times. Whilst the extent it can be used is limited, the payment in March 2024 of 1c per litre on 2023 supply, benefitted suppliers to the tune of €1.8m. Following this allocation, the fund available now stands at close to €1.5m.

Dairy Cube Bonus – Feed Price Reduction

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.

Separately from 3rd November 2025, we were in a position to reduce the price of all feed from our standard range by €10 per tonne.

Willowwarm Event

Thank you to Jim and Noel for visiting all our Centenary Home and Garden branches each Saturday during the month of November. Their expertise and support were greatly appreciated by both customers and staff.

As part of the event were delighted to run a special giveaway in partnership with Willowwarm, where four lucky customers each won five bales of Willowwarm briquettes. Willowwarm briquettes are available at all Centenary Home and Garden branches, offering a dependable, Irish made heating option for your home.

Retirement of Eamonn Bergin

Our Deputy Chief Executive, Eamonn Bergin, retired on Friday 7th November after more than 32 years' service to Centenary Thurles. On the day, the Centenary Thurles Social Club made a presentation to Eamonn.

Joe Kerrigan, on behalf of the Staff, paid tribute to Eamonn who was the first salesman appointed to Centenary back in 1993. His initial role was to grow and develop, particularly with his technical expertise, sales of feed, fertiliser, chemicals, etc. throughout the Co-Op area. Subsequently in April 2009, Eamonn was the natural choice to be appointed Deputy Chief Executive, taking complete responsibility for the development of our Stores Division, the legacy of which can readily be seen today. The strength of the Co-Op has been underpinned by that stores division; indeed, it is our financial engine, without which we couldn't operate today. Eamonn worked in a collaborative way with our Committee, managers, staff and customers to achieve results.

Joe referred to Eamonn as being a strong asset to the Society over the years. He thanked Eamonn for his support and advice and wished him well in his retirement.

Pictured L-R; The Bergin family - Martin, Jack, Eamonn, Kate, Sadie, Edward and Sarah

NDC & Kerrygold Quality Milk Award 2025

We were proud to be represented in the Lyrath Hotel on Thursday 23rd October last, when the Ryan Family from Lisheen, Moyne were announced as the overall winner of the NDC & Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards for 2025.

Tom, Mary and Michael Ryan had earlier this year been victorious in the Centenary Milk Quality Awards for milk supplied to us in 2024. As such, we were in a position to nominate them for the national awards.

12 suppliers representing 12 different dairy Co-Ops reached the final. The high-profile judging panel consisted of Professor Paddy Wall (UCD), Professor Karina Pierce (UCD) and Dr. David Gleeson (Teagasc). They assessed the top dairy farms across the key areas of:

— Animal Health & Welfare

— Hygiene

— Dairy and Parlour Facilities

— Pride and Passion

— Continuous Improvement

— Sustainability and the Environment

— Quality Milk

— Nutrient Management

— Stock Management

— Business Management

— Infrastructure

Following a rigorous process, 6 of the 12 finalists were awarded category awards, with the Ryan's picking up the award for Environmental Stewardship. The scene was then set to announce the Overall Winner for 2025. Great celebrations ensued from the Centenary Thurles table when the large screens settled on the image of the Ryan Family as the overall winner.

All at Centenary Thurles wish to be associated with the many congratulations conferred on Tom, Mary & Michael for their outstanding achievement, built on their own hard work and dedication.

Pictured; Overall winner of the NDC & Kerrygold Quality Milk Awards for 2025, the Ryan family

Pictured; Minister Martin Heydon, Conor Galvin (CEO of Ornua) Emma Walls (CEO of NDC) presenting the NDC & Kerrygold Quality Milk Award 2025 to the Ryan family

Cabragh Wetlands

A Recollection By Liam Byrne, Cabragh Wetlands member

As I travel to Thurles from Holycross on the old Sugar Factory Road, and I pass the fine Cabragh Wetlands Visitor Centre, I often reminisce about the origin of the Centre.

My earliest memory being that a topic was raised at a meeting of the Holycross/Ballycahill Gun Club where members were concerned about the Sugar Factory settling ponds in Cabragh being filled in and the land being levelled. There was concern also from neighbouring Gun Clubs.

The Holycross/Ballycahill Gun Club's main concern was that this land was part of a large duck and pheasant sanctuary, an area that stretched by road from the river bridge in Holycross to the Yellow Lough, then on to the Suir Bridge in Cabragh and back to Holycross bounded by the Suir itself. This was a large tract of land and had been a club sanctuary going back to the sixties, having been agreed by landowners and the Gun Club.

My late uncle Sean Donnelly, an early member of Cabragh Wetlands Trust, told me that making the wetlands a sanctuary was the best decision the Holycross/Ballycahill Gun Club had ever made. He said that after the opening of the season on the 1st of September there would not be a duck back in Cabragh for months having moved in large numbers more than likely to the river Shannon. Since becoming a sanctuary the wetlands has a year round large population of wildfowl.

So the news of machinery working on the Sugar Factory land sounded alarm bells for the members who were worried about the huge disruption and ground damage that might occur to the wetlands sanctuary.

A meeting between Gun Clubs and concerned locals was convened at Greenvale Animal Feeds (which was still operating at the factory after sugar processing ceased). Here, a committee was formed to protect the wetlands. Thurles Sugar Factory Head Office was contacted about the ongoing works that were taking place in Cabragh. They confirmed that sugar production had indeed ceased in the Thurles factory, the beet wash settling ponds were no longer needed and the company had decided to fill them in to prepare the land for sale.

The factory management informed the Committee that there were fourteen acres untouched in the centre of the wetlands and that they would be willing to sell it for a reasonable price. This information kickstarted the Cabragh Wetlands Committee into fundraising to purchase the land. To achieve this, the Wetlands committee organised many different events such as clay shoots, card games, dance nights, raffles etc. Eventually the funds were raised and this precious portion of the wetlands was saved. Subsequently, a carpark, bird hide and meeting rooms / reception area were added and in later years more land was purchased.

Today, the wetlands habitat, wildlife sanctuary and buildings are the committee's proud achievements having been secured for future generations to enjoy. Meetings, workshops and various activities take place at the Centre on a regular basis. Rooms are available to organisations to rent. For further information please contact **0504- 43879** or **cabraghwetlandsmembers@gmail.com**

Proudly Supporting Cabragh Wetlands | Tipperary Centre for Environmental Learning

Garden tips and advice for the winter

Terriesa Torode

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

December Gardening Tips

Welcome everyone to some more helpful tips and advice for your garden over the next couple of months. For many of us winter is a time of retreating from the garden but there are many jobs to do outside that will either help towards a healthy, productive garden or some important pruning to be accomplished that will enhance your shrubs or fruit trees.

Mulching

I have started with this if you wish to improve your own soil quality and everything that grows in it, then mulching is the key to greatly benefiting the garden and all plants. On bare soil over winter many nutrients and minerals are washed away by the heavy winter rains and frosts. By mulching we trap those nutrients in the soil rather than leaching away and we improve soil quality by adding this humus rich material on the top of the soil. Never worry about the mulch as all the microscopic insects that live in the soil will bring this wonderful mixture down into the depths of the soil. Worms play a very important part of this process to. Either collect or order your three-year-old manure, or miscanthus used in horse stables, spent mushroom compost, leaf mould, your own compost if you have a large amount or buy a few bags of well-rotted manure from a local garden centre. Spread this evenly over the ground around two to three inches deep. Vegetable plots become very productive if this method is used and trees, shrubs and of course all perennials except Mediterranean plants. Then just leave the mulch because by the end of winter the mulch will have done its job and your plants and seedlings will grow healthy next year.

Pruning

In winter when the plants are dormant all apple and pears trees get pruned. This is to shape the trees, open them up to prevent disease, increase yield by learning about spurs and keeping them under control. These trees need an open centre, strong branches radiating out and all laterals pruned by a third to encourage more side shoots which will bear more fruit. There are several form of trees from cordons, dwarf pyramids, espalier, central leader bush tree and open centered bush. For most of us we will have the last two and there is so much information to relate but here are a few tips. Prune strong branches by a third, weak branches by a half. Avoid cutting so a bud is facing towards the centre of the tree. Prune to outward facing buds so the new branches or spurs grow outwards keeping the centre open and allows plenty of air circulation in the next years growing season. Always sharpen all tools required for this job, then sterilise with a disinfectant and I use a spray from the kitchen when I am pruning, frequently sterilizing as I work. Clear away all pruned pieces, if diseased burn them to ash. If free of disease, break into smaller pieces and place in the compost but never place diseased shoots into the compost or allow to stay on the ground because you will then be spreading the disease in the garden.

With ornamental trees pruning in winter helps keep the trees healthy so try to get all pruning done except for evergreen trees pruned over winter. Birch, Maples, Oaks, Chestnuts and nearly all deciduous trees. Evergreen trees get pruned in May. Afterwards clear away clippings and spread a little mulch around the base with some slow release fertilser.

Indoor vines need pruning, with mature vines prune all leaders by one half or down to two buds. New shoots will grow from these next year. Outdoor vines leave until January. For gooseberries, cut back all leaders by one half and all laterals that were pruned in summer prune these to around two inches in length. Redcurrants cut away leaders by one half always to outwards facing buds and laterals that were pruned to four inches cut to one inch. This encourages plenty of fruiting spurs. Old Blackcurrants need a third of their old stems removed down to the base. Vigorous branches can be pruned to a strong side shoot. Loganberries and Blackberries should have had their old, flowered shoots removed to the base. This year's new stems secured onto the wires. When planting new loganberries cut one stem to ten inches high. With Blueberries prune away a third of old flowered stems to a vigorous shoot or to the ground depending on the stem. As with all pruning cut out any diseased stems or rubbing and crossing over stems. Clear away all prunings, keep sterilizing as you work and always have sharp tools, preventing damage to shoots. Take cuttings of blackcurrants, white and red and gooseberries.

Vegetables

Clear away all canes, netting unless you are protecting any brassicas you have growing like Brussel sprouts, purple sprouting or spring cabbage. Mulch vacant ground. Reevaluate all that you have grown. Note down what vegetable did well and what struggled. Organise your four-plot rotation and order seed catalogues. Lift parsnips and lay horizontally in a box filled with sand, lay parsnips in rows. Heel in some leeks near the kitchen door for easy access. Get garlic in now, it needs a long cold period to grow well. Make new rhubarb plants by digging up the large clump and cutting it into pieces ideally with a large bud on it. Replant pieces into a rich humus hole by adding plenty of well-rotted manure. Use a sharp spade for this job. Pot up all strawberry runners for next year.

Outdoor structures and general maintenance

Disconnect all hose pipes and protect. Wrap insulation around existing taps. Clear away all leaves caught in gutters to prevent weeds from growing next year. Power wash all paths and remove algae and moss to prevent slipping in wet or frosty weather. Leave a pile of wood, branches and cover with leaves to allow a small habitat for beneficial creatures of the garden. Repair all wooden structures like trellis holding up a climber or an arch holding a rose before winter damages them more. Bring in and store all garden furniture if it is plastic or wood. Clear away all leaves and rubbish from glasshouses and polytunnels. They should be clean and tidy at this time of the year. Organise all pots and scrub and clean all seed sowing equipment before winter ends. Trays and small pots, propagators and sieves. Get all tools repaired, cleaned oiled and sharpened as winter requires lots of pruning jobs. Service all machinery before spring so your machines are working perfectly next spring. Remove all petrol as this harms carburetors. Lift all pots up onto pot feet to prevent cracks or broken pots. Move your best pots to the front door where you can enjoy them.

Pruning shrubs

Some perennials have exquisite seed heads, and these can be left for the birds. Whilst others simply die back, clear this all away. Remove all perennial weeds from the border like dandelion and docks. Mulch heavily the entire border and either fertilser now with slow release fertilser or early spring. Clear away all canes, supports and string, giving the whole border a clean and organised feel for the winter.

Bulbs

All bulbs should be planted now. Check those you are forcing, if they have reached two inches they can be brought into a cool frost-free position but with more light and more water.

Lawns

Remove all leaves from the lawns. Try and give edges a final trim to prevent grass from growing into the border. Only on dry days cut the lawn very high if necessary over winter, but never on frosty lawns.

Hellebores

Mulch around hellebores with leaf mould or compost. If you want perfect flowers early next year, consider placing a pane of glass over the entire plant. This will protect the flowers from splash back but not too large because the plant still needs water.

Snow

If we receive snow and it is heavy like last year, get out into the garden and use a rake to shake it mostly off. The heavy snow breaks branches, stems and flattens shrubs so they receive lots of broken stems. This may cause disease to enter the plants system. Hedges can be ruined if left. Perennials will be protected by the snow so do not worry about them.

So happy gardening folks, enjoy the winter and your gardens, look and see what is flowering amongst your shrubs and pick a few stems ,bring inside and enjoy their fragrance in a vase.

CENTENARY
Home & Garden

Open
December
Wednesday 24th (till 4pm)
Monday 29th
Tuesday 30th
Wednesday 31st

Closed
December
Christmas Day
St Stephen's Day
Saturday 27th

January
Thursday 1st

CENTENARY
Agri

Open
December
Wednesday 24th (till 4pm)
Monday 29th
Tuesday 30th
Wednesday 31st

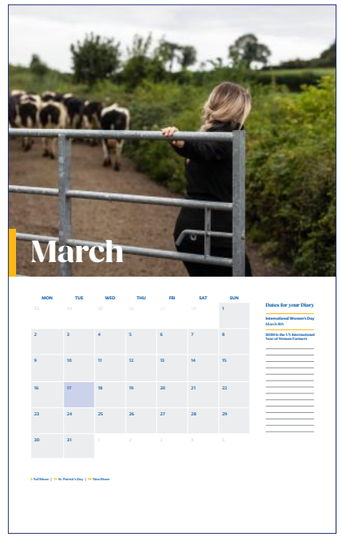
Closed
December
Christmas Day
St Stephen's Day
Saturday 27th

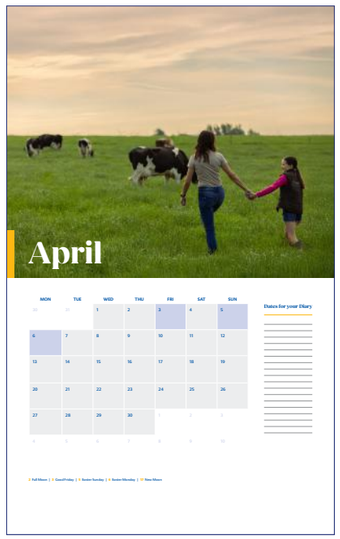
January
Thursday 1st

Centenary Thurles 2026 Calendar

Our calendar is now available at all branches. 2026 is the International Year of Women Farmers and we would like to acknowledge and celebrate the vital role women play in our communities and our future.

We wish everyone a safe and fulfilling year.





centenarythurles.com Telephone: 050491900 Facsimile: 050422657

@centenaryagri | @centenaryhomeandgarden @CThurles

@centenaryagritipperary | @centenaryhomeandgarden