

# Evaluation Form

# 2018

**Village of Birdhill,  
Co Tipperary,  
Ireland**



# 2018 Evaluation Form

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**Community:** Village of Birdhill  
**Province/Country:** Co Tipperary, Ireland  
**Category:** International Challenge Small

<b>Tidiness</b>	132.50	/	150.00
<b>Environmental Action</b>	132.50	/	150.00
<b>Heritage Conservation</b>	130.00	/	150.00
<b>Urban Forestry</b>	150.00	/	175.00
<b>Landscape</b>	164.50	/	200.00
<b>Floral Displays</b>	148.50	/	175.00
	<b>Total</b>		<b>858.00 / 1000.00</b>

**Percentage :** 85.80%

**Bloom rating:** 5 Blooms – Bronze

**Bloom rating:** Up to 55%: 1 bloom. 56% to 63%: 2 blooms. 64% to 72%: 3 blooms 73% to 81%: 4 blooms. >82%: 5 blooms.

National and International Edition, for evaluated communities only.

82 to 83.9%: 5 Blooms. 84 to 86.9%: 5 Blooms (Bronze). 87 to 89.9%: 5 Blooms (Silver). 90% and over: 5 Blooms Gold

**Mention:** Community Park

**Representative (s) of Community**

Name: Denis Floyd Function: Chair, Birdhill Tidy Towns  
 Name: Rosemary Joyce Function: Nenagh Municipal District, Senior executive Officer  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Function: \_\_\_\_\_

**Judges**

Name: Berta Briggs Name: Karin Rindal

**Evaluation**

**date:** June 29, 2018

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## IMPORTANT NOTES:

Evaluation is adjusted to the climate and environmental conditions of the community.

Some aspects of the evaluation might not be applicable: scoring will be prorated.

The score will vary from the previous year based on the facts that the evaluation form is subject to modifications each year and that the scores are based on the perception of the current judges.

## SECTORS OF EVALUATION

### Municipal:

- Municipal properties, parks and green spaces, streets, streetscapes
- Properties owned and run by municipality such as museums, historical sites

### Business and Institutions:

Properties owned and managed by

- **Business:** commercial sector, shopping centres, commercial streets, industrial parks, manufacturing plants
- **Institutions:** schools, universities, churches, hospitals, service and community organization buildings (such as YMCA, Legion), private museums, Government and Crown Corporations buildings (such as Canada Post, provincial and federal parks, etc.)
- **Tourism bureaus and Chamber of Commerce offices**
- **Farms:** in rural communities, farms can be considered in this section

### Residential:

- Citizens and citizen groups acting within their own properties
- Residential property owners, rate payer groups

### Community Involvement:

The principle of community involvement is so fundamental to the program that it is considered in each segment of the evaluation.

- Individuals, community organizations, citizen groups (includes youth programs) – all contributing to various aspects of community improvement, including municipal spaces maintained through the efforts of volunteers and community
- Organized clubs such as horticultural societies, garden clubs, community associations, school groups
- Service clubs such as Rotary, Lions, Optimist
- Participation (financial and/or in-kind or employee participation) by the municipality, businesses and institutions.

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### GENERAL COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Congratulations to the Village of Birdhill for being selected by Ireland Tidy Towns to participate in the International Challenge of Communities in Bloom. We welcome you and thank you for competing! In this competition the Village of Birdhill has earned 5 Blooms - Bronze. Well done!

The Village of Birdhill has a long history of achievements as a small but mighty community. Most recently it was declared "Ireland's Tidiest Town" – this follows holding the title of "Ireland's Tidiest Village" for many years. Birdhill is definitely the pride of Tipperary and is often called upon to share with other municipalities how they achieved and maintain such excellent standards.

In 2015 with the amalgamation of 10 authorities within the county it was cited in the corporate plan to strive toward economic development, social inclusiveness, and environmental sustainability. Like many communities, Birdhill has been using the Tidy Town model for many years to be well advanced upon this path. Leadership is vital to success and effective leadership is recognizing the great talent at hand that is happy to be exploited for the betterment of the community. Birdhill has the talented and skilled volunteers that are eager to work with each other under the kind and gentle leadership of their chair, Denis Floyd. Birdhill Tidy Towns has been able to leverage very modest funding with sustained and talented volunteer participation.

The Community Park has to be the epitome of what Birdhill is all about. This is a park that has not been imposed upon the community, it has been conceived and built and expanded and renovated to meet the needs and desires of the community. It is the heart of the community and the site for so many events and activities throughout the year.

The Community Profile we received prior to our visit is excellent. It is attractive and very informative. We hope it is on your website and we highly encourage that a hard copy be placed in places like waiting rooms so local residents can read about themselves and their wonderful community.

The information we received in advance and the well-planned and well-executed tour allowed us to learn about and see something of every criteria under evaluation. We always learn new things during our evaluation tours and one thing we were delighted to learn about is hurling – such fun!

The motto of Communities in Bloom is "People, Plants and Pride – growing together!" The Village of Birdhill certainly exemplifies this. Thank you for sharing your community with us!

Berta Briggs and Karin Rindal

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<b>TIDINESS</b>		
<p>Tidiness includes an overall tidiness effort by the municipality, businesses, institutions and the residents throughout the community. Elements for evaluation are parks and green spaces, medians, boulevards, sidewalks, streets; municipal, commercial, institutional and residential properties; ditches, road shoulders, vacant lots, signs and buildings; weed control, litter clean-up (including cigarette butts and gum), graffiti prevention/removal and vandalism deterrent programs.</p>		
	<b>Max</b>	<b>Actual</b>
<b>Municipal</b>		
<b>Overall Impressions</b> Tidiness, order, cleanliness and first impressions	10	9
<b>Anti-litter</b> Community anti-litter awareness programs	10	9
<b>Regulations</b> Effective bylaws, programs and policies and enforcement; litter control, unsightly private property maintenance by-laws, graffiti prevention and eradication, graffiti removal kits to residents	10	9
<b>Cleanliness</b> Of public green infrastructure: parks, streetscapes (sidewalks, planters, urban signage and furniture such as benches, litter and recycling containers etc.)	15	14
<b>Municipal Properties Appearance</b> Visual appeal and condition of municipal buildings and properties (including city hall grounds),	15	13
<b>Business &amp; Institutions</b>		
<b>Overall Impressions</b> Tidiness, order and cleanliness and first impressions	15	13
<b>Site Conditions</b> Condition of buildings (exterior maintenance), grounds, sidewalks and parking lots	15	13
<b>Furniture Appearance</b> Condition of urban furniture: benches, litter and recycling containers	5	4
<b>Residential</b>		
<b>Overall Impressions</b> Tidiness, order and cleanliness	20	18
<b>Property Conditions</b> Condition of buildings, grounds and yards	15	13.5
<b>Community Involvement</b>		
<b>Public Participation</b> In community, neighbourhood or individual street tidiness, clean-up programs, activities and annual maintenance (including promotion, organization, innovations involving youth and seniors, etc.)	10	8.5
<b>Community Support</b> Financial and/or in-kind or participation by the municipality, businesses and institutions for community clean-up programs	10	8.5
<b>Tidiness Total</b>	<b>150.00</b>	<b>132.50</b>

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## TIDINESS

### Observations:

The Village of Birdhill is under the administration of nearby Nenagh. The municipal building is modern, attractive and very clean and tidy both inside and out.

Birdhill takes tidiness very seriously and all areas on the evaluation tour were clean, tidy and well maintained. There is a new Litter Management Plan that was formulated with set objectives and within it are clear targets: roadside litter, illegal dumping black spots, street litter, unauthorized signage, household waste disposal, dog fouling and graffiti. The Plan is clearly working. Littering laws are firmly enforced.

There is an annual spring clean-up and for ongoing care there is a rotating schedule of volunteers who assure Birdhill is a litter free community. Plogging (jogging with a litter bag) is encouraged and is becoming a common activity. There is even a Gum Litter Campaign.

All hard landscape features including benches, sculptures and art items, planters, signs, play equipment, etc. are all very clean and in good condition.

Homes, businesses and public buildings are tidy and in good repair.

Roads, trails and sidewalks are maintained to an appropriate standard. Rural and farm properties are orderly and in good condition.

### Recommendations:

There are a few weeds at vacant buildings, such as the old post office, and some in sidewalk cracks at the industrial park. Knowledge in weed identification can always be useful; perhaps a workshop could be offered, or have lists of invasive weeds on the Tidy Towns website. Identification of weeds before they become a problem is important. Japanese knotweed is an invasive weed that Birdhill is working on to keep under control.

Weeds are essentially plants growing out of control putting desirable plants at risk. Use caution when introducing plants from the pollinator guide – buddleia, for example, is considered a medium level invasive in Ireland and the UK. Barberry is also listed on the Irish National Biodiversity Centre database of invasive species but is listed in the Pollinator Friendly Garden Guide.

It is advisable to be proactive with maintenance - some of the large, multi-tiered planters are starting to show signs of rust. A paint touch-up when they are cleaned out in the fall can keep them in good shape for years to come.

There are some dark colored safety cones that would be more visible with some reflective tape.

Educational panels should be checked for consistency. Maintaining a standard set of fonts and overall look for all informational placards contributes to the impression of tidiness.

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<b>ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION</b>		
<p>Environmental action pertains to the impact of human activities on the environment and the subsequent efforts and achievements of the community with respect to: policies, by-laws, programs and best practices for waste reduction and landfill diversion, composting sites, landfill sites, hazardous waste collections, water conservation, energy conservation, and environmental stewardship activities under the guiding principles of sustainable development pertaining to green spaces.</p>		
	<b>Max</b>	<b>Actual</b>
<b>Municipal</b>		
<b>Sustainable Development Strategies</b> Policies, programs, guidelines, long-term planning/vision; effective bylaws/policies and their enforcement; and public education programs and activities	20	18
<b>Waste Reduction</b> Reduction of waste going to landfill and results (3-R: reduce, reuse and recycle), municipal composting programs, including activities such as composting sites, yard waste collections, mulching of wood debris (Christmas trees, hedge trimmings, etc.) & reclamation of cut trees. Handling of hazardous waste including e-waste collection and reuse of compost material.	20	18
<b>Water Conservation</b> Use-reduction programs such as promotions, efficient irrigation, use of non-potable water, water restriction policies	15	13
<b>Energy Conservation</b> Programs such as alternate forms of energy (ex. geothermal, biomass, wind, solar) and initiatives such as: energy-efficient appliances, shielding for night skies, efficient street lighting	15	14
<b>Environmental Initiatives, Innovations and Actions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development and expansion of sustainable mobility and active transportation network such as bike lanes and multi-used pathways;</li> <li>- Horticultural practices such as green roofs, green walls, green lanes, living fences, buffer zones; re-use of sites; engineered wetlands, bio-swales, permeable surfaces and rain water management</li> <li>- Brownfield redevelopment, remediation, land reclamation</li> <li>- Air quality programs such as anti-idling, reduction of greenhouse gas emission (carbon reduction).</li> </ul>	10	8.5
<b>Business &amp; Institutions</b>		
<b>Participation in The Environmental Effort</b> Waste management (reduce, reuse and recycle), water conservation, energy conservation, brownfield management	10	9
<b>Corporate Environmental Action</b> Innovation/stewardship, initiatives, activities (for example: environmental clean-up activities)	10	8
<b>Residential</b>		
<b>Participation in Environmental Initiatives</b> 3-R (reduce, reuse and recycle), composting	10	9
<b>Water Conservation</b> Practices such as water use reduction, rainwater collection and rain gardens	15	13.5
<b>Community Involvement</b>		
<b>Public Participation – Civil Action</b> Participation in public forums and policy development on environmental issues	5	4.5
<b>Public Participation in Activities</b> Community (including children/youth), neighbourhood or individual street environmental activities and programs (including promotion, organization and evidence of taking ownership, etc.)	10	9
<b>Community Support</b> Financial and/or in-kind or participation by the municipality, businesses and institutions in public environmental activities and programs	10	8
<b>Environmental Action Total</b>	<b>150.00</b>	<b>132.50</b>



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## ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

### Observations:

Both current and future economic development is closely tied to a healthy and protected environment. Along with all of Ireland, Birdhill is actively and successfully reducing emissions within the principles of the Kyoto Accord. The Tipperary Energy Agency (TEA) was established as a response to Kyoto with the mandate to promote sustainable energy. To date there have been multiple projects that are effecting the transition of Tipperary to a low carbon future.

The 3 R's are all well addressed. The Bring Banks accept beverage containers and clothing while most homes use Blue Bins to divert other recyclables. Hazardous goods and e-waste are dropped off at a choice of three facilities. There are workshops to learn how to reduce food waste in the home and the School hosts a Fashion Show of outfits designed and made by students from recycled fabrics. Farms produce a huge amount of waste plastic with bale and silage wraps, etc. and there is a service available to them for the disposal and recycling of the plastics.

The Tidy Towns committee manages the composting of garden waste and Christmas trees are shredded. The compost and the wood chip are used on village flower beds.

The Birdhill Elementary School is looking to achieve its' fifth Green Flag designation. This is no small feat. Congratulations! The theme this year is biodiversity.

Ardnacrusha Hydro - Electric Generating Station has won awards in the past for both design and environmental efforts. There is a built-in fish bypass that allows for passage of migrating fish. Staff conduct on-site salmon fish breeding to balance out loss created by changes in habitat. This is reported to have stabilized salmon and eel numbers.

Water conservation is top of mind this year with all of Ireland experiencing drought conditions in the high temperature, low rainfall conditions. A Sustainable Drainage System is being implemented to keep rain water in place by reducing run-off. Rain water harvesting is gaining in use. Birdhill uses harvested water for their planters and baskets. Most homes have water butts.

A volunteer group calling itself the Birdhill Energy Scheme is working to do audits then advise and assist residents in upgrading and retrofitting their homes and businesses to be more energy efficient. These efforts have saved almost 4 million kWh in 5 years! Use of solar energy is increasing and visiting a residential wood gasification heating system was part of the evaluation tour.

A "Hitching Post" encourages ride sharing (or hitch hiking).

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### Recommendations:

Continue to keep residents informed about ways they can reduce their environmental footprint. The Zero Waste tips on the Birdhill website are excellent but they scroll through a little too quickly to be easily read.

The Greener Gardening brochure is well done to encourage the best practices involving more organic gardening methods and mulching to reduce water usage, as well as weeds control. Try to find ways for wider distribution. A workshop to encourage local residents on implementing greener gardening techniques is one suggestion. A spin-off value of such a workshop is bringing people together.

A composting workshop could be well received. If people grasp the idea that no organic material should leave their property, they can become very receptive to composting techniques. They learn it is easy and is just a case of changing habits.

Statistics speak volumes – consider publicizing the steady reduction of emissions, cost reductions, green energy production, waste diverted from landfills, etc. Using bar graphs, thermometer style graphs, pictographs or any other representation that translates tangible success. A permanent spot on the website would have people checking from time to time to see how their efforts are making a difference.

The 'Hitching Post' is a great reminder that ride sharing is possible. Ride sharing could be increased with an app to link people who are driving to a destination with people who wish to go there. Continue to promote ride sharing as well as cycling, walking, trains and buses to reduce pressure on the environment.

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<b>HERITAGE CONSERVATION</b>		
<p>Heritage conservation includes efforts to preserve natural and cultural heritage within the community. Preservation of natural heritage pertains to policies, plans and actions concerning all elements of biodiversity including flora and fauna ecosystems and associated geological structures and formations. Cultural conservation refers to the heritage that helps define the community including the legacy of tangible (built/hard assets) elements such as heritage buildings, monuments, memorials, cemeteries, artifacts, museums and intangible elements such as traditions, customs, festivals and celebrations. The participation of groups such as historical societies and conservation groups is considered.</p>		
	<b>Max</b>	<b>Actual</b>
<b>Municipal</b>		
<b>Natural Heritage Strategic Plans</b> Policies, by-laws and their enforcement and effective programs	10	8
<b>Natural Heritage Management Plans</b> Management and preservation initiatives: including eco systems, eco parks, protection of sensitive habitats, species at risk, support for at risk pollinators, grasslands, naturalization, wetlands, urban agriculture/farming, and wildlife	15	14
<b>Natural Heritage Promotion</b> Management and promotion of natural heritage (through communications, information and support programs, economic development/tourism) including activities and programs (year-round) for education and use of natural heritage sites for and by the public	15	13.5
<b>Cultural Heritage Strategic Plans</b> Policies, by-laws and plans and preservation initiatives for heritage buildings, cemeteries, artefacts, museums, monuments, heritage trees and gardens, including their integration with streetscapes and landscape	15	13.5
<b>Cultural Heritage Activities</b> Initiatives throughout the year including festivals and celebrations along with preservation of traditions and customs	10	9
<b>Business &amp; Institutions</b>		
<b>Natural Heritage Assets</b> Conservation, restoration and integration of natural heritage, including eco parks, conservation areas, heritage gardens, trees and landscapes.	15	12.5
<b>Cultural Heritage Assets</b> Conservation, restoration and reuse of heritage buildings and artefacts including their integration with the built/hard?, streetscapes and green landscapes	10	8.5
<b>Residential</b>		
<b>Cultural Heritage Initiatives</b> Conservation/restoration and reuse of heritage buildings, artefacts on residential lands	10	8.5
<b>Community Involvement</b>		
<b>Natural Heritage Public Participation</b> Participation in community (including children/youth), neighbourhood or individual natural heritage programs including developing policies and plans, site improvements and management, conservation and education initiatives	15	13
<b>Natural Heritage – Community Support</b> Financial and/or in-kind or participation by the municipality, businesses and institutions (including environmental groups) in community-initiated natural heritage activities and programs	15	13
<b>Cultural Heritage - Public Participation</b> Participation in community (including children/youth), neighbourhood or individual cultural heritage programs including year-round heritage community events/activities, festivals and celebrations along with preservation of traditions and customs	10	8
<b>Cultural Heritage - Community Support</b> Financial and/or in-kind or participation by the municipality, businesses and institutions (including historical societies) in community-initiated cultural heritage activities and programs.	10	8.5
<b>Heritage Conservation Total</b>	<b>150.00</b>	<b>130.00</b>

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## HERITAGE CONSERVATION

### Observations:

Ireland is very proactive in preserving, protecting and promoting its' natural heritage under a number of land use bylaws. Natural habitats are protected under a Natural Landscape Policy. Ireland is very diligent in monitoring all indigenous species be it birds, animals, fish, etc.; for example there are 80 protected plants in Ireland.

The Birdhill Community Park has a small wildlife corridor that serves as a demonstration of the value of retaining and re-establishing such corridors. Interpretive boards illustrate how important it is to allow the natural movement of all critters, bugs, reptiles, creepy crawlers, fungi, etc. to have a healthy eco system. The interpretive boards are changed seasonally to fully tell the story.

Interpretive boards telling of the natural history of the area are placed on the many trails as well as in the Community Park. They are very well done with excellent photos and relevant information.

The excellent trails have been planned and created to allow access for visitors, but with sensitivity toward protecting the fragile environment.

The new apple orchard with an apple tree representing each County in Ireland is a unique nod to the history and tradition of apple growing in Ireland.

Few communities have a heritage that includes a myth about the origin of its name as well as a song "Sweet Birdhill". The village's past is important to residents as demonstrated through the care of restored buildings and the interest in traditional music, language and dance.

There is a Heritage Trail with a corresponding brochure. The Literary walk is a lovely idea incorporating famous quotes as well as citizen contributions.

There are five protected structures in Birdhill. Landmark buildings include Cooper's Pub, the Old Barracks, and the former Creamery and old Post Office. Artifacts dot the village including antique water pumps and vintage farm implements at the entrance roundabout. A restored telephone booth fittingly serves as an information booth and is incorporated into a little pocket park with a bench and a 'hitching post' to add charm to the streetscape.

The beautifully maintained train station is over 150 years old and is still in active use.

While digging in Birdhill to establish a new motorway, workmen discovered ancient artifacts and uniquely styled cooking sites. Information about these discoveries is displayed on a placard at the apple orchard near where they were unearthed.

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### Recommendations:

Consider working with the Irish Plant Society to set up a speciality garden devoted to threatened Irish plants. More information is available at <http://irishgardenplantsociety.com/irish-heritage-plants-plandai-oidhreachta-2/>.

It appears that Birdhill is involved in Birdwatch Ireland but exactly to what extent is unclear on the organization's website. Hopefully there can be greater community involvement in the Irish Garden Bird Survey, as well as in activities to help the many endangered birds in Ireland. Specifically, it would be interesting to learn more about swifts in the context of Birdhill since they are an endangered species.

The interpretive boards are excellent. As boards require replacement or more are added, consider putting a QR code on them to link with smart phones allowing people to access more information about the natural heritage if they choose.

The property housing the old Creamery and Post Office has been purchased and is slated for redevelopment. The new owners appear to be sensitive to the historical value of the property. Try to urge community input and consultation with the developer to respect and represent the heritage elements of the site. It would be nice to see a part of the new development devoted to the history of Birdhill along with its myths and legends.

Cemeteries hold wonderful stories about the people and reflect events in history. A graveyard tour may be worthy of consideration. Gravestones reflect the impact of events such as the potato famine or the Spanish flu; or famous forefathers or foremothers and their influence in the history of Birdhill. High School history teachers find this is a research project that often appeals to their students.

A list of the Literary Walk quotes would be helpful, as some are hard to read. A handout or phone app that encourages people to walk and write in the name of the person who voiced the quote would make it more interactive.

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<b>URBAN FORESTRY</b>		
<p>Urban forestry includes the efforts of the municipality, businesses, institutions and residents with regards to written policies, by-laws, standards for tree management (selection, planting, and maintenance), long and short-term management plans, tree replacement policies, pollinator-friendly tree selection, tree inventory, and Integrated Pest Management (IPM), heritage, memorial and commemorative trees.</p>		
	<b>Max</b>	<b>Actual</b>
<b>Municipal</b>		
<b>Overall Impression</b> Overall impact, benefit and first impression of the urban forest	10	9
<b>Strategic Plans</b> Policies, regulations and tree by-laws, tree protection and planting on public and private lands	15	13
<b>Urban Forestry Plan</b> Plan, design and inventory management including integration with overall green infrastructure landscape plan, and measures to preserve, protect, manage and expand overall tree inventory, including woodlots	20	17
<b>Plan of Action</b> Procurement, species diversity (including native trees), selection of hardy and pollinator habitat tree species, recommended tree list and tree planting standards.	10	8
<b>Integrated Pest Management (IPM) / Plant HealthCare (PHC):</b> plan of action for invasive pest detection and control, information on current infestations and diseases	10	8.5
<b>Public Information Programs</b> Provides information on good planting techniques, best practices and maintenance programs	15	13
<b>Maintenance Quality</b> Best practices with demonstrated results	10	8.5
<b>Qualified Resources</b> Qualified personnel (including seasonal staff and/or qualified experienced contractors) and/or in place training programs	5	4
<b>Business &amp; Institutions</b>		
<b>Tree inventory</b> Contribution to expanding overall tree inventory, with consideration of design and diversity including native and hardy species of trees, on properties owned by businesses and institutions.	15	12.5
<b>Maintenance Quality</b> Programs, best practices with demonstrated results: watering, pruning, IPM	10	9
<b>Residential</b>		
<b>Tree Planting</b> Contribution to expanding overall tree inventory, with consideration of design and diversity including native and hardy species of trees on residential properties	15	13
<b>Maintenance Quality</b> Best practices with demonstrated results	10	8.5
<b>Community Involvement</b>		
<b>Public Participation</b> Participation (including children/youth) in tree planting and conservation programs such as Green Streets Canada, Arbor Day, Maple Leaf Day, and other tree planting and maintenance programs and activities on public lands (including promotion, organization etc.)	20	18
<b>Community Support</b> Financial and/or in-kind or participation or promotion by the municipality, businesses and institutions for community tree planting and conservation programs on public lands	10	8
<b>Urban Forestry Total</b>	<b>175.00</b>	<b>150.00</b>



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## URBAN FORESTRY

### Observations:

Trees are very important in Birdhill both as part of the landscape and an important part of the economy with the commercial woodlots. Many streets are enchantingly flanked by a canopy on both sides of the road.

The story of local trees is perhaps best portrayed on the Pollagh Trail. The trail passes through natural woods, as well as past the woodlots. There is a brochure describing the trail and the trees (and wildlife) that a visitor encounters. There is also a large interpretive poster board on the Trail that details the trees in the area.

The commercial woodlots are largely evergreen with a mandated 15% deciduous to help increase the biodiversity and to sequester CO2.

Ireland celebrates National Tree Week. Birdhill uses the week to distribute leaflets about trees and their care. Planting a diverse variety of trees is stressed and selecting native species is promoted. The regular newsletter to residents often has tree tips relevant to the season. Tidy Towns have participated in workshops on the identification and control of invasives.

School children are taught tree identification as part of their curriculum. The school is very close to a food forest that established with an initial 32 apple trees – one from each county of Ireland. This year berry shrubs are being added to the orchard.

There are commemorative trees in the Community Park. Rather than adding a plaque to each tree Birdhill has wisely placed a donor board that can be added to as required to acknowledge the occasion and sponsor of each tree. Trees within the park are clearly labelled with their variety name. ‘White Light’ is a birch hybrid developed in Birdhill.

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### Recommendations:

There is a concern with the commercial woodlots that under corporate management and control that there is more interest in profit than in the maintaining biodiversity and implementing a long term strategic plan for ongoing sustainability. As concerned citizens continue to apply pressure for companies to be better stewards of the land and your environment.

The new industrial park offers the space to plant many more trees. The ones that are there are a single specie – encourage the planting of a diverse variety of trees to reduce risk of disease or insect infestation. In such settings it can be more aesthetically pleasing to plant trees in groupings. Maintenance is easier so mowing can be done around the island of mulched trees rather around individual trees.

Encourage home owners to plant more trees on their properties, including the use of more shrubs to soften the foundation lines of homes.

At present the Council encourages the replacement of a removed tree with the planting of a native tree. Consider implementing a policy requiring the planting of three trees for every tree removed on municipal property and similarly as part of the building permit for trees removed on new builds on private property. The distribution of guidelines to the community on the properly sized tree well diameters would be helpful.

The apple trees in the orchard are missing signage on their origin. Consider adding this for educational purposes.

A chestnut displayed some type of stress or disease. It could be blight. See <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?PID=200> . Good hygiene practices like regular raking of leaves can prevent spread and reoccurrence. Note however that tree expert Thomas Pakenham said “the four diseases of ash, chestnut, beech and oak represented the “horsemen of the apocalypse” for Irish forestry. He said his estate, Tullynally Castle in Co Westmeath, loses one horse chestnut a year. He attributed the disease to globalization, with parasites probably coming on pallets from the Far East. But, he said, Indian and Asian horse chestnuts seem to have become immune, which offers hope. “

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<b>LANDSCAPE</b>		
<p>Landscape includes planning, design, construction and maintenance of parks and green spaces suitable for the intended use and location on a year-round basis. Elements for evaluation include: native and introduced materials; balance of plants, materials and constructed elements; appropriate integration of hard surfaces and art elements, use of turf and groundcovers. Landscape design should harmonize the interests of all sectors of the community. Standards of execution and maintenance should demonstrate best practices, including quality of naturalization, use of groundcovers and wildflowers along with turf management.</p>		
	<b>Max</b>	<b>Actual</b>
<b>Municipal</b>		
<b>Gateway Impressions</b> First impressions of the community including gateway/entrance treatments	10	8
<b>Sustainable Designs – Soft Landscape</b> Sustainable designs (seasonally adjusted year round): energy efficient, use of green materials, naturalization, xeriscaping, suitable plant varieties (including pollinator friendly) , traffic calming, bank stabilisation	10	7.5
<b>Sustainable Designs - Hard Landscape</b> Urban and civic design standards for streetscape and public places: flags, banners, public art, fountains, site furnishings, signage, seasonal design and décor, walkways and paving materials	10	8
<b>Landscape Plan</b> Integrated and implemented throughout the municipality	10	8
<b>Turf Management Programs</b> Integrated Pest Management (IPM), Plant Health Care (PHC), alternative solutions to diseases and infestations when appropriate, increased naturalization and adapted maintenance programs	10	8
<b>Landscape Maintenance</b> Policies, Standards, Best Practices and Programs	10	9
<b>Landscape Quality</b> Landscape maintained to appropriate standards, specs and best practices.	5	4
<b>Qualified Resources</b> Qualified personnel (including seasonal staff) and/or in place training programs and/or qualified experienced contractors	10	8
<b>Year-round use</b> Demonstrated year-round opportunities and programs for education and use of parks and green spaces (urban agriculture, community gardens, parks and recreation programs)	10	8.5
<b>Business &amp; Institutions</b>		
<b>Sustainable Designs</b> (Seasonally adjusted year-round): energy efficient, use of green materials, naturalization, xeriscaping, alternate groundcovers, urban agriculture	10	7.5
<b>Integrated Plan</b> Contribution to urban & civic design and public green spaces above requirements: such as public art, streetscape, site furniture, fountains & innovation in concept & design	15	12.5
<b>Maintenance Quality</b> Adequate ongoing life cycle management (ongoing maintenance, ground & asset management, rehabilitation & replacement) of all landscape elements	10	8
<b>Residential</b>		
<b>Streetscape Appeal</b> Of landscapes (year-round, seasonal, themed)	15	12.5
<b>Maintenance Quality</b> Lawn care, trees and shrub maintenance (with demonstrated results)	15	12.5
<b>Plant Selection</b> Selection of plant material (native, local, innovative, edible & pollinator friendly plants)	10	8
<b>Community Involvement</b>		
<b>Public Participation</b> in community programs (including children/youth) such as: urban agriculture, community gardens, "yard of the week", volunteer park maintenance, holiday illumination & decoration (promotion, organization, etc.)	20	17
<b>Volunteer Recognition</b> Recognition (by municipality and/or volunteer groups) of volunteer efforts in all aspects of the Communities in Bloom program including activities in all evaluated criteria	20	17.5
<b>Landscape Total</b>	<b>200.00</b>	<b>164.50</b>

# 2018 Evaluation Form

## LANDSCAPE

### Observations:

The layout of Birdhill is a small village in the heart of the much larger community. The idyllic setting offers everything that a community requires with the central Village Green, train station and bus stop, restaurants/pubs, a couple businesses and the wonderful Community Park. Nearby is the school, community hall and church.

There are a number of features that provide a warm welcome to Birdhill; a large stone/pebble bed saying “Failte” (welcome in Irish), the symbolic white bird etched on a rock, and a simple directional sign to the Birdhill roundabout anchored with lush lavender. The roundabout itself has old farm implements placed as a nod to the history of and the ongoing importance of agriculture in the community.

Various artistic elements continue through the village with the pumps, fountain, mural at the creamery, the landscaped spring bubbling down the bank, repurposed telephone booth, “Bright Bird”, and the dovecote in the white garden, to name a few. There are so many reasons for the passerby to stop and stay a while.

The trails are a compelling feature of Birdhill –the Pollagh Trail, the Arts and Architecture Trail, the Literary Trail, and the Walking Routes and Heritage Trail. Birdhill is also on the Blueway Recreational Trail. It is evident that these trails are very popular with both local and visiting hikers and cyclists. Good information is available on all of them and trails are dotted with well-designed and sturdy interpretive boards.

The Community Park is the heart of Birdhill and has been developed over the years by user/volunteers so it is a very personal park that serves the community extremely well. Communities in Bloom is all about the elements that create quality in life and this park addresses aspects of all criteria in Communities in Bloom – tidiness, environmental action, heritage conservation, urban forestry, landscape and floral displays. This is why this location is so well used and much loved. It is the centre of events and activities year round. The Fairy Trail and the autism-friendly garden are unique.

## 2018 Evaluation Form

### Recommendations:

Consider landscaping the roundabout so the farm implements are more integrated into one big design plan rather than a collection of little features that melt into the landscape. Perhaps a backdrop of native shrubs and some ornamental grasses would offer a more cohesive design. Care must be taken of course to protect sight lines for traffic.

The Village Green is charmingly eclectic. It features many symbols that are very important to the community – the elegant stainless steel ‘Bright Bird’ sculpture, the original pump, the bench of achievements, the 1916 memorial, etc. Think carefully about the function of and the activities in the Village Green and try to find something that ties the entire site together. It may be a hard landscaping element or even a floral theme or color to create a cohesive impression.

Keep an eye on the treatment of street furniture, sculptures and other elements so they are consistent with the look and feel you wish to have identified with your village. Without deliberate thought it is often easy to clutter a site when too many styles are incorporate within an area. As an example, the handicapped rail at the church does not match with other hardware and is not in keeping with the historic nature of the building. Painting it black would help if it can’t be replaced.

It was indicated that there are popular spots for people to take selfies. Consider enhancing these areas so the name “Birdhill” will likely show in the selfie.

Traffic roundabouts and islands are good places to add landscape elements that reflect the pride and personality of the community. Consider adding plantings or other landscapes elements to the blank traffic circle outside the school directly below the newly-planted apple orchard area. Perhaps a sculpture of a hurley or a stylized apple tree could be appropriate.

Holliston, Massachusetts is an America in Bloom participant. They have an award-winning garden designed for those with autism and sensory issues. Consider exchanging key learnings for your autism garden with them. Contact is Mark Ahronian email: [mark@ahronian.com](mailto:mark@ahronian.com)

# 2018 Evaluation Form

## 2018 Evaluation Form

<b>FLORAL DISPLAYS</b>		
<p>Floral displays evaluates efforts of the municipality, businesses, institutions and residents to design, plan, execute, and maintain floral displays of high quality standards. Evaluation includes the design and arrangements of flowers and plants (annuals, perennials, bulbs, ornamental grasses, edible plants, water efficient and pollinator friendly plants) in the context of originality, distribution, location, diversity and balance, colour, and harmony This pertains to flowerbeds, carpet bedding, containers, baskets and window boxes.</p>		
	<b>Max</b>	<b>Actual</b>
<b>Municipal</b>		
<b>Floral Display Plan of Action</b> Integration into overall landscape plan and distribution through community. Concept and design including sustainable design	15	13
<b>Diversity of Displays</b> Flowerbeds, raised beds, planters, hanging baskets, window boxes, carpet bedding, mosaics	20	18
<b>Diversity of Plants</b> Annuals, perennials, bulbs, grasses, woody plants, natural flora, pollinator friendly plants	10	7.5
<b>Maintenance Quality</b> Maintenance to appropriate specifications and standards, best practices: watering, weeding, edging, dead heading, etc.	20	17
<b>Qualified Resources</b> Qualified personnel (including seasonal staff) and/or in place training programs and/or qualified experienced contractors	10	8
<b>Business &amp; Institutions</b>		
<b>Design Concept</b> and design (including arrangement, diversity, colour of display and plants) on grounds	15	12.5
<b>Overall Plan</b> Contribution to, and integration with, overall community floral program	10	8
<b>Maintenance Quality</b> Of planting and maintenance: watering, weeding, edging, dead heading, etc. with demonstrated results.	10	8
<b>Residential</b>		
<b>Concept and Design</b> (including arrangement, diversity, colour of display and plants) on residential properties including Pollinator gardens and/or inclusion of pollinator plants in gardens	20	16.5
<b>Maintenance Quality</b> Of planting and maintenance with demonstrated results.	15	13
<b>Community Involvement</b>		
<b>Public Participation</b> In community projects, volunteer initiatives (including children/youth), outreach programs in floral displays (including promotion, organization, etc.)	15	13.5
<b>Community Support</b> Financial and/or in-kind or participation by the municipality, businesses and institutions for community floral displays activities	15	13.5
<b>Floral Displays Total</b>	<b>175.00</b>	<b>148.50</b>



## 2018 Evaluation Form

### FLORAL DISPLAYS

#### Observations:

Such a pretty village! And that is thanks largely to the vibrant floral displays. There are ground beds, raised beds, planters, baskets, and wall sconces. There are annual flowers, perennials, grasses, shrubs and bulbs.

Community involvement is key as all work from the planning, design, installation, maintenance to the fall clean-up is all volunteer! Birdhill Tidy Towns meet regularly and plan the themes and the floral displays three years in advance. The planning is for all season beauty. Monday night a crew gathers for maintenance of all the beds. Then daily, individuals take on the task of day-to-day watering and care. A great demonstration of pride and commitment!

The tiered black steel planters are strategically placed throughout the village. They are colorful and beautiful. Their consistency leads one through the village. Again the quality of care is admirable.

There is trend toward more perennial and sustainable beds that especially feature pollinators and wildflowers. There are 13 identified areas dominated by pollinator plants.

Birdhill in Bloom sponsors a Best Garden competition. Perhaps 'best rose' could be a part of this as there are stunning roses in Birdhill!

At the Railway Station is the alphabet garden that is well explained with the "Say it with Flowers" poster that links flowers with emotions.

## 2018 Evaluation Form

### Recommendations:

The monochromatic astilbe beds are attractive on their own but in the landscape they are almost lost. The dark color of the flowers and the bronzy nature of the foliage tends to draw in light rather than emit light. Colors such as yellow, lime and pink work; or, white is considered the night color because it almost glows in the moonlight. Consider adding some lighter colored flowers into the design or even frame the bed with light colored perennials.

The Tidy Towns achievement bench has blue and white campanulas planted around it with a stone chip ground cover. The plantings don't speak well to the significance of the bench, they appear sparse and don't bloom consistently through the season. This area around the bench is worthy of a new design. A new plan could be part of a general facelift (as mentioned under Landscape) to contribute to a theme that gives the Village Square a more cohesive feel.

The vegetable garden allotments beside the Barracks are no longer fulfilling their original mandate. It may be time to repurpose this area. Users said that it has become an area to grow a little 'extra' because most people have home vegetable gardens that meet their needs. Perhaps one or more of the restaurants might want to take over this area to produce 'home grown' for their kitchens. The back end of this area beyond the composter would lend itself to a nice shade garden with seating.

Created by a volunteer with donated plants, the Moon Garden is a great idea. Any new garden can take years to fill in well. It has a good start but could use more dense plantings for easier care and a more lush effect. Perhaps in the fall a call could be put out as people dig and divide their perennials to request additional white flowering perennials. The design team could help with a garden plan to enhance the moonlight theme. Sometimes plants grow taller than expected and need moving – perennial beds are ever evolving. Meanwhile huge kudos to the passionate volunteer who is creating this lovely moon garden!

As garden displays move toward more sustainable plantings and pollinator gardens in particular, there can be push back from the public who are used to manicured displays with conventional ornamental plant choices and mowed turf. To encourage greater acceptance by the public and circumvent any complaints, consider implementing signage to explain why areas are not being mowed. See the Pollinator Plant site for signage options <http://pollinators.ie/resources/signage-templates/>.

Use caution when introducing plants from the pollinator guide, buddleia for example is considered a medium level invasive in Ireland and the UK. Barberry is also listed on the Irish National Biodiversity Center database of invasive species but is listed on the Pollinator Friendly Garden guide.

# 2018 Evaluation Form

## 2018 Evaluation Form



### THANK YOU FOR YOUR INVOLVEMENT

“Within the context of climate change and environmental concerns, communities involved in the Communities in Bloom program can be proud of their efforts, which provide real and meaningful environmental solutions and benefit all of society.”

### COMMUNITIES IN BLOOM IS MADE POSSIBLE BY

The commitment of local, provincial and national volunteers

The support of elected officials and of staff in municipalities

The dedication of our judges, staff and organizations

The contributions of our sponsors and partners