

The Society of Irish Foresters
in association with the
The National Botanic Gardens
presents
The Annual Augustine Henry Forestry Lecture
‘To further planting of trees’: Arbor Day in 20th century Ireland
by
Dr Mary Forrest
Emeritus Associate Professor UCD Horticulture
and
Chair of the Irish Garden Plant Society
in
The National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin
Thursday, 23 March 2023 at 3.00 pm

National Tree Week and National Tree Day have become firm fixtures in the annual calendar of tree and biodiversity events in 21st century Ireland. In this country a forerunner of these tree events was known as ‘Arbor Day’ a term coined by an American, Julius Sterling Morton, in the 1870s.

This lecture draws on newspaper accounts, photographs and archival material to tell the story of Arbor Day in Ireland. The first Arbor Day took place in 1904. It was organised by the Irish Forestry Society and continued until 1918. From 1918 to 1923 Sinn Fein and local authorities held tree planting events on Arbor Day. For four years from 1935 the Department of Lands promoted Arbor Day in schools. In 1950 Trees for Ireland reintroduced Arbor Day, promoting tree planting in urban and rural areas and encouraging local community groups to do likewise. Their final Arbor Day took place at Áras an Uachtaráin in 1984. All these Arbor Days followed a similar format with speeches by local politicians and clergy referencing the social, sometimes nationalistic role of trees, followed by tree planting by dignitaries and young people. Some were festive occasions with school bands and participants parading to the planting site. How much of the Arbor Day planting remains today? There are fine trees on at least one site.

All are welcome

[This event is worth 15 CPD points to those registered on the CPD Programme](#)