

The Irish Wildflower Plant Identification course is a Level 6 course (10 credits) and a certificate will be awarded on successful course completion.

The course is due to commence in January 2026 and will run until early September 2026.

Participation on the course involves the following:

Mandatory – preparation of an herbarium with 100 flowering plants (full guidance will be provided):

Mandatory – attendance at an examination in ATU Sligo which will test your knowledge of the collected plants in your herbarium.

Optional (but recommended) - attendance at a number of classroom and field-based workshops which will be held on Saturday, primarily in the afternoons (see the table below for dates).

Draft schedule for online meetings, field trips (proposed)¹ and examination - 2026

Date	Time	Location	Details
January 13th 2026 (Tuesday)	7-8pm	Online via MS Teams	Introduction to the course, timetable for online and in person workshops, health and safety briefing. Recording will be available
Tuesday 3rd 2026 (Tuesday)	7-8pm	Online via MS Teams	Introduction to the course, timetable for online and in person workshops, health and safety briefing. Pressing plants and starting an herbarium.
February 24th 2026 (Tuesday)	7-8pm	Online via MS Teams	An introduction to plant parts and identification and the habitats of Ireland (recording available on Moodle)
March 10th 2026 (Tuesday)	7-8pm	Online via MS Teams	Ireland's vascular plants, their conservation status and why they need to be conserved
April 18th 2026 (Saturday)	1-5pm	ATU Sligo	Habitat = Urban. Examples of herbaria, plant identification. Easy to moderate walking pace.
May 9th 2026 (Saturday)	1-5pm	Hazelwood, Co. Sligo	Habitat = Deciduous woodland. Spring flowers of woodland. Easy to moderate walk – there is a footpath which can be muddy in wet weather.

Continued on next page. Note all on-line lectures and check-ins will be recorded and available on the course Moodle page

¹ As far as is possible, the workshops will run on these dates, subject to weather and other circumstances. Where a workshop has to be moved to another date, participants will receive as much notice as possible from the course co-ordinator.

Date	Time	Location	Details
May 19th & June 9th 2026 (Tuesdays)	7-8pm	Online via MS Teams	Virtual workshops on identification characteristics of different plant families. Students can check plant identifications and ask any questions about herbarium.
May 16th 2026 (Saturday)	1-5pm	Strandhill, Co. Sligo	Habitats = Sand dunes & coastal grassland. Extensive areas of coastal sand dunes and grasslands. Moderate to difficult in parts for walking, some sections have an incline – we'll be stopping frequently however.
June 6th 2026 (Saturday)	1-5pm	Farmland, Co. Leitrim	Habitats = Wet grassland and bog. A chance to understand how sensitive farming systems can maintain habitats. This will be a moderate walk at the start of the trip, over uneven ground, which may be wet underfoot.
September 5th 2026 (Saturday)	1-4pm	Examination in ATU Sligo	Each participant to take part in an individual examination which tests knowledge of the flowering plants in their herbarium. This must be completed and passed for students to be awarded the Special Purpose Award certificate. <i>(Please note this is an in-person exam).</i>

What will I learn?

During the course, the lecturer will explain the course outline, provide information on:

- How and where to collect wild flowering plants,
- Identification of habitats,
- Recording plant collection data e.g. date and location and other parameters,
- How to photograph (using smartphone/camera) the plant in situ for the herbarium,
- Characteristics of plants which can be used for their identification – in conjunction with the recommended books and keys,
- Advice on pressing and drying plant specimens for your personal herbarium,
- Cataloguing specimens into families and species.

A series of short video clips to assist in plant identification will be placed on the associated ATU Sligo course page (called the Moodle site) and participants will be shown how to access this site.

Recommended identification books

The Wildflowers of Ireland. A Field Guide. Zoe Devlin. (2014) - approximately €14.99.

Collin's Wild Flower Guide (Britain and Ireland). David Streeter. (2016) - approximately €34.99 for the paperback version.

Some participants may also wish to use the Webbs An Irish Flora (2012). John Parnell and Tom Curtis. Cork University Press – around €35. This book is quite technical for a beginner, but is specific to Ireland. Unfortunately, it is out of print at the moment, but you might be able to get a second hand copy.

Herbarium

Following the introductory workshop, it is up to the participants to collect up to 100 flowering plant specimens for their herbarium, to record the requisite information and to learn the scientific and common names.

Field Trip Workshops

The in-person field trip workshops are provided to help the participants identify plant specimens and will involve visits to local habitats to collect specimens. Assistance will be provided in resolving any problems encountered in identifying and preserving specimens.

IMPORTANT: The field trips will be held outdoors, over often uneven ground and in changeable weather conditions. Participants on the field trips should wear appropriate clothing and footwear and bring with them any refreshments, medications (including suncream) or other items they may require.

Examination

The examination will involve the participants presenting their herbarium and catalogue of specimens for examination. The candidate will be asked to identify a random number of specimens in terms of their scientific and common names. The percentage of specimens correctly identified will reflect the percentage mark obtained in the course.

If you have further queries, please do not hesitate to email me on dolores.byrne@atu.ie

Dr. Dolores Byrne

ATU – Lecturer in Environmental Science