



Design Your Own Bealtaine May Bush

Students explore the Celtic tradition of the May Bush, part of Ireland's ancient Bealtaine festival marking the beginning of summer.

Through research and art, students create their own symbolic May Bush using natural or recycled materials.



Learning Intentions:

Understand the cultural and historical significance of Bealtaine in Irish heritage.

Explore how symbols and materials communicate meaning in art.
Express personal and seasonal themes through creative design.

Subjects & Cross-Curricular Links:

History (Celtic traditions, seasonal festivals)

Art (visual communication, sustainability, design)

CSPE (cultural identity, active participation)

SPHE (wellbeing, seasonal reflection)



Step-by-Step Instructions:

1.Introduction (Whole Class):

- Begin with a short presentation or video on the origins of Bealtaine.
- Discuss traditional May Bushes: where they were placed, what they symbolised, and the materials used (e.g. hawthorn, ribbons, shells, flowers).

2.Individual or Group Research:

- Students research the symbolic meaning of elements (fire, fertility, protection, seasonal change).
- Students record notes on how the May Bush relates to nature and cultural celebration.

3.Design Time:

- Students sketch or plan their own May Bush.
- They gather or suggest suitable materials: twigs, ribbons, flowers, shells, fabric scraps, paper, recyclable items, etc.

4.Create Your Bush:

- Using small branches, wire frames, or even classroom materials, students build their version of a May Bush.
- Each student or group completes a short artist’s statement explaining:
 - What their May Bush represents
 - The meaning of the colours, textures, or symbols used
 - Why their design reflects Bealtaine

5.Display:

- Set up a “Bealtaine Garden” in the classroom or hallway with all student work.
- Optional: Invite other classes or staff to view the display during the week of May 1st.

Extension Activities:

- Creative writing: Write a myth or story inspired by the May Bush tradition.
- Photography: Capture and caption the Bealtaine Garden for school social media or newsletter.
- Celtic Calendar Study: Compare Bealtaine with Imbolc, Lughnasadh, and Samhain.



