

## Eliya Lavine

### *Seed Scholars*



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Eliya Lavine has long been frustrated with the practice of restricting schoolchildren's lessons to the decidedly unnatural space of the classroom.

Indeed, after moving to Ireland from her native Los Angeles, California, with her husband in 2018, and starting a teaching position in Dublin, she realised that the classroom's dominance of children's school experience extended beyond the US and into the Irish context.

Eliya responded in March 2020 by setting up Seed Scholars, a social enterprise with a mission to connect young people with nature, themselves and others through outdoor, immersive, and meaningful learning experiences.

"We reach young people through our core programme of workshops in which a Seed Scholars Educator meets with classes once per week for a minimum of six consecutive weeks. We also offer teacher training. Everything is customised to meet the groups' needs - from our existing menu of garden biodiversity and forest school oriented hands-on lessons," says Eliya, who has an undergraduate degree in sustainable food systems and a Master's degree in education from University of California Berkeley.

Now operating from a farm/woodland/garden space in Collinstown, Co. Westmeath, she is guided by the principle of teaching children to first love the earth before asking them to save it from the dual threats of biodiversity loss and climate crisis.

She continues: "I started the business in Dublin but am now focusing on reaching local Westmeath schools. We recently formulated designs for our new base in Collinstown where we have an incredible natural landscape and can host sessions for children as well as training for teachers and nature educators nationwide."

Eliya hails ACORNS for providing "powerful and incomparable" support through a ready-made network of fellow entrepreneurs. "ACORNS gave us a space where a diverse range of business owners could come together and be vulnerable about the challenges we were having and share solutions," she adds.

***Providing early stage female entrepreneurs, living in rural Ireland, with the knowledge, support and networking opportunities to meet and even exceed their current aspirations.***



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