

TREE TRAIL FACT SHEET

Alder

Swamp-dweller, water-lover. The wood of this tough tree doesn't rot when waterlogged, instead turning stronger and harder. Common name(s): alder, common alder, black alder, European alder

Scientific name: *Alnus glutinosa* Conical in shape, mature trees can reach a height of around 28m and live to approximately 60 years. The bark is dark and fissured and is often covered in lichen. Twigs have a light brown, spotted stem which turns red towards the top. Young twigs are sticky to touch.

Look out for: small brown cones, which are the female catkins and stay on the tree all year round.

Identified in winter by: female catkins (that look a bit like cones) and purple twigs with orange markings (known as lenticels).

Ash

One of our most beloved trees. Ash is one of the most common trees in the UK, but as ash dieback sweeps through, is it set to be erased from our countryside? Common names: ash, common ash, European ash

Scientific name: *Fraxinus excelsior*

When fully grown, ash trees can reach a height of 35m. Tall and graceful, they often grow together, forming a domed canopy. The bark is pale brown to grey and fissures as the tree ages. The tree is easily identified in winter by its smooth twigs that have distinctive black, velvety leaf buds arranged opposite each other.

Look out for: the black buds and clusters of seeds which are key features.

Identified in winter by: its distinctive black buds and flattened twigs.

Aspen

Trembling, fluttering and shimmering in the slightest breeze. The rippling leaves of this beautiful tree give it its name: quaking aspen. Common names: aspen, quaking aspen, common aspen, European aspen

Scientific name: *Populus tremula*

Also known as quaking aspen, this is a beautiful tree with shimmering foliage. Mature trees grow to 25m.

Older trees may be covered with lichen, which gives the trunk a black appearance, and the bark is grey and often pitted with diamond-shaped pores, called lenticels. The uppermost branches are sometimes bent over horizontally. Twigs are dark brown, slender and shiny.

Look out for: leaf stalks (petioles) which are flattened.

Identified in winter by: its twigs which are very knobbly, especially older ones. Buds spiral around and are closely pressed to the twig.

Beech

Monumental, majestic, home to rare wildlife. Beech is an enchanting species and known as the queen of British trees. To wander beneath the leafy canopy, its cathedral-like branches spreading upwards, is an awe-inspiring experience. Scientific name: *Fagus sylvatica*

Mature trees grow to a height of more than 40m and develop a huge domed crown. The bark is smooth, thin and grey, often with slight horizontal etchings. The reddish brown, torpedo-shaped leaf buds form on short stalks and have a distinctive criss-cross pattern. Look out for: the edges of the leaves which are hairy.

Triangular beech nuts form in prickly four-lobed seed cases.

Identified in winter by: leaf buds which are distinctively sharply pointed and not pressed against the twigs. They often hold on to their leaves throughout winter, a trait known as marcescence.

Birch, Silver

Pretty, pale, a symbol of purity. This common tree, with its silver-white bark, is favoured by gardeners who want to renew and purify their land for coming year.

Scientific name: *Betula pendula*

Silver birch is a striking, medium-sized deciduous tree. When mature they can reach 30m in height, forming a light canopy with elegant, drooping branches. The white bark sheds layers like tissue paper and becomes black and rugged at the base. As the trees mature, the bark develops dark, diamond-shaped fissures. Twigs are smooth, and have small dark warts.

Look out for: its bark, which is white, and its triangular-shaped leaves.

Identified in winter by: bark that is white year-round and twigs that are rough to the touch.

Crab Apple

A symbol of fertility and a forager's delight. Crab apple trees are associated with love and marriage and its small, hard fruits make an exquisite, jewel-coloured jelly

One of the ancestors of the cultivated apple (of which there are more than 6,000 varieties), it can live to up to 100 years. Mature trees grow to around 10m in height. They have an irregular, rounded shape and a wide, spreading canopy. With greyish brown, flecked bark, trees can become quite gnarled and twisted, especially when exposed, and the twigs often develop spines. This 'crabbed' appearance may have influenced its common name, 'crab apple'. The crab apple is one of the few host trees to the parasitic mistletoe, *Viscum album*, and trees are often covered in lichens.

Look out for: its 'crabbed' or spiny appearance because of gnarled and twisted twigs.

Identified in winter by: the edges of the bud scales which have a short row of hairs.

Elder

Feared by the devil. Favoured by foragers. Elder is the very essence of summer with its fragrant flowers and soot-dark fruits. It was said that an elder planted by your house would keep the devil away. Mature elder trees grow to a height of around 15m and can live for 60 years. Elder is characterised by its short trunk (bole), and grey-brown, corky, furrowed bark. It has relatively few branches.

Look out for: leaves which have 5–7 pairs of leaflets with sparsely serrated edges.

Identified in winter by: the green, unpleasant-smelling twigs which are hollow or have a white pith (spongy tissue) inside. Buds have a ragged appearance, often with leaves showing through the bud scales.

Elm, wych

Decimated by Dutch elm disease, the sweeping and majestic wych elm is a much rarer sight these days. Its loss goes hand-in-hand with the decline of the elusive white-letter hairstreak butterfly, whose caterpillars rely on elm leaves. Scientific name: *Ulmus glabra*

Trees can grow to a height of 30m. The bark is smooth and grey when young, becoming grey-brown and fissured after 20 years. Twigs are dark grey and covered in coarse hairs, and leaf buds are hairy, purple-black and squat in shape.

Look out for: the asymmetric leaf bases which are a feature of all elms. Leaves are rough to the touch on the top surface.

Identified in winter by: both bud and twig which are densely covered in orange hairs.

Field Maple

Pollution fighter, autumn stunner, syrup maker. The field maple is a sturdy broadleaf which supports caterpillars, aphids, and all their predators, all while resisting air pollution.

Scientific name: *Acer campestre*

The bark is light brown and flaky, and twigs are slender and brown and develop a corky bark with age. Small, grey leaf buds grow on long stems. Field maples can grow to 20m and live for up to 350 years.

Look out for: new seeds which are tinged with pink and the wings on the seeds set in a straight line.

Identified in winter by: the older twigs which have corky ridges and small, grey leaf buds.

Hawthorn

Named after the month in which it blooms and a sign that spring is turning to summer. The pale green leaves of this hedgerow staple are often the first to appear in spring, with an explosion of pretty pale-pink blossom in May. It simply teems with wildlife from bugs to birds. Mature trees can reach a height of 15m and are characterised by their dense, thorny habit, though they can grow as a small tree with a single stem. The bark is brown-grey, knotted and fissured, and twigs are slender and brown and covered in thorns. It often hybridises with the UK's other native hawthorn, Midland hawthorn (*Crataegus laevigata*). Both species are similar and can be hard to tell apart. Look out for: the deeply lobed leaves, spiny twigs and haws (berries).

Hazel

Catkins resembling lambs tails, and late-summer nuts. Hazel is one of the most useful trees for its bendy stems and as a conservation saviour. And its nuts are loved by people, squirrels and hazel dormice. Hazel is often coppiced, but when left to grow, trees can reach a height of 12m and live for up to 80 years (if coppiced, hazel can live for several hundred years). It has a smooth, grey-brown, bark, which peels with age, and bendy, hairy stems. Leaf buds are oval, blunt and hairy. Look out for: leaves which are soft to the touch as a result of the downy hairs on the underside. Hazel is often coppiced. Identified in winter by: its nuts, which are each held in a short, leafy husk which encloses about three quarters of the nut. Small, green catkins can be present in autumn.

Juniper

A cosy home for wildlife and a gin-drinker's delight, the juniper is a much-loved evergreen that brightens up the winter months. Scientific name: *Juniperus communis* Common juniper is an evergreen conifer. Mature trees can reach a height of 10m and live for up to 200 years. Its bark is grey-brown and peels with age, and its twigs are reddish brown. Look out for: needles that have a single pale band on the upper surface and are grey-green beneath. They are found in threes around the ridged twigs. The female cones look like blueberries. Identified in winter by: its needles which are present all year round. Twigs are ridged.

Larch

A spring-time show-off, European larch is a conifer full of surprises. Introduced over 400 years ago, it's a favourite with squirrels, birds and moths alike. Scientific name: *Larix decidua* Mature larch can grow to 30m and live for 250 years. It is fairly fast growing and cone-shaped when young, becoming broad with age. The bark is pinkish-brown in colour and thick, and develops wide vertical fissures with age. Twigs are amber or slightly pink, and hairless. Look out for: the needles which form in clusters, like rosettes, along the twigs. Identified in winter by: the small oval cones that remain on the tree, and the loss of its needle-like leaves.

Oak

The ruling majesty of the woods, the wise old English oak holds a special place in our culture, history, and hearts. It supports more life than any other native tree species in the UK; even its fallen leaves support biodiversity. A large, deciduous tree growing up to 20–40m tall. As common oaks mature they form a broad and spreading crown with sturdy branches beneath. Oaks even shorten with age in order to extend their lifespan. Look out for: its distinctive round-lobed leaves with short leaf stalks (petioles). Identified in winter by: rounded buds in clusters. Each bud has more than three scales.

Rowan

Bane of witches, diviner of the future and producer of jam, rowan is an elegant tree with a mystical history. Its leaves and berries are a favourite for wildlife in woods and towns alike. Scientific name: *Sorbus aucuparia* Mature trees can grow to 15m in height and can live for up to 200 years. The bark is smooth and silvery grey, and leaf buds are purple and hairy. Look out for: its 5–8 pairs of serrated leaflets which are distinctive. Identified in winter by: the young twigs which start hairy and become smooth later. Buds are hairy all over. Terminal buds (on the ends of shoots) are up to 8mm in length and lateral buds (in leaf axils) have 2–5 scales.

Scots Pine

Towering in the glen, the Scots pine is a truly stunning tree. It is one of only three native conifers, and our only native pine. It's the perfect home for iconic Scottish wildlife, such as the red squirrel, capercaillie, Scottish crossbill and the Scottish wildcat. Scientific name: *Pinus sylvestris*

Scots pine is an evergreen conifer native to northern Europe. Mature trees grow to 35m and can live for up to 700 years. The bark is a scaly orange-brown, which develops plates and fissures with age. Twigs are green-brown and hairless. Look out for: mature trees which have reddish bark towards the crown of the tree and brown bark towards the base. The needles are twisted and when broken, they have a fine white fringe of hairs. Identified in winter by: its evergreen needle-like leaves which are present all year-round.

Sycamore

Familiar, romantic, sticky. Sycamore might have been introduced by the Romans or in the 1500s. Since then, it's colonised woodland becoming a source of food and shelter for wildlife including aphids that leave behind their tacky honeydew. Scientific name: *Acer pseudoplatanus*. These broadleaf trees can grow to 35m and live for 400 years. The bark is dark pink-grey, and smooth when young, but becomes cracked and develops small plates with age. Twigs are pink-brown and hairless. Look out for: leaf veins which are hairy on the underside. Identified in winter by: twigs which are pink-brown and have no hairs.

Whitebeam

Charming and domestic, the whitebeam's fruit is a favourite of garden birds. It's rarely found in the wild but is a popular ornamental tree in parks and gardens, with lovely blossom and russet autumn leaves. Scientific name: *Sorbus aria*. Whitebeam is a deciduous broadleaf tree that is compact and domed. Mature trees can grow to a height of 15m. The bark and twigs are smooth and grey and the shoots are brick red in sunlight but greyish-green in shade. Look out for: the oval, serrated-edged leaves that are softly hairy underneath and dark green and shiny on top. Identified in winter by: the young twigs which start hairy and become smooth later. Only the edges of the buds are hairy.

Willow

Strong, neat and bendy, osier willow is the best of the best for basket weaving. It's not only a source of food and shelter for native wildlife, it can even decontaminate soils it is planted on! Scientific name: *Salix viminalis*. Common osier is a deciduous broadleaf tree. Mature trees grow to 7m. The bark is greyish-brown with vertical cracks. Twigs are smooth and yellow-green. Look out for: the edges of the very narrow leaves which often appear to be rolled inwards. Catkins appear before the leaves. Identified in winter by: the green, sparsely hairy, narrow buds which are pressed close to the twig.

Credit The Woodland Trust

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/trees-woods-and-wildlife/british-trees/a-z-of-british-trees>