The Tree Trail

A Warsash Common Walk

www.fareham.gov.uk/thetreetrail

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The Tree Trail

Contents

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Introduction

The tree trail and poetry path have been designed to encourage people of all ages to take more advantage of our local natural environment. There are twelve native trees within the trail and individual information sheets offer everyone the opportunity to learn which tree is which, as well as facts about the ecology and botanical features, uses made of the wood and some of the superstitions and myths associated with them.

The poetry path runs parallel with the tree trail and incorporates poems and Haiku about the natural environment. They are written by local residents and pupils from schools within the Borough and there are six poetry posts and two poetry trees around the site. The poems are changed regularly to encourage those who write the poems, as well and friends and family, to walk the path, find their work and read the poems.

The tree trail and poetry path form a self-guided circular walk around the Warsash Common Local Nature Reserve which is approximately 1.5km in length. The terrain varies significantly but on the whole the paths are passible throughout the year. The walk incorporates a wide variety of different habitats which includes open grasslands, water bodies as well as wet and dry woodlands.

Acknowledgements

The council would like to thank the Jacqueline Memory Paterson estate for providing permission to extract information from her book Tree Wisdom. We would also like to thank the Woodland Trust for permission to use their graphics and providing the ecological information used in the fact sheets. Thanks also to Stormwatch for providing the Ogham information. Lastly, we would like to thank the National Trust. The poetry tree at Wordsworth's house in Cockermouth provided the inspiration for much of this project.

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Trees

1 - Silver Birch	5 - Beech	9 - Hawthorn
2 - Willow	6 - Holly	10 - Oak
3 - Blackthorn	7 - Alder	11 - Yew
4 - Hazel	8 - Apple	12 - Ash

Poetry Path

PP - Poetry Post PT - Poetry Tree

Walks Key

Horse Route

Route 1

This is a walk of approximately 1.5km that takes in the main habitat types and landscapes. The walk is steep in places with steps, a bridge, gravel paths and boardwalks.

Route 2

This walk is approximately three quarters of a kilometer which is predominately negotiable during the summer as the surfaces can be very wet in places.

Route 3

This is the easy access route which starts and ends in the car park off Dibles/New Road and circles the main common. This route is generally flat but can be wet during the winter in certain areas which may make it difficult for some types of wheelchair.

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The Silver Birch
(*Betula pendula*)

Botanical
This is a native of the UK and most of the northern hemisphere. It grows up to 30m in the right conditions and can live for up to 100 years. However, most live between 50 – 60 years.

This species has both male and female flowers in the form of catkins with the female ones being small and erect and the male being much longer and very floppy. The pollen in the male catkins needs help from the wind to pollinate the female flowers. When pollinated, the female catkin will produce hundreds of tiny two-winged seeds all able to create a sapling.

If the Birch is left unmanaged it will spread quickly and will eventually become woodland.

Myths & Traditions
The silvery white nature of the bark was believed by the Celts to ward off evil or negative spirits. Traditionally the branches were used to drive out the spirit of the old year, which is related to the fact that the finer twigs have traditionally been used in besoms or brooms. Another cleansing link relates to the Medieval practise of beating lunatics with birch as it was thought to drive out their demons and bad spirits.

This species is also known as the 'Lady of the Woods'. Many pre-Christian people across northern Europe would go into the Birch woods at the beginning of the Spring to sit quietly and listen to gentle rustling of the young leaves hoping that they may receive a message of guidance for the new year from female relatives who had died.

Uses
The bark is very hard wearing and takes a long time to rot. It is also waterproof even when peeled from the trunk. Welsh hill farmers in and around Snowdonia traditionally used the bark to make a hat to protect them from foul weather conditions. North American Indians used it to waterproof their canoes.

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Ecology
At ground level, birch woods create the perfect growing conditions for grasses, mosses, wood anemone, bluebells, wood sorrel and violets.

The tree itself provides food and habitat for more than 334 insect species. The leaves attract aphids, which are a good food source for ladybirds. Woodpeckers often drill into the trunk, while the seeds are eaten by siskins, greenfinches and redpolls.

Leaf

Bark

Twig

Bud

Catkin

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The Willow
(*Salix sp.*)

Botanical
There are numerous species in the Willow family. The 'White' is the tallest at 80ft (24m).

The Weeping Willow is not native to the UK but the more common White, Crack, Goat and Grey are. They are often found near water as it grows very easily and quickly in damp conditions. Their shallow root base and large canopy make them prone to storm damage.

There are male and female trees and the flowers rely on the wind and insects to pollinate them. The male and female flowers or catkins are quite different, with the male being brighter and very downy when young. This is used by many birds when they are constructing their nests.

Myths & Traditions
Christians traditionally placed branches of this tree in coffins before burial as it was believed that the willow helped ease the soul into the Heavens. This is similar to the Celtic tradition of planting a willow sapling on a grave with the belief that the spirit in the earth would grow into the tree and up into the spirit world.

In the agricultural communities, it was traditional for those with a broken heart to put willow in their hat to attract new love and to protect them from jealous thoughts about their lost love.

The origins of 'knock on wood' are said to stem from an old country belief that to knock on a willow tree would protect the person from evil and bring good luck.

Uses
Whilst most willows produce a soft wood, the white willow produces very strong timbers which were used to make roof rafters and 2lb 6ozs of the cricket bat willow was used to make bats.

The tannin in the bark of Goat Willow is combined with other man-made ingredients to create the anti-inflammatory drug salicin and the original aspirin. Other uses include the making of rake teeth, clothes pegs and weaving rods for baskets.

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Ecology
The Willow attract 450 species of insects, which includes the caterpillars of the puss moth, eyed hawk-moth and red underwing. The catkins provide an important source of early nectar and pollen for bees and the branches make good nesting and roosting sites for birds like the sparrow.

Leaf
CC By Titus Tscharntke

Bark
CC By FBC

Twig
CC By Jim Conrad

Bud

Catkin

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The Blackthorn
(*Prunus spinosa*)

Botanical
There are many similarities between the Blackthorn and the Hawthorn. One way of telling them apart is to remember that the Blackthorn will flower before the Hawthorn, but won't come into leaf until the Hawthorn blossoms. Just remember B before H!

The name is associated with the very dark colour of the bark and the long very pointed thorns.
It is often the first tree to blossom even before winter is over and the dense cover of star shaped, five-petalled flowers can look like a covering of snow or a sharp haw-frost in a hedge or thicket. This is also known as a Blackthorn winter.

Myths & Traditions
Known as the sister of the Hawthorn the traditions associated with this species are closely related to rural fertility celebrations. The myths or superstitions are often very negative and associated with the very poisonous thorn, which was used to inflict harm and identify Witches. Blackthorn topped the maypole used in Mayday celebrations and was combined with the Hawthorn to make the garland. These spring garlands were often laced with mistletoe and hung on the edge of a village to bring good luck for all living and working there. Special crowns were made by farmers and burned in the Spring. The ashes were then scattered on the fields to increase fertility.
A scratch or even a shallow puncture of the skin from a thorn will often turn septic unless treated. There are stories which tell of thorns being placed under saddles of horses which when sat on would make the horse rear up and unseat the rider with the aim to kill them.
During the 15th and 16th Centuries period it was believed that the devil would prick those he wished to work with and many women believed to be witches were stripped and their body searched for 'the devil's mark'. If any such mark was found, the suspect would be tried and burnt on a pyre of blackthorn.

Uses
Blackthorn, along with Hawthorn and Hazel, has long been used to create hedges. The more mature branches were often cut and used to make the teeth for rakes and the fruit (sloe), is used to make jelly. Alternatively, the surface of 2.5lbs of fruit can be pricked with a needle several times and added to 3.5 pints of gin and 0.75lbs of brown sugar to make sloe gin.

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Ecology
The blossom appears early in the spring and offers a rich source of nectar and pollen for bees. The leaves attract the caterpillars of a number of moths which includes the lackey. It is also used by black and brown hairstreak butterflies.

A variety of birds, like the blue tit and robin, search the leaves for the caterpillars and other insects in the spring and feast on the berries in autumn.

Leaf

Bark

Twig

Flower

Fruit

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The Hazel
(*Corylus avellana*)

Botanical
The Hazel can grow up to 12m tall; however it is rare for it to grow into a full tree.

The flowers or catkins are often seen in January with the male ones being much longer and floppier than the short stubby female ones. These are also known as lamb's tails.

The hazelnuts ripen in the early autumn but the tree needs to be at least 10 years old before it is mature enough to produce the nut.

Myths & Traditions
The Celts of both Ireland and Scotland thought of the hazel as the tree of knowledge. In pagan times cutting down a Hazel without permission was punishable by death.

The name of 'Haslemere' in Surrey is thought to have come from the old Anglo-Saxon herders name for their rods or staffs 'haesel' which were used to control their animals.

In Gaelic, hazel is called Cal or Coll and one of Irelands most famous kings was called Mac Coll (Son of Hazel).

To prevent toothache, some people would carry a double hazelnut in their pocket. They would also create a cross made from hazel which would be laid on a snake bite. It was believed that the cross would draw out the poison.

Uses
Woodsmen coppiced hazel and used the rods for beaters, bean-poles, clothes-props and pegs, and hedge stakes. The thatcher's 'springles' were used to hold the thatch in place.

The Romans also used the thinner, more flexible twigs to tie vines to stakes. The Cornish still use hazel rods to dowse for mineral veins and water.

Hazel is still very popular with those who make walking sticks and many Scottish and Welsh herders have been buried with their trusty stick.

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Ecology
106 species of insects live in or off this species. Not only are hazel nuts used by dormice to fatten up before hibernation, but in spring, the leaves are a good source of food for caterpillars, which the dormice also eat.

Leaf

Bark

Twig

Nut

Catkin

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The Beech
(*Fagus sylvatica*)

Botanical
Known as the 'Mother of the Woods', the Beech grows well on chalky soils and can reach the height of up to 140ft (42.5m). The dense nature of a woodland canopy can restrict light reaching the floor and often there is not much vegetation growing at this level. The leaves are very light sensitive and will twist on the stalks to face the sun. They are also high in Potash which, when rotted, is released into the soil.

Male and female catkins grow on the same tree, but the first crop of the very nutritious nuts will not appear until the tree is at least 50 years old. Even then, the tree will only produce a full crop every five years.

The roots are very shallow and they can be seen above ground and are very a useful network for small mammals to shelter in.

Myths & Traditions
The colour of the wood is very pale and has long been used as a writing surface. Some of the earliest Viking books were written on thin slices of beech. During the mediaeval period, sailors and soldiers would cut a thin piece of beech and write or scratch a wish on it and bury it in or near a holy place. This was seen as a good luck charm before going into battle.

Uses
The beech nuts are highly nutritious and can be eaten by humans and animals. However, the high levels of Potash contained within the nut can lead to headaches or dizziness if humans eat too many at any one time.

Farmers do not let their pigs gorge on beech nuts as the high oil content can have a negative effect on the meat.

The wood is very close grained and like the oak is very tough. It is also quite water tight and the tall, straight nature of the mature tree meant that traditional shipbuilders would often use it when constructing the keel. It also makes good parquet flooring and small pieces of furniture. It is however, prone to wood-worm and is rarely used to make the bigger pieces of furniture like a bureaux.

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Ecology
As this tree gets older, the number of insects found using it can increase to as many as 98 and over 200 lichen. It makes an important habitat for over 40 butterflies.

The leaves are also eaten by the caterpillars of a variety of moths, including the barred hook-tip and olive crescent. The seeds are eaten by mice, voles, squirrels and birds.

Leaf

Bark

Twig

Bud

Nut

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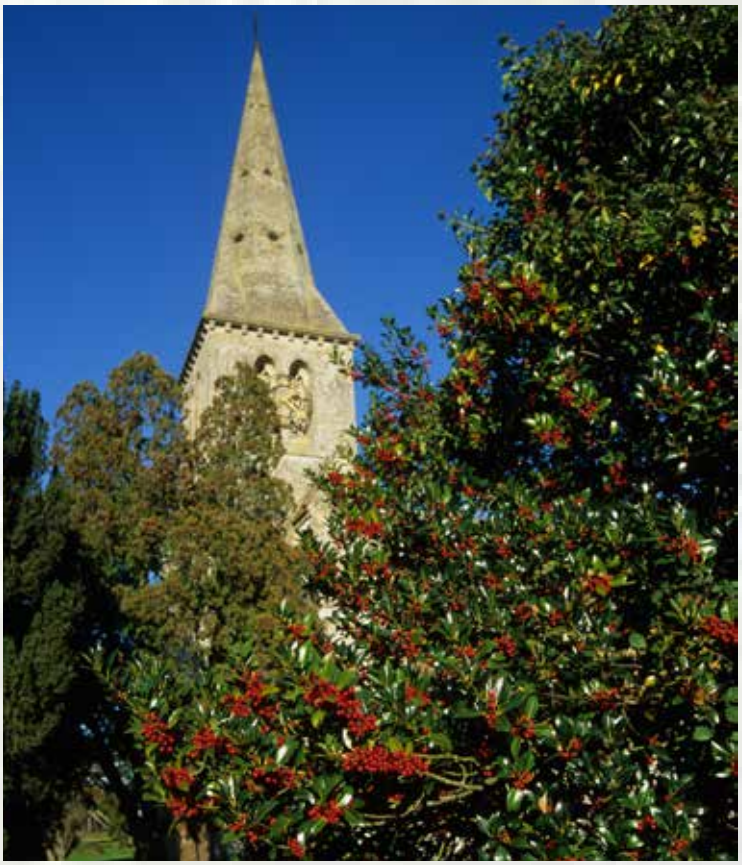
The Holly
(*Ilex aquifolium*)



Botanical
This evergreen shrub is native to the UK and although it grows slowly, it can reach heights of 15m. The leaves are tough and are very prickly below 12ft.

There are male and female Holly trees and they bloom in May. The female flowers change into berries if there is a male tree close by, from which pollen can be transferred. The flowers are tiny and are a pale pink and white, and look like stars.

The berries are ripe by September and include four stones containing seed. They are dispersed by birds such as larks, finches, nightingales and field-fares who eat them. However, they are poisonous to all other animals. If the tree fruits well one year it will rest the next.

Myths & Traditions
In pre-Christian Britain, Druids advised people to take Holly into their homes in the winter. It was believed that homes with Holly inside would provide shelter for the elves and faeries that would join mortals at this time without creating disturbance or harm. However, it was important that the holly was removed by the 31st January as any left would lead to bad luck. Christians know this as Twelfth Night.

Holly is believed to be especially lucky for single men in the west-country, and if a leaf or a berry is carried by them, it was said that they would soon become attractive to women. The very prickly leaves were referred to as ‘he-holly’ and the smoother ones as ‘she-holly’. An old north-country belief says that if the smooth leaved holly is brought into the house by the lady first at Yuletide, then she will rule the household during the New Year and vice-versa if the man brings the sharp leaved holly in first.

Uses
The wood from the tree is very hard when dried. It is also very white but can be stained or dyed well. It was often used to inlay furniture with marquetry.

It became known as the ‘poor mans’ ebony and ivory’ during the Victorian period and was used to make the handles for cutlery by those that could not afford the real products.

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Ecology

The tiny flowers provide nectar and pollen for bees and other pollinating insects. The leaves are eaten by caterpillars of the holly blue butterfly, along with those of various moths including the yellow barred brindle and the holly tortrix. The smooth, high leaves are eaten by deer in the winter. The berries provide food for birds, wood mice and dormice.

Leaf

Bark

Twig

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Flower

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Fruit

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The Alder
(*Alnus glutinosa*)

Botanical
The Alder, like the willow, grows well near rivers and water. It is the only deciduous tree that produces a cone which is the fruit of both male and female catkins, which grow on the same tree. The male catkins are singular, a rich purple or red colour and longer than the female ones, which grow in small clusters and are green and cone like in shape.

Myths & Traditions
The tree has come to mean many things to many different cultures. To the Irish, when the sap is exposed to the air, it was seen to be the blood of the faeries. Many alders were considered sacred and it was forbidden to chop them down. When travelling cross-country, they would change their route if they could see any groups of alder on the horizon, as this often meant that they were approaching a wetland area.

The Druids associated the Alder with the four seasons and traditionally whistles and flutes were made from branches of different thicknesses and were played to encourage wind and rain when needed by the agricultural communities.

Alder makes very good charcoal and was often used by the blacksmiths to make swords and spear heads. The association of the sap and blood was seen as a strong link between warriors and slaying their enemy. It was believed that weapons made from alder charcoal would increase the strength of both the weapon and the warrior.

Uses
Alder is very durable when exposed or left in water after it is cut. Many Lancastrians traditionally make their clogs from it. Many of the supports used to construct bridges which spanned local rivers were made from the Alder. Jetties and some lock gates were also constructed from Alder with the piles often forming the foundations for properties in Venice, the Netherlands and France.

Small scale weavers still use the sap to dye wool and cotton. Red and green dye can be made from the catkins' which was originally used to make the clothing favoured by foresters and woodsmen. The leaves were also used by tanners when making leather, but they do not use the bark as this contains too much tannin.

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Ecology

The Alder and the damp woodland conditions attract over 141 different species of insect including the pearl bordered fritillary and chequered skipper and over 100 lichens. It is the food plant for the caterpillars of several moths', including the alder kitten and blue bordered carpet moth. Catkins provide an early source of nectar and pollen for bees and the seeds are eaten by the siskin, redpoll and goldfinch.

Leaf

Bark

Twig

Cone

Catkin

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The Crab Apple
(*Malus sylvestris*)

Botanical
The crab apple is the only indigenous form of apple tree in the UK and it wasn't until the 18th century that hybrids were imported and grown on a commercial scale. The crab apple is another member of the rose family and the wild crab apple has thorns.

The cider apple is related to the original crab apple and is thought to have been developed or domesticated as a result of its tart/ sharp taste.

Myths & Traditions
Traditionally, the apple trees both wild and domesticated were blessed with cider in a ceremony known as wassailing. A bowl of spiced cider and pieces of apple was passed among orchard workers and village folk. Glasses were raised in a toast of thanks to the trees for their fruits and to wish for a good harvest in the following year. The trees were then watered with some of this cider.

Traditionally, the cider apple trees are planted on May Day with small pieces of coal under the roots and watered in with cider.

In the north, cutting an apple and counting the pips was used as way to foretell a marriage. If the number of pips were even, then a marriage would be inevitable. If the number were uneven the person would remain unmarried for quite some time. Another way of foretelling the future of a marriage or a relationship was again to cut an apple and if one pip is cut, the relationship could be stormy. If two pips were cut, the relationship would be short lived.

Uses
Before the days of air-fresheners, cloves would be stuck into apples and then left in linen cupboards to keep them sweet smelling.

The juice from the wild crab apple is often made into a vinegar and the fruit is often used to make conserves and jellies.

The wood is a favourite with carvers and tool makers alike. It carves well and was used to make the handles of small hand tools like knives.

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Ecology

The leaves are food for the caterpillars of many moths, including the eyed hawk-moth. The flowers provide an important source of early pollen and nectar for insects, particularly bees, and the fruit is eaten by birds, including blackbirds, thrushes and crows. Mice, voles, foxes and badgers also eat the apples.

Leaf

Bark

Twig

Flower

CC By Ian Kirk

Fruit

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The Hawthorn
(*Crataegus monogyna*)

Botanical
Haw is Anglo-Saxon for hedge and when planted to form a hedge it can provide food and shelter for over 50 species of birds and mammals.

It is part of the rose family and does not grow particularly tall: it is more a bush. It lives for up to 400 years. There are two main species, the Midland and the Common variety. The difference between these is in the colour and fragrance of the blossom. The Common Hawthorn has a white tone to the blossom and has a distinctive smell. The Midland variety has a pink flower and the scent is not as distinctive.

Myths & Traditions
For the agricultural community, the Hawthorn has long been a symbol of fertility. Young couples were encouraged to get married in late Spring when the tree is in full blossom so that the bride could wear a crown made from a mixture of flowers and young leaves.

One of the oldest myths is associated with the Glastonbury thorn. Joseph of Arimathea is said to have rested on his staff on top of Wearyall Hill. During the night it took root and became a Hawthorn tree. There is still a hawthorn at Glastonbury and each year a blossoming twig is sent to the Queen as a gesture of good luck and protection from lightening.

The Hawthorn has been seen as a tree of protection and some fishermen would take a twig to sea to protect them from foul weather.

Uses
In Scotland the bark was used to make a black dye and the leaves are still used to make a tea. The flowers can be used to make a country wine and the berries are still used in chutney and jellies.

The wood burns hot when green. Woodsmen all over the UK still use it to make charcoal.

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Ecology

Hawthorn can support up up to 209 insects. It is the food plant for caterpillars of many moths, including the hawthorn, small eggar and lappet moths. Dormice eat the flowers and they also provide nectar and pollen for bees and other pollinating insects. The berries are rich in antioxidants and enjoyed by many migrating birds like redwings and fieldfares as well as small mammals like field and wood mice.

Leaf

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Bark

Twig

Bud

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Fruit

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The English / Pendunculate Oak
(*Quercus robur*)

Botanical
Known as the 'Father of the Woods', the Pendunculate or English oak and the Sessile oak are native to the UK. Others, like the Holm or Holly oak and the Turkey oak have been introduced.

The native species can grow up to 40m and live well over 600 years. However, the first full crop of acorns may not be seen for up to 40 years.

The tree contains both male and female catkins, which can be seen from April. The male catkin produces the pollen, is long and droops down, while the female catkin is shorter, upright and will produce the acorn.

Myths & Traditions
Traditionally, oaks were planted to identify county and settlement boundary lines. At the time of the Doomsday surveys, the value of a woodland was assessed not by their size but by the number of oaks providing acorns, which could be used to feed livestock.

During the pre-Christian period, it was traditional for couples to be married under the Oak. After Christianity was adopted, clergymen often preached from a mature Oak, which became known as 'gospel Oaks'.

Charles II is said to have hidden in an oak after the battle of Worcester, hence the term 'Royal Oak'. For many years people believed that carrying an acorn would bring luck, sustain youth and a healthy life.

Another tradition is associated with identifying the length of a relationship. Lovers would put two acorns in a small bowl of water and if they drifted together their relationship would be long lasting.

Uses
The hard, close-grained nature of oak is very durable and has been used to construct ships, churches and many other types of property for centuries. The term 'hearts of oak' was developed during the Tudor period when many houses were constructed from oak frames. This is where the term 'home is where the heart is' comes from.

The bark is still used in Scotland when dyeing wool a purple colour. If alum is added to the dye it goes brown and if salt is added the dye will turn yellow.

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Ecology
Oaks provide a habitat rich in biodiversity; they support more life forms than any other native tree. They host over 423 species of insect which are the food source for many British birds like the nuthatch. Badgers and deer eat the acorns.

Leaf

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Bark

Twig

Bud

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Nut

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The Yew
(*Taxus baccata*)

Botanical
This conifer is probably the longest living native tree with some surviving over 2,000 years. It is slow growing with the main trunk taking up to 150 years to form the familiar hollow appearance. The bark is very thin and peels easily and this in turn does not offer a good guard to the heart of the tree. It is this apparent weakness that can encourage the trunk to become hollow despite the fact that the girth will continue to grow.

Unlike other conifers, this species does not produce any cones and there are male and female trees which depend on the wind to blow the pollen from the male tree to the female tree, which holds the tiny fruit flower. The yellow pollen is only released on warm dry days in the spring and this can produce a noticeable haze if there are a considerable number of them in any one place.

This is one of the most poisonous trees in the UK with the toxin deadly to both humans and animals.

Myths & Traditions
Traditionally, pre-Christian armies would gather under a Yew Tree to be blessed by the local Druid and the soldiers would cut branches from the tree to make arrows. This association was adapted by Christian clergy and many churches were built close to a mature Yew, especially those used as a place of worship by the Druids. This is why there is the association between a Yew Tree and a graveyard.

It was considered unlucky to cut down or damage a Yew Tree. Coffins or shrines were only ever made from those that had fallen as a result of bad weather. It was also considered unlucky to let those branches damaged by lightening or high winds to stay on the land as it was believed that the negative spirit of the storm remained within the branches.

Uses
One of the most famous uses of the Yew is the making of the longbow. This particular weapon was used to great effect by the English armies. Elizabeth I was given a lot of Spanish Yew by the Spanish King which was made into bows. These weapons were then used by the English in subsequent confrontations with the Spanish.

In northern England, Yew was used to dowse the location of lost or stolen goods. The dowsing rod was also used to track down the thief.

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Ecology
The fruit is eaten by birds such as the blackbird, mistle thrush, song thrush and winter visitors like the fieldfare. Small mammals like squirrels and dormice also feed on them. The leaves are eaten by caterpillars of the satin beauty moth.

Leaf

Bark

Flowers (Male)

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Fruit

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The Ash
(*Fraxinus excelsior*)

Botanical
A native of Britain, this tree can grow up to 150ft (45.5m) tall and live well over 100 years. It is easy to recognise in the winter as the branches grow opposite one another and the leaf buds are a quite black.

In the summer the leaves could be confused with the Rowan, but there are 5 pairs of leaflets on the Ash and at least seven on the Rowan. The difference is that the leaves on the Ash grow opposite one another on the twig but on the Rowan they grow alternately.

The fruit is better known as 'wings' or 'helicopters' and they hang in large bunches also known as 'keys'. These are the seeds and are produced from male and female flowers which grow on different trees. The tree needs to be at least 40 years old before it produces fertile seeds.

Myths & Traditions
The Vikings were also known as 'Men of Ash'. They believed the Ash held many magical spirits. The spirit being of Odin who hung himself from a living Ash in an effort to realise his true being or inner self. Ash was used in the building of long boats, weapons and the bowls or cups used in many of their ceremonies.

The Irish culture also thought that the Ash held a magical spirit and it is believed that St. Patrick drove all serpents from the island with an ash stick in 500AD.

The leaf contains an odd number of leaflets. It was considered good fortune if a leaf was found with an even number of leaflets; much like finding a four leaf clover. A traditional country saying is that 'if you find an even ash or four leaved clover, you will see your true love 'ere the day is over'.

Uses
The flexible and tough qualities of the tree have long been recognised and in certain parts of the UK like the Lake District, there are long avenues of ash trees which have been pollarded on a regular basis.

The ash grows quickly and very straight. Ash woodlands were worked and coppiced every seven to ten years, with the long poles being used to make basket frames, fence panels and cross-bows. The axles of carriages were often made of ash and during WWII, large ash woodlands were felled and the timbers used to make the frames of planes like the Spitfire.

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The Tree Trail

Ecology
This tree provides a home to 239 insects and when mature, up to 710 lichen, mosses and fungi. Bullfinches eat the winged seeds and woodpeckers, owls, redstarts and nuthatches use the trees for nesting. The leaves are an important food plant for the caterpillars of the coronet, brick and privet hawk-moth.

Leaf

Bark

Twig

Bud

Seed

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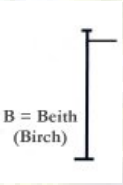
The Tree Trail

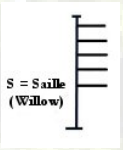
Introduction

There are thirteen moons in a year and whilst there is no written evidence, it is believed that the Celts (750BC - 12BC), were the first to establish what has become known as the lunar tree calendar using the ancient Irish alphabet also known as the Ogham symbols. Each moon phase was assigned a corresponding tree, each tree being sacred to either feminine energy and to a goddess, or to masculine energy and to a god. The trees that were selected were sources of magic and myth in Celtic folklore. Several of the trees are said to be attractive to faery folk, and others were sources of magic herbs or medicines.



Silver Birch – Betual pendula / Ogham – Beithe

The birch is the first tree in the calendar. In Celtic mythology the birch symbolised renewal and purification with birch twigs being used to drive out the spirits of the old year. It is a tree of great life giving properties and is always associated with new beginnings, physical and spiritual.

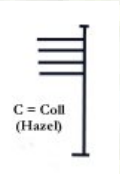


Willow – Salix sp / Ogham - Saille

Known as 'the tree of enchantment', the willow is a strong power in this system. In all her seasons and shapes the tree is a potent symbol of grief. It is used for healing and help in grief and death.

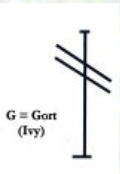
Blackthorn – Prunus spinosa / Ogham – Straif

This is a tree of profound magical tradition. It is used for banashing negativity and raising awareness and energy. The trees are an ancient, native species and the fruits were eaten by early man. There's evidence that the Blackthorn was used in Iron Age communities c3400 yrs ago.



Hazel – Corylus avellana / Ogham - Coll

Celtic culture notes that the hazel has the ability to connect the concious with the unconscious and is good for bringing ideas to the surface and for transforming dreams into reality. It is associated with wisdom and knowledge, with meditation and an ability to increase psychic abilities and intuition. Coppicing the many trunks was also believed to provide a strong link to the earth.



Beech - Not an Ogham tree. Many trees have Ivy which is part of the Ogham

Ivy- Hedera Helix / Ogham - Gort Ivy represents the search for the self, and the wandering spirit of the Ivy can either restrict and bind or unite. It is associated both with freedom and attachment. Many of the trees have Ivy growing up them which may not harm them but provides an important habitat for wildlife.

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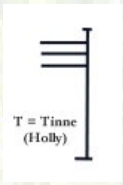
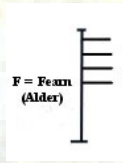
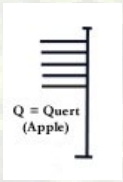
The Tree Trail



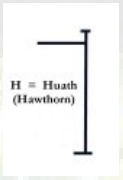
Holly – Ilex aquifolium / Ogham – Tinne
The evergreen Holly is a masculine tree and a symbol of potent life energy. It is used to help restore direction and balance in life and unites the past with the present. It is believed to bring love and compassion and is a tree of protection. The energy of Holly was used to heal a broken heart.



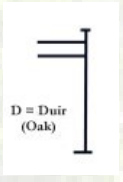
Alder – Alnus glutinosa / Ogham - Fearn
The magic of the alder is believed to span the space between earth, water, with its roots in the two elements and the tree never stands far from water. It is the magical tree of Bran, King of the Celts. It is seen to help with physical and spiritual protection. It also gives courage and eases mental fear and doubt.



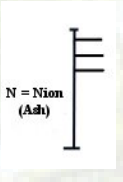
Crab Apple – Malus sylvestris / Ogham - Quert
Native crab apples were found in the remains of a bronze-age burial grounds and cultivated varieties were brought with the Roman ships. Under Celtic lore, the apples are good for spiritual healing and protection and seen as a symbol of rejuvenation, love and immortality.



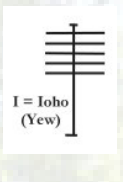
Hawthorn – Crataegus monogyna – Ogham - Huath
Hawthorn has the ability to open the heart to spiritual growth and love. The Hawthorn is good for reliving stress and releasing blocked energy and also creates the ability to trust and let go of fear. It also is good for cleansing and protection.



Oak – Quercus robor / Ogham - Duir
The oak, known as the 'king of trees' is probably the most well known and best loved tree in Britain. One of our longest living and largest trees has seen it used as a symbol of strength and duration. The most sacred tree of the Druids it is seen as a doorway to inner spirituality. It restores the will and determination that may have become weakened in times of stress and will lead to the truth.



Ash – Fraxinus excelsior / Ogham - Nion
The ash tree – Yggdrasil (pronounced igg-drah-sill with emphasis on the first syllable) is also known as the tree of life or the Great World Tree in the mythology of Odin and is revered and full of magic. The only one of the olive family (apart from privet) that is native to Britain, it is used for protection and to enhance courage before going to sea.



Yew – Taxus baccata / Ogham - Idhadh
The yew is the last of the tree Ogham system. It is believed to offer knowledge about rebirth and transformation. It also offers access to the ancestors and spirit realms.

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Haiku Poems - Name That Tree

1. No faeries will bite
   While her bark shines bright
   Bind her branches tight and fly off tonight.

2. The Druids gave strength and mettle
   To soldiers about to cross metal
   There's a score they need to settle!

3. Dye your cap with my sap,
   Make your clogs from my logs,
   But beware there's marsh where I grow.

4. Strung up from on high
   Odin chose to die but
   Did this tree set his spirit free?

5. Where I grow, water does flow.
   Knock on my wood and
   Your luck will be good.

6. The blossom's white, the bark is dark;
   But beware the thorn,
   For it leaves the Devil's mark.

Answers: 1. Silver Birch. 2. The Yew. 3. The Alder. 4. The Ash. 5. The Willow. 6. The Blackthorn.

Haiku Poems - Name That Tree

7. Beneath these boughs you took your vows
   You feed your sows
   And preached your gospels many.

8. Grow with coal, pass our bowl,
   And bless her soul
   If she is to bear fruit a'plenty.

9. The Mother she stood
   Deep in the wood
   Watching her leaves as they follow the sun.

10. Protected when at sea
    For he carried this tree and
    From the leaves he brewed himself tea.

11. My wood was poor man's ivory.
    Prickly leaves which make skin sore.
    Smooth leaves ensure women's law.

12. A twig to find your water
    A stick to herd your sheep
    A nut to bring you knowledge.

Answers: 1. The Oak. 2. The Crab Apple. 3. The Beech. 4. The Hawthorn. 5. The Holly. 6. The Hazel.

Appendix

Trees in Medicine

Introduction

From' folk medicine' to 'official medicine' and from early herbal medicine to homeopathy, trees have played their part in developing a better understanding and science of which species is best for which ailment.

The enormous variety of appropriate vegetation across the world has influenced many different cultures and whilst man-made pharmaceuticals dominate our medicines today, it is worth stopping for a moment and looking at what our ancestors did to develop a better understanding of how nature was used to help cure a variety of ailments in our everyday lives.

Please note, readers should take advice from a qualified doctor or herbalist before using plants as a cure for ailments.

Silver Birch

The bark, leaf and sap have been and continue to be used in different forms of medicine.

Sap

The sap is best extracted in the spring as it begins to rise but it does not store well. This seasonal fluid was used in early folk medicine to prevent stones in the kidneys or bladder and for treating rheumatic diseases. It was and continues to be used by herbalists to improve skin complexion and reduce acne.

Leaf

The leaves were stewed and made into a tea which was then prescribed as a diuretic, to relieve rheumatism and to dissolve kidney stones.

Another cure for rheumatism and arthritic pain involved placing a layer of leaves inside a warm bed. This induces a heavy sweat which brings relief to the joints.

Bark

The bark contains a natural anesthetic and in early medicine it was applied to the skin to relieve muscle pain. This was popular among the agricultural communities especially around harvest time.

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Willow

As with the Silver Birch, the sap has been used seasonally and both the leaf and bark have healing properties.

Sap

Early physicians prescribed the sap as a cure for dimness and soreness of the eyes. However, the sap was only tapped when the tree was in flower.

Leaf

The leaf and the bark both contain salic acid which is a painkiller and the primary component of aspirin (see below).

A decoction of both leaf and bark was and still is prescribed by herbalists to eradicate dandruff. It can be rubbed into the scalp before the final rinse.

Lastly, the leaves can be wrapped in a warm damp cloth and applied to the feet to relieve a fever. This was particularly popular among the agricultural communities and prescribed by herbalist working in medieval monasteries.

Bark

The bark is high in tannin which is particularly sharp to the palate. However, this did not stop the gypsies using it to make a tea which was ingested by those suffering with rheumatism, influenza and headaches.

Salic acid is more concentrated in the bark than the leaf and was first discovered in 1860. It has since been synthesized and produced to make aspirin.

The bark was also used to make an incense. Modern homeopaths prescribe it as a healing aid for those suffering deep emotional problems as it clears the head and uplifts the spirits.

It is still used by herbalists to relieve fevers, headaches and painful joints. It has been found that the natural salic acids in the bark produces pain relief without any of the side effects of aspirin, such as irritation of the gut.

Blackthorn

The sap, leaf and bark have not been used in folk or traditional medicine to date. However, the tree has significant healing properties for spiritual healers and is used to cleanse the soul and re-establish mental and spiritual balance.

Fruit

During the 17th and 18th centuries, early physicians would recommend making a brew of unripe sloes to cure ‘fluxes in the belly’. This would have been a particularly caustic remedy as the fluid would be extremely acidic.

The high level of natural acids, even in the ripe fruit, saw herbalists and early physicians use it to ‘burn off’ warts. The fruit was rubbed into a wort and then tossed over the shoulder in the belief that the cause of the wort would go with it.

On a more practical note, ripe slow juice was prescribed to alleviate women suffering excessive menstruation.

Flower

It is the flowers that are most often used medicinally, usually in the form of infusions for their laxative, diuretic and anti-inflammatory effects.

Research at the University of Lódz in Poland revealed that the flowers contain the flavonoid glycoside quercetin, which has anti-inflammatory properties.

They also contain kaempferol, another flavonoid that in preclinical studies has been found to reduce the risk of developing some forms of cancer and cardiovascular diseases. Research work is ongoing.

Flavonoids
These are various compounds found naturally in many fruits and vegetables. They are phytoestrogens, meaning that they are chemicals that act like the hormone oestrogen.

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Apple

There is no record of the sap being used in medicine, but the leaf and the fruit are packed full of therapeutic elements which include the sugars, amino-acids, vitamins, pectin and mineral salts.

Leaf

The leaves contain up to 2.4% of an antibacterial substance called fluorine. This is rare in nature but when man-made it forms the basis of anaesthetics, antibiotics, anti-cancer and anti-inflammatory agents. This inhibits the growth of a number of gram-positive and gram-negative bacteria in a low concentration (30 ppm). Gram-positive bacteria are not usually found in the human body. That means they are more easily recognised and targeted by the immune system. Gram negative bacterial cells often have labels on their cell wall, called ‘antigens’, which allow the human body to recognise them. If the cell has a capsule or slime covering, as gram-negative bacteria do, these antigens are hidden from the immune system. So, the immune system cannot target the infective bacteria.

Bark

The bark, and especially the root bark, contains anthelmintic elements which when isolated can be used to expel parasitic worms (helminths) and other internal parasites from the body. It is also used to induce sleep (see below). An infusion is still used by herbalists as a treatment for fevers.

Fruit

The fruit can be acidic and used as a laxative. The crushed fruit pulp can be used in a poultice to heal inflammations or small flesh wounds.

They are best eaten first thing in the morning or last thing at night. Herbalists advise those women experiencing morning sickness to grate the fruit and eat it in the morning. The fruit also encourages sleep when eaten before going to bed.

In early folk medicine the fruit was used to clear warts in much the same way as the sloe. Two halves of an apple were rubbed into the wort. The remains were buried and left to decay during which time the wart would disappear.

Lastly, raw apple was used to reduce inflammation of the eyes, aches and pains and to speed up the healing of significant wounds. To do this, the fruit was soaked in boiling water for a while. Any excess was drained off and the remainder of the flesh was put between two layers of material (a poultice) and applied to the affected area.

Yew

This is a very poisonous tree and must not be self-administered.
There is no record of the sap being used in any forms of medicine. However, the taxol which can be found in the leaves and the bark have made a significant impact on modern day cancer treatment.

Leaf & Bark

During the 20th century, pharmacologists found that taxol, created by the Yew can inhibit cell division. During the 1980's investigations intensified and progress was made into its use against cancer. It now plays an important part in the treatment of ovarian and breast cancer.

The young leaves contain a small amount of taxol but there is more in the bark. For some time the yew trees in the USA were being stripped of their bark and huge swathes were dying. The Yew is now a protected species and more effort is being put into developing a synthetic substitute.

Fruit

One of the most poisonous elements of the tree is the seed within the berry. This applies to man and animals. Nevertheless, the flesh of the berry combined with young tree shoots is used by homeopathists to treat cystitis, headaches, neuralgia, some heart conditions, gout and rheumatism.

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Oak

The oak tree, like the Silver Birch has a wide range of healing qualities, none of which includes the sap.

Leaf

In folk medicine, the young leaf buds were prepared in distilled water and drunk to relieve inflammations of the stomach and other major organs.

Externally, bruised leaves were applied to wounds and haemorrhoids to reduce swelling.

Bark

The bark of this tree has been used for medicinal purposes more than any other component.

Bark which has been ground into a fine powder, has long been used like snuff to stop nosebleeds. This powder was sprinkled on bed linen to reduce the discomfort created by bedsores.

A strong decoction of the bark (chopped bark boiled in water) may be used to cure chronic diarrhoea. A slightly less concentrated mixture can be rinsed around the mouth to stop bleeding gums or gargled to reduce inflammation of the throat and the mucous membranes in the mouth.

Fruit

Rather ironically, a decoction of acorns and bark, ground and added to milk was given as a remedy for poisoning from plants and unreliable medicines.

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Hawthorn

There is no evidence to suggest that the sap has been used to cure or prevent illness in folk or official medicine. Moreover, the leaf and bark have not been adopted widely. However, the flower and berries have been used to good effect through much of the 20th century.

Leaf

In Scotland the leaves were used to make a tea and drunk to alleviate sore throats.

Bark

In Ireland the bark was chewed to reduce the discomfort associated with toothache.

Flower & Berries

Both have been used as a heart tonic. In the 19th century, an Irish doctor called Dr Green, identified that the flowers contain a series of natural elements which act as a sedative, an anti-spasmodic and diuretic. Dr Green's findings have been developed throughout the 20th century and the findings have led to it being used by homeopaths as a natural regulator of arterial blood pressure (high and low), as a treatment for congestive heart failure and as a valuable heart stimulant. The lack of toxicity within the tree as a whole means that the medication can be used over protracted periods without fear of any negative side effects.

During the 16th and 17th centuries the berries or 'haws' were skinned and stoned. The flesh was then mixed into a thick paste and ingested to treat diabetes. This paste could also be added to cider or wine and drunk to ease kidney stones.

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Hazel

The hazel tree is revered in folklore and the nuts were believed to be a font of much knowledge but surprisingly, there has been very little use of it in medicine throughout the ages.

Bark

In Ireland the bark was used to treat boils and cuts. The oils in the bark were recognised for their healing qualities.

Nuts

Hazelnut milk is highly nutritious and was often used as a dietary supplement for the young during times of famine.

Beech

Like the Hazel tree, the Beech has not been used in any form of medicine except for one element. Beech tar extracted from young branches has been applied to the skin to help cure eczema, psoriasis and as an ingredient in an expectorant syrup to relieve bronchitis.

An expectorant is a natural ingredient that thins out phlegm in the lungs and helps to bring it up and out of the airways.

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Holly

There is no evidence that the sap was used in any form of medicine. The leaf has limited use and the bark was not used as a remedy in the traditional sense.

Leaf

Traditionally, sprigs of leaves were used to thrash chilblains in order to chase the chill out. This was common across England. The same method was practiced in Somerset to ease arthritis and alleviate a stiff neck in Ireland.

An infusion of fresh or dried leaves is still used by modern day herbalists to treat catarrh, coughs and bronchitis, pneumonia, flue rheumatism and fevers.

Bark

In the 17th century it was used to make a very sticky adhesive which, when dry, becomes quite hard. It was used in the process of making casts for fractured bones. The process for making this adhesive (aka Bird Lime), was arduous and didn't last very long. Bird Lime became very popular as the British Empire expanded into places like the West Indies where it was used to trap insects.

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Alder

Once more, the sap has not been used in any form of medicine but the bright blood like colour has many superstitions associated with it which might have been a deterrent even for the most inquisitive pharmacologist or aspiring doctor.

Leaf

In folk medicine, the leaves were used as a dressing on minor burns and added to shoes to prevent soreness if walking long distances. Herbalists continue to put the leaves in poultices which are then used to dry up breast milk.

Bark

Alder bark is prepared for medicinal use by carefully scraping off the dead outer bark and using the green, living tissue underneath. Once dried and powdered, this part of the bark can be simmered in water to make a wash for treating deep wounds. The leaves and powdered bark are still simmered into a bitter tea and used as a throat gargle when a patient is suffering from tonsillitis and a fever.

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Ash

This is a tree with many healing powers associated with our inner spirit and some of the more bizarre folklore practices. One example involves boring a hole in the trunk big enough to insert a live shrew. The hole was sealed up and the shrew was left to die and rot. The leaves and twigs from from shrew ash were placed on those humans and farm animals suffering from paralysis and painful cramps. The spirit of the scurrilous shrew would run ‘magically’ through the affected areas and provide relief from the affliction.

Leaf

In folk medicine, the leaves were boiled in water and, once removed, were applied to a snake bite to ease swelling. This liquid was also ingested to reduce the risk of poisoning. This panacea was offered to both humans and agricultural animals.

In the 1600s both Culpeper and Pechey recommend the leaves as a slimming aid. They suggested that the juice from three or four leaves be taken every morning as part of a diet. This juice acts more as a laxative and as a diuretic and could offer some negative side effects if taken for a protracted period.

Bark

The inner or green bark of the tree was dried, powdered, added to wine and drunk to dissolve gravel/stones in the urinary system. The ash of the bark was recommended as a cure for a scabby scalp. This ash was also dissolved in hot water and prescribed as a remedy for jaundice.

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