



HEDGEROW & TREE MYTHS TRAIL

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English Oak *Quercus robur*

Description

Large oaks are most impressive trees, with massive, sturdy trunks and large crowns which provide shade over a wide area. They have small flowers in spring, and produce acorns in autumn.

Myths and Legends

- Druids in Celtic Britain held the oak tree sacred, and gathered mistletoe from its boughs for their secret rites.
- Ever since those days, the English oak has been the "king" of British trees.
- It is often split by lightning, possibly because it is frequently the tallest tree around. As a result it was often associated with the gods of thunder.
- It is said Charles II hid from Roundheads in an oak tree during the English Civil War. Since then, Royal Oak Day on 29 May has been celebrated.
- King Arthur's round table was reputedly made from one slice of a giant oak, echoing both the oak's and Arthur's status as protectors of Britain.
- An old country saying, used to predict the summer's rainfall by when the leaves come out, goes:
*'If the oak is out before the ash, the earth will only get a splash.
If the ash is out before the oak, the earth will really get a soak.'*

Facts, Figures and Uses

- The oak flowers from April to May. The male flowers are green and inconspicuous, growing in clusters along a stalk. Pollen from the male is blown by the wind to the female flower which then forms the seed (acorn).
- Of all British trees the oak supports the widest variety of insect and other invertebrate and fungal life.
- No wonder botanists named it 'robur' (meaning sturdy) for until man devised iron cutting tools the oak resisted all attempts to fell it. It has been used as a symbol for strength, as in the saying "mighty oaks from little acorns grow".
- The acorns were once an animal foodstuff of great importance, feeding pigs on common land in forests.
- Oaks were commonly planted as boundary or property markers between farms, villages and shires. There are several on this site, marking boundaries between Rosliston, Drakelow & Cauldwell.
- Plantations of oak and ash planted 1993-5 cover around 40% of our woodland area.

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Western Hemlock
Tsuga Heterophylla
Tduga

Description

A tall, elegant, conical tree with branches that turn slightly upward. The light coloured bark develops narrow fissures as it ages. The leaves vary in size and grow from the stem at various angles.

Myths and Legends

- North American Indian tribes used to treat a variety of complaints with Hemlock.

A concentrated liquid brewed from the pounded bark has been used in the treatment of haemorrhages, tuberculosis and syphilis.

- 'Pitch' made from the tree's sap and rubbed into the scalp is supposed to get rid of head lice.



- Hemlock seeds, in a dense forest, will often grow on top of, through and around a fallen tree, taking advantage of the light from any gap in the forest canopy.

A fully grown hemlock tree clutching a fallen tree in its roots looks slightly sinister.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- Male cones are red, turning white in spring. Female cones are small, green and egg shaped.
- The hemlock can live for up to 500 years and grows quickly to 15m.
- It was often planted under the cover of other trees because it grows well in shade.
- The wood is used commercially for paper pulp, box making and building.
- The leaves and twigs yield 'spruce oil' used commercially to flavour chewing gum, soft drinks and ice cream.
- The wood makes a slow burning fuel and can be used to bank up a fire to keep it burning overnight.

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Silver Birch *Betula pendula*

Description

Its straight silvery-white trunk makes the silver birch one of the most decorative and easily recognised of Britain's native trees. It has catkins in the spring.

Myths and Legends

- The name "birch" is a very ancient one, probably derived from the Sanskrit *bhurga* meaning "a tree whose bark is used for writing upon".
- The silver birch was a holy tree, revered by pagan Celtic & Germanic tribes. In Britain the Druids gave its name to a winter month.
- The birch was considered to have sacred powers of renewal and purification, so its twigs were used in the ritual of driving out the spirits of the new year.
- The belief persisted into the recent past, when people and animals were 'birched' to expel evil spirits.
- Birch trees were favoured by the forest 'geni' in Eastern Europe. The power of the genies was invoked by cutting down young birches and placing them in a circle with the points towards the centre.
- In Finland, the beauty of the birch and its cultural importance resulted in it becoming their national tree in 1988.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- There are claims that birch makes poor timber, but many uses have been found for this tough wood.
- It was used in large quantities to make hard wearing bobbins, spools and reels for the cotton industry.
- Perhaps the most familiar use of birch is in the making of traditional broomsticks or besoms.
- The twigs have been used for thatching and making wattles, and the sap has been used to make various drinks such as beer, wine and vinegar.
- Sap is collected in the first two weeks of March by boring a hole pointing upwards into the trunk and inserting plastic tubing leading down to a collecting bottle.
- Birch sap was recommended to "break the stone in kidneys and bladder" and as a mouth wash.

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Cherry
Prunus avium

Description

The wild cherry is a tall, handsome, deciduous tree that can grow to 100ft (30m). In spring, when covered with a mass of flowers, it is a spectacular sight attracting many insects.

Myths and Legends

- The cherry is quite common in folklore. It is strangely mixed up with the cuckoo, including the tradition that the cuckoo must eat three good meals of cherries before he is allowed to stop singing.
- The saying "all or nothing" means the same as "the whole tree or not a cherry on it", while "to make two bites of a cherry" is to divide something too small to be worth dividing.
- Cherry trees are sometimes planted in Japan and in other countries in early August in memory of those who have died.
- In Denmark and in Lithuania the cherry was thought to be the hiding place of demons. In Serbia the 'Vila' (a kind of fairy or elf) could be found, if needed, near the cherry, as they chose it to dance around.
- In the wizarding world of Harry Potter, a cherry wand would usually be matched with a confident wizard of sound judgement.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- Wild cherry grows rapidly to full size, and its wood is used to make fine furniture, veneers and sweet-smoking cherry pipes.
- The wood is of good quality, though larger trees sometimes suffer from heart rot.
- The cherry, like other fruit trees, has been crossed and selected to produce better fruiting varieties. Many of these derive from the wild cherry, or gean, which is still used as the rootstock on which its more productive relatives are grown.
- The fruit can be eaten fresh or prepared in a variety of ways, and is also used in syrups and cough medicines.
- Liqueurs are distilled from the fermented pulp of fruit and stone.

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Beech
Fagus sylvatica

Description

The beech is a native deciduous tree of south east England and is now widely distributed. It can be recognised by its silver grey, smooth bark, and smooth leaves on twigs which form a zig-zag pattern. Beech nuts grow in furry cases.

Myths and Legends

- Beech bark was thought to be deadly to snakes.
- Beech tea, made with lard, was a sure remedy for rheumatism.
- Botanists believe that ancient beech trees in the south of England are descendants of the original beech that came here after the last Ice Age ended some 12,000 yrs ago.
- Beech has long been a favourite of lovers wishing to carve their initials, names or sentimental verses into the bark.
- Gutenberg is said to have invented printing after he saw what happened to some letters he casually carved out of beech bark. He wrapped them in paper whilst still damp, and when he unwrapped them he discovered that their shape was printed on the paper.
- In German lore, beech is thought to repel lightning. Like so much local lore this may be partially based on fact as water runs down the smooth bark and may carry the electrical current safely along the tree instead of destroying it.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- The wood is fine grained and easy to work with. It is used for chairs and piano frames, polishing to a superb natural finish.
- Although the timber is less durable than oak, it survives well underwater and has been used for bridge piles.
- Beech trees do not produce a good harvest of nuts (called 'mast') every year. In favourable conditions an abundant mast occurs every five to eight years.
- The mast is edible, and in times of famine the nuts have been eaten. However, they are very small so collecting and peeling sufficient for a meal must have been hard work.
- Swine would have been let loose in beech woods in autumn to eat the mast, although erratic cropping meant this was not a reliable food source.

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Apple
Malus domestica

Description

Apple trees can grow up to 30 ft (9m) high, They have delicate pink /white blossom and fruit suitable for cooking and/or eating. At Rosliston there is a mixture of dessert apples and our native crab apple trees. The crab apple is a shrub-like tree and the fruit is small, yellow to red and rather sharp tasting.

Myths and Legends

- It has always been a symbol of fruitfulness and plenty. Apples were considered one of the most magical of all trees.
- In other stories, people were warned not to sleep under an apple tree—it meant you were likely to be carried off by the fairies.
- A single spray of apple blossom flowering among ripe apples was believed to warn of the death of one of the family.
- Apples were also used in experiments for love and favour. To test the fidelity of a lover, place an apple pip in the fire and say his name. If the lover is faithful the pip will make a noise as it bursts with the heat, but if he is not the pip will burn away silently.
- The crab apple tree's name may come from the word 'crabbed' meaning 'of awkward character' - as it is often a stunted, crooked tree.
- Alternative & more positive characteristics are noted by wandmakers in 'Harry Potter' as the wood is associated with masters who are charming and well-loved.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- Apples belong to the rose family (Rosaceae)
- There are about 2000 different varieties of eating and cooking apples.
- There is only **one** genetic form of each variety of apple, so every single Cox's Orange Pippin tree in the world has been grown from a twig or bud taken from the original tree.
- As 'named' domestic apples are always propagated by grafting, if you grow a tree from any apple pip it will be a completely new variety - just like children are related to (but different from) their parents.
- Find our Space Sapling apple tree nearby: it has been grown from a pip from Sir Isaac Newton's 'Flower of Kent' apple variety. We are waiting to see how much resemblance there is to its famous parent!
- Apple trees take four to five years to produce their first fruit.
- The crab apple recolonised Britain after the Ice Age and is therefore regarded as a native British tree.
- The wood of the crab apple is excellent for carving.

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Ash
Fraxinus excelsior

Description

The ash is a common deciduous tree with large divided (compound) leaves. It produces small purple flowers and many seeds. It can also be identified by the distinctive jet black buds at the base of each leaf.

Myths and Legends

- The ash tree is mentioned often in folklore from all over Europe. It was considered to have magical powers—able to keep the devil away from newborn children, and predict who a girl might marry.
- The Yggdrasill-tree of Scandinavian mythology was an enormous ash whose roots spread in three directions: heaven, earth and hell.
- The legend tells that the gods made the first man, Askr, from ash wood.
- Ash branches could be used by witches in order to fly. However in Lincolnshire use of the female ash tree, Sheder, would defeat a male witch, while the male tree, called Heder, would defeat a female witch.
- Failure of the ash seed crop was thought to foretell a royal death and a failure in 1648 was said to predict the execution of Charles I on Jan 1st 1649.
- According to wand lore in Harry Potter stories, ash wands have strong, powerful and brave owners and are not to be passed on lightly.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- The winged seeds are commonly known as 'keys', as they are a similar shape to the keys used to open mediaeval locks.
- A Roman iron implement, dating from the first century AD was found to have a handle made of ash.
- It is still used for hockey sticks, oars, rudders, billiard cues, cricket stumps, polo sticks and police truncheons as it has a springy resilience that modern plastics cannot equal.
- As a wood for fuel, ash is said to be best while still green but of little use when dry.
- Tea can be made from the leaves.
- It is rarely grown as an ornamental tree due to its overwhelming size and fibrous root structure that takes moisture from the soil and prevents anything else from growing.
- Around 40% of our site is mixed oak and ash plantations. Sadly we have 'Chalara Ash Dieback' fungal disease here. Its long term impact on our site is unclear and you are advised not to take leaves or twigs anywhere else as this can spread the disease.

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Hazel
Corylus avellana

Description

A small bushy tree, with alternate leaves, almost heart shaped, which appear in May. Beautiful yellow catkins appear in February, rich with pollen, and nuts appear in late summer.

Myths and Legends

- Animals could be protected by hazel's magic powers. When a horse had eaten too much, hazel twigs were bound to make it well again. Of course, the correct rhyme had to be recited for it to work.
- A good crop of hazel nuts was said to foretell either disasters or good fortune: "Many nuts, many graves", or, on the other hand, plenty of babies...
- The magic power of the hazel nut is said to be strongest on Halloween (also called Nutcrack Night). The fate of lovers would be determined by how well the nuts blazed in the fire. The brighter the flame, the stronger the passion. If 2 nuts burned quietly side by side, the lovers would be faithful, but if one rolled away they would not...
- It is said to be unlucky to pick the nuts before Michaelmas Day (29th Sept). However the squirrels have usually eaten most of them by then so our advice is to try earlier!
- Hazel wands, in Harry Potter's world, are affected by mood and best owned by wizards who can control their emotions.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- Few hazels ever reach tree height- most ending up as large shrubs of 13ft (4m) in a hedge. Undisturbed single trees can reach 20ft (6m).
- In timber production, hazel is usually coppiced (cut off at the base) and regrows into long strong straight poles used for fence posts .
- Hazel nuts or cobs ripen in late August / early September and are a valuable food source for many animals.
- They are also prized by humans for eating raw, and making into spreads and sauces, often with chocolate.
- Hazel was used to build the coracles (boats) used by Welsh fishermen 3000 years ago, wattles for early house building, hurdles and walking sticks.
- Hazel was also used to dowse (search) for water and minerals. Using a forked twig, a 'diviner' walked over the ground holding the two prongs of the hazel fork. When passing over water under the ground, the twig should twitch..

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Small Leaved Lime
Tilia cordata

Description

A distinctive tall tree with an uneven crown. It grows straight upwards with branches billowing out towards the top. The bark is grey and finely cracked. The yellow flowers and small round fruits grow in small clusters. You can also watch our new mile-long lime avenue grow—it runs along Burton Road between Rosliston and Drakelow.

Myths and Legends

- The lime has been regarded as a female tree and was sacred to Frigga the Goddess of Fertility.
- The lime was a tree to dance around and this is still done in Germany.
- The lime tree was also a symbol of liberty and they were planted to commemorate victory in battles in Switzerland and France.
- In Scandinavia people believed the tree to be a favourite haunt of elves and fairies and it was considered unsafe to go near a lime tree after sunset.
- In the wizarding world of Harry Potter lime (or silver lime) wood is highly prized for its beauty and for its association with wizards dealing in psychic magic—raising its status by association with these mysterious powers.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- It is less common in Britain than the rest of Europe. It will form woods on deep loamy soil.
- Lime wood is used to make canoes, bowls and ladles.
- The strong fibre of the underbark has been used for centuries to make nets and rope.
- The flowers and leaves are a popular snack for cattle and deer.
- It is suitable for planting in urban areas as it grows upwards rather than outwards and is often seen in public parks. Lime avenues can be seen at some stately homes
- It is a long-lived tree which grows to a full height of 38m.
- Bees and hoverflies are attracted to the trees in flower. Mannose, a sugar in the nectar, can make bees dozy or even a little drunk....
- Lime leaves can be used as a sandwich filling and the yellow flowers have a honey-like fragrance and can be dried to make a tea.

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Norway Maple *Acer platanoides*

Description

A widespread tree which grows to a height of 30m. It has a short un-branched trunk with grey, smooth or finely ridged bark. The leaves are bright green with five pointed toothed lobes.

Myths and Legends

- Norway Maple is part of a large family of Acers, with various species growing around the world, each with its own local legends.
- Carvings in maple can be seen in many thirteenth century cathedrals and churches.
- In parts of Europe, it was believed that maple branches around a doorway had the power to prevent bats entering.
- Herbalists recommended decoctions of the bark and leaves to strengthen the liver.
- J.K Rowling, in the Harry Potter franchise, comments that as well as being beautiful, maple wood is most suited to those in search of adventure.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- The wood is heavy and finely grained.
- It is used for cabinet making and veneer wood. It can be worked very thin and takes a polish.
- It has also been used to make harps and violins.
- Produces wonderful colours in autumn due to the chemical composition of the leaves which include carotene and xanthophylls.
- It has yellow flowers in April followed by winged olive coloured fruits growing in a pair.
- The maple sap which rises in the spring can be used to make wine and syrup.
- Varieties of acer in tiny pots are carefully tended and trimmed into miniature 'bonsai' trees in Japan. This custom has become popular all over the world.

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Whitebeam
Sorbus Intermedia

Description

In the open this tree grows with a regular shaped crown, but forms a mass of steeply rising branches if in a wood. The bark is smooth grey-brown and the leaves are oval, dull green on top and pale underneath.

Myths and Legends

- In Lancashire and Cumbria, the fruits are known as chess-apples and like medlars are edible when on the point of rotting.
- English Whitebeam was used as a boundary marker by the Anglo Saxons.
- There is much folklore associated with Rowan and Whitebeams being used to create magic and to dispel magic. Depending upon the writer and the century, it is either used by witches and the fairy folk or used to banish them.



Facts, Figures and Uses

- English whitebeam is rare but the Swedish variety is more common especially throughout Southern England
- They normally reach a height of 15m.
- Whitebeam wood is hard and durable. It has been used for making cogs, wheels and other machine parts.
- It was named by the Anglo Saxons, the word 'beam' coming from the German 'baum' meaning tree.
- Popular as a suburban roadside tree it also makes a striking shrub, flushed with silver when the wind turns up the pale undersides of the leaves.
- Small white flowers appear in clusters during May—June and round red fruit in September.
- The red berries are popular with birds and squirrels.
- Whitebeam is related to the Rowan.

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Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*

Description

An attractive tree growing to 30m with smooth, grey, fissured bark. Its leaves have prominent veins and jagged edges. Younger trees have a conical shape. It has striking green flowers and seeds that hang from the tree in summer like decorations or lanterns.

Myths and Legends

- People born in early June are said to have fallen from the Hornbeam tree. They are said to have good taste and to enjoy a comfortable life!
- Romans used hornbeam to make their chariots.
- It is thought the mazes at Hampton Court were grown from Hornbeam originally before being replaced with yew and holly.
- Up to the end of the Victorian era, hornbeams close to London were pollarded and coppiced to provide charcoal, kindling and thin poles for things like beansticks.
- In the world of Harry Potter, a hornbeam wand reflects its owners views and desires to such an extent that it may refuse to work for anyone else.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- Hornbeam wood is very hard, tough and heavy, blunting saws very quickly.
- Its hard wearing quality makes it suitable for flooring, chopping blocks, skittles and snooker cues.
- It is also used to make piano keys and harpsichords.
- There are about 25 other species of Hornbeam in the Northern hemisphere.
- Leaves turn orange in Autumn.
- The name may be derived from the ancient use of the wood for yokes—the beam between the horns. Or another interpretation is that in Old English horn meant hard and beam meant tree.
- It is often found as an understorey tree in oak woods.

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Elm
Ulmus spp.

Description

The English elm has dark brown bark and dark green double toothed leaves which appear in April. Flowers appear in February and the fruit consists of single seeds within a circular membrane. Wych elm has much larger leaves. Our elms are part of the 'Great British Elm Experiment'.

Myths and Legends

- The elm tree has been known as *elven*, believed to be associated with elves.
- It has also been associated with death and re-birth. This includes links to Burial Mounds and the later English tradition of using elm for coffins.
- In Devon it was thought that if elm leaves fell prematurely then cattle disease would follow, and that elm trees were never struck by lightning.
- In Cornwall, the maypole taken to the village on 30 April to be decorated for May Day was always made of elm.
- A Scandinavian myth tells the tale of 3 of the Gods finding an ash and an elm lying on the sea shore and transforming them into the first humans.
- It's believed that the Romans brought the "English" elm to Britain.
- In Harry Potter's world, an elm wand is highly dependable and capable of highly skilled and intelligent magic if paired with a similarly gifted wizard.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- The tree became national news in the 1970s when large numbers were destroyed by the rapid spread of Dutch Elm Disease, a disease originating in Asia and first spotted in Holland. The disease was spread by a bark beetle which carries the infection and it is believed that the disease has recurred in episodes since Neolithic times. Wych elms are more resistant to it than English elms.
- Elm seeds are generally sterile in the UK which is on the edge of their range. So new trees are usually produced by suckers sent out from the parent plant. This method of reproduction means that most elms are identical clones of one parent, so if one succumbs to a particular disease it is likely the rest will too.
- Elm is a strong wood, and was often used for the dividing sections in cowsheds, because it could withstand the continual kicking from animal hooves. It was also used for wheels.
- Straight trunks and branches were often used for early water pipes. Some put underground in London in 1613 were still good as new when uncovered in 1930.

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Corsican Pine *Pinus nigra var. maritima*

Description

The Corsican pine is a fast growing, evergreen conifer, although it takes 4-5 years to get established. It has long, twisted needles which grow in pairs, and very young trees look like bottle brushes. It grows fast to about 115ft (35m).

Myths and Legends

- The Vikings used pine to carve dragonhead prows for their longships.
- Pine has been used to celebrate and encourage the return of the Sun and is often found associated with birth.
- The resin was believed to have "protective magical power".
- Pine trees are thought to be home to the fairies, wood-trolls and the Spirit King of forests in some countries.
- The Chinese planted pine trees on graves in order to strengthen the souls of the dead and protect the bodies from decay.
- In Korea, blind wizards called Pan-Su used pine (and peach) wands to dispel demons that lived in shady areas.
- Pine is also known as the Tree of Cybele. Legend tells that her lover, Atys, had an affair and then died of remorse. Cybele transformed him into a pine tree, cherishing it forever. To please Cybele, Jupiter decreed that the pine should remain ever-green.
- Pine wands are said to be adaptable & creative and suit intuitive and adventurous masters.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- This tree is a variety of Austrian pine, and is valued as a timber tree for its straight, cylindrical trunk.
- The mature cone is rounded and takes 2 years to ripen.
- Today, Corsican pine is used for pit props, building work and plywood.
- Pine can be tapped for its sap /resin. If you distil sap (heat it and condense the vapour) you will get turpentine. The "rosin" is the sticky stuff that remains behind after distillation and it is good for many things like violin strings, paints and varnishes.
- Pine resin was once used for sealing-wax. It was also highly prized as 'pitch' to seal boats.
- Pine is a powerful bronchial disinfectant and is used to ease respiratory problems. It has also been used to treat bladder and kidney problems and makes an excellent antiseptic.
- Thousands of Corsican Pines were planted here between 1993-5. Our pines are affected by red band needle blight, a fungal disease which affects growth. As we thin, fell and replant, other conifers are being planted here too.

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Sweet Chestnut *Castanea sativa*

Description

The sweet chestnut's leaves are large, and edged with coarse, saw-like teeth. The fruit is a green spiny/furry husk which splits in autumn to release one to three edible nuts.

Myths and Legends

- Sweet chestnuts roasted beside an open fire have been a winter delicacy in Britain for generations and chestnut stuffing has become a traditional part of the Christmas turkey dinner.
- The sweet chestnut is a native of the Mediterranean and was probably introduced to Britain by the Romans.
- From the fruits they made a form of porridge, called *pollenta* in Latin, which is still eaten in regions of southern Europe.
- The Persian nobility, according to Xenophon, were fattened on chestnuts.
- In wizardry, according to J K Rowling, a chestnut wand is adaptable - with the ability to suit many different personality traits. It is often matched with wizards who administer justice and value fair play.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- Few chestnuts bought in this country are home-grown, as British summers are usually too cool for the chestnut to ripen to full size.
- Because chestnuts do not germinate freely in Britain, few Sweet Chestnut trees are genuinely wild.
- Chestnut wood is very similar to oak, and it is used for panelling and beams. As it resists the weather well, it is used to make rough fences.
- The nuts are a good food source. They may be boiled, roasted, ground into flour, made into puddings, cakes, bread and porridge.
- Chestnut production is a much loved part of Corsican social and economic culture as well as being an important food source with around 60 different sub species in cultivation.

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Sitka Spruce
Picea sitchensis

Description

This tree is similar to the Norwegian Spruce but has flatter, sharper needles and smaller, paler, rounded cones. It grows to a height of 50m and is now possibly the most common tree growing in Britain. A native of North America, it flourishes in areas of high rainfall.

Myths and Legends

- Howard Hughes' famous airplane the Spruce Goose was made of Sitka Spruce. It was also used in the manufacture of Mosquito Bombers in World War II.
- Aboriginal tribes thought the Sitka spruce was magical. Its wood was carved into love-charms. During ceremonial dances, capes were made from boughs to protect the dancers from evil presences while the dancers portrayed powerful spirit creatures.
- The dried and split roots were used to weave watertight hats and baskets and the inner bark was used as a laxative.
- The sap was used to treat skin irritations and sunburn.
- Its Norwegian cousin, Norway Spruce, is our traditional Christmas Tree.
- In the magical world of Harry Potter a spruce wand can be difficult or independent and hard to control by a weak master. In the right hands, though, it is an excellent spell-maker.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- This tree is named after the town of Sitka in Alaska.
- The Spruce family contains around 40 species of trees found throughout the northern hemisphere from the Arctic Circle to the Pyrenees and Himalayas.
- This is the fastest growing tree in wet soil and millions have been planted around the world.
- A versatile timber, the Sitka is used for paper, board, pallets and packing cases.
- Sitka Spruce is also known as the Coast Spruce, Tideland Spruce or Yellow Spruce.
- The cones tend to occur only in the top of the trees near the end of smaller branches on mature trees.

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European Larch *Larix decidua*

Description

The Larch is deciduous, unlike most other conifers. The needles are bright green, soft and grow in tufts along the branch. They turn yellow before dropping in the autumn. Woody cones grow along the branches and can remain on the tree for several years.

Myths and Legends

- A sacred larch tree was said to exist in Austria up until 1859. If the tree was cut, then the person who cut it was said to be wounded to the same depth as the tree. His wound would not heal until the wound on the tree healed. In addition, no one was allowed to quarrel or swear near the tree -something to bear in mind!
- Ornamental varieties of larch are used for bonsai work—which is the art of keeping living trees miniature by pruning the roots and branches, and of wiring the branches of normal trees. This idea developed in China but Japanese bonsai is more widely known today.
- The specially 'dwarfed' bonsai trees are held to symbolise mortality and the changes of the seasons.
- In Harry Potter's world larch is a popular choice for wands as it is believed its owner will become more courageous when using it. It can also reveal and enhance the talents of its owner.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- 'Larix' is the name of the species. 'decidua' refers to the fact that the Larix trees are deciduous. Most Conifers are evergreen, keeping their needles all year. The only other deciduous conifers are Dawn Redwood and Swamp Cypress.
- Larch wood is high quality with a reddish grain and is used in houses and ship building
- Larch poles are often used for rustic work such as furniture or sawn very thinly and treated with preservative for garden fencing panels.
- The tree can reach 30-45 metres in height and has downward-sweeping branches that turn upwards at the ends.
- The cones can remain on the tree for several years.
- Its close relative, the Japanese Larch, is one of the main commercial forestry trees at Rosliston. Nationally, larch is being affected by a fungal disease, phytophthora ramorum. As we thin and replant we will plant a wider variety of conifer species to reduce our dependence upon larch.

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Spindle *Euonymus europaeus*

Description

The spindle tree is one of our loveliest woodland shrubs. It grows to a height of 3-10m. The spring flowers are small and unspectacular but the leaves and fruit become a glorious red in autumn. When the pink fruits split, bright orange seeds are revealed.

Myths and Legends

- In old herbal books it is called Skewerwood or Prickwood from its use as toothpicks.
- Spindle is supposed to symbolise creative inspiration and purification.
- Celts believed the Spindle tree was a sign that obligations should be fulfilled and tasks completed or life cannot move forward.
- Its name 'euonymus' comes from the Greek word for 'good'. In some areas it was associated with good luck. In others it was considered unlucky and a predictor of plague if the shrub flowered early....



Facts, Figures and Uses

- All parts of the spindle are poisonous. This means that it can be used to kill pests - so dried and powdered seeds were used for killing head lice and to treat mange in cattle.
- Spindle trees are widespread in Europe as far north as Scotland and Sweden.
- It is often found on chalk and limestone in lowland Britain.
- The wood which is of a light yellow hue is strong, compact and easily worked with tools. The trees are quite small though - which limits what it can be used for.
- The wood is so hard that it can be used to make spindles for spinning wool - hence the name.
- It is also used to make charcoal for artists.
- The seeds can remain dormant for many years.
- The twigs are a lovely shape, slightly squared, and have beautiful white streaks/ patterns.

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Holly
Ilex aquifolium

Description

This favourite evergreen needs little introduction, with its distinctive prickly leaves. Bright red berries grow on the female trees and are a symbol of Christmas. It grows widely over much of the British Isles.

Myths and Legends

- Originally used in pagan rituals to stop demons from entering homes; this benefit was extended to churches by early Christians.
- Like several other trees, it was said to be the one from which Christ's cross was hacked.
- Symbolic links are recorded in the words of "The Holly and the Ivy" carol: the spines represent the crown of thorns, the white flowers purity and the birth of Christ, the red berries drops of blood and the bitter bark the passion.
- A good crop of berries is said to be the warning of a hard winter.
- Cow herdsman used sticks made of holly, believing a holly stick would bring back runaway cows if thrown after them!
- The old name for holly is "holm" which is found in place names.
- It is associated with wizards focussed on difficult quests, according to the wand lore of Harry Potter's world.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- Hollies are slow growing, taking many years to reach tree height.
- They are not fussy about soil type or situation, growing happily in sun or shade. However ones with variegated (2-colour) leaves require more light.
- Berries will only grow on a female tree, and then only if there is a male tree nearby.
- The wood is hard and heavy due to its slow growth and is used for carving, particularly chessmen, and many other turned objects.
- Almost all parts of the holly have been used for healing purposes. Eating small numbers of berries acted as a purgative (to clear out the digestive system). Large numbers act as an emetic (making you sick). Leaves were used to cure fever and improve circulation.
- Holly is a common tree in this area and particularly associated with the Forest of Needwood in Staffordshire.

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Yew
Taxus baccata

Description

The Yew is one of the 8 most widespread and characteristic native trees found in Britain. It is also our most mysterious and sacred tree. It is a conifer which has flat needles and easily recognized red berries. Flowering is from February-April.

Myths and Legends

- Many yews are found growing in Churchyards and on ancient Celtic and Saxon burial grounds. It is traditionally seen as the tree of death but at the same time represents regeneration and immortality.
- Christians traditionally used yew branches in Church at Easter and on Palm Sunday to symbolise the continuity of life.
- Shoots of yew were also put into the shrouds of the dead and in graves, to protect the spirit as it continued into its life to come.
- In the wizarding world of Harry Potter, yew wands are often matched with owners of outstanding potential. Consequently they are quite rare.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- Yew trees grow to the greatest age of any native tree. Although they are difficult to date as they get rotten and hollow when old, many are known to be well over 1000 years old. The Fortingall Yew in Perthshire is claimed to be up to 9000 years old.
- Yews can also grow up to 28m tall, the tallest on record being at Belvoir Castle and measuring 29m (95ft.)
- The red berry has long been considered poisonous and while the seeds inside are, the red flesh of the berry is not and many birds and mammals feed on them.
- Yew trees are widely distributed in Britain, occurring in scattered populations in woodland, especially under oak. The largest and most commonly encountered specimens are in Church yards.
- Yew timber is very hard and heavy and was traditionally used to make longbows and spears. It also resists water so was used for ship masts and wine barrels. The Vikings used yew wood for nails when building their ships. It is decorative and finishes well so is also used for furniture and ornamental work.

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Lodgepole Pine *Pinus contorta*

Description

Height 20-25m. This is a conifer with a cone-shaped crown. The bark is scaly and brown. Leaves are blue-green, tapered and usually slightly twisted. It has tiny flowers in late spring.

Myths and Legends

- Pine has been used to celebrate and encourage the return of the Sun and is often found associated with birth.
- The resin was believed to have 'protective magical power.'
- The Chinese planted pine trees on graves in order to strengthen the souls of the dead and protect the bodies from decay.
- Pine is also known as the Tree of Cybele. Legend tells that her lover, Atys, had an affair and then died of remorse. Cybele transformed him into a pine tree, cherishing it forever. To please Cybele, Jupiter decreed that the pine should remain ever-green.
- A pine wand suggests that the owner has an adventurous, creative and intuitive personality—according to the writings of J K Rowling.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- In the wild, this species of pine grows in western North America from Alaska down to California along the Pacific seaboard and on the mountain ranges inland.
- The native people selected its strong straight tree trunks for building their dwellings - hence its name.
- Lodgepole pines make good Christmas trees as they have long needles and open foliage which shows off decorations to advantage. They also hold their needles well indoors.
- Male cones are yellow.
- It is often grown as a commercial 'crop' although our pines at Rosliston are mainly Corsican pine.
- A vast area of lodgepole pine forest in Canada has been badly damaged by the mountain pine beetle. It normally tolerates this 'pest' because it is killed off in the severe winter weather—but global warming and consequently milder winters mean the beetle has got the upper hand.

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Norway Spruce *Picea abies*

Description

A common and widespread tree, it has a conical shape with level or drooping lower branches and ascending higher ones. It has rich deep green needles which are rigid, quadrangular and pointed. The cones are long, cigar shaped and downward pointing. Height is to 40m(130 ft)

Myths and Legends

- The traditional use of the Norway spruce is for Christmas trees as its shape makes it ideal for displaying lights and tinsel. The tradition of a Christmas tree was introduced from Germany by the Royal Family in the 19th century. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert had their first Christmas tree at Windsor Castle in 1841.
- The tradition of erecting a Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square dates from 1947. The tree is donated by the people of Oslo in gratitude for British support during the Second World War.
- It tends to drop its needles indoors when it gets warm and starts to dry out but its lovely smell usually makes up for the inconvenience!
- It's said that a spruce wand can be awkward for a weak or indecisive wizard to master but when controlled by a strong-minded wizard it is a powerful tool.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- A single Norway spruce on Campbell Island, Antarctica holds the record for the most isolated tree in the world, being over 90 miles (145km) from its nearest companion on the Auckland Islands.
- The largest known Norway spruces in Britain are found in Cumbria and Scotland, the greatest height recorded being 52m (170ft) in 1986.
- The timber of the Norway spruce, called Whitewood or White Deal, also has great commercial value. It is a clean softwood suitable for chipboard and paper pulp. It is also used in building and joinery as it has a natural sheen.
- Spruce was used to build several fences at Aintree racecourse.
- The Norway Spruce attracts a large variety of wildlife.

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Alder
Alnus glutinosa

Description

Alder thrives in wet ground. The tree is covered in little cones all year round, and has brown catkins which ripen in spring. The leaves are flat, rounded and smooth, sometimes notched at the tip.

Myths and Legends

- Evil lurked in the Alder, according to ancient belief. The tree was feared because its wood, when cut, takes on a blood-orange tinge as if it is bleeding.
- This gave rise to a superstition that the tree was the embodiment of a malign spirit, such as Erlkonig of old German legend. Erlkonig meant "alder king", though the title is usually translated as elf king.
- Traditionally in Ireland it is unlucky to pass an alder on a journey, possibly because this would mean going through swampy land, where all sorts of misfortune might happen to the traveller.
- In Austria, alder's a favourite gathering place for sorcerers.
- Witches were said to use whistles of alder to conjure up the force of the North wind.
- If a twig of alder is carried it is said to give spiritual protection during disputes.
- As a wand, alder can be hard and inflexible but it is said to seek a master with the opposite characteristics.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- Alder can be planted to enrich poor ground (eg restored open-cast land), or to prevent erosion of river banks. Like other members of the pea family, the alder's roots contain bacteria which can absorb or 'fix' nitrogen from the air - making up for the usual lack of nitrogen in wet soil.
- Pollen grains found in peat deposits show the alder has been established in Britain for thousands of years.
- Alder is easy to work with tools and does not get slippery or slimy when wet. So it was favoured for clog making and still is used for shoe sole.
- Black dye can be made from the bark, fruit and leaves. The wood is yellow when dried out
- Alder posts and piling form a significant part of the foundations of Venice as chemicals within the timber mean that it can last hundreds of years underwater.
- Top quality charcoal and gunpowder were made from alder.

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Douglas Fir
Pseudotsuga menziesii

Description

A coniferous tree widely planted in Britain. The needles leave the shoot in all directions and have two white stripes underneath. They smell of oranges when rubbed. The bark has large fissures and is dark brown.

Myths and Legends

- Fir has become a popular choice for Christmas trees, replacing the Norway Spruce in some households as it lasts longer before the needles drop and is less prickly. Fir was also the original German Christmas tree (not spruce).
- Many of the myths associated with the pine tree are also linked with fir, including the tale of Cybele's unfaithful lover being transformed into an 'evergreen' tree. It seems that anger or spite of the ancient Gods of many cultures often caused them to turn people into fir trees....
- In Poland, a beautiful female huntress called Dziwitza (possibly Diana) used to terrify people who wandered through the fir forests.
- In Russia, a sacred grove of fir trees was visited by men when rain was needed—they made loud noises and waved a firestick to imitate thunder and lightning, and sprinkled water over the firs. Rain was then set to follow.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- Douglas Fir trees originated in North America. They were first imported into Britain in 1827 by the famous plant hunter David Douglas.
- The cones are very distinctive - egg shaped, hanging downwards and with a unique three-pointed bract on the outside of each cone scale.
- They are a valuable timber producing tree used for joinery, decoration and veneering.
- The tallest specimen of any tree ever recorded was a Douglas Fir. It reached 127 metres and grew in British Columbia, where it was felled in 1895.
- You can tell a fir from a spruce because fir needles are soft whereas spruce needles are spiny.

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Walnut
Juglans regia

Description

A widely spreading tree with twisting branches and a big broad trunk. The leaves are made up of small leaflets, dark greenish yellow with a matt surface. The flowers open just before the leaves, the fruit is oval and has one seed—the walnut.

Myths and Legends

- Shelled walnuts look very much like the two halves of a brain. It is for this reason that the ancient Greeks and Romans believed that walnuts cured headaches.
- Romans also believed that sleeping in the shade of a walnut tree caused headaches and uneasiness. This may be because the trees produce chemicals called 'juglones' that stop other plants growing underneath them and some people still believe that lying under such trees makes them feel unwell.
- According to the writings of J K Rowling in her Harry Potter books, walnut wands are high performing helpmates for skilled wizards. They are particularly suited to creative work but can be led astray quite easily in the wrong hands.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- Walnuts have a high calorie content so have been used since Greek times as a food.
- The oil is delicious on salads and pasta.
- The leaves and outer green husks are deadly poisons for fish and most animals.
- The outer husks have been used to make a dark brown natural dye.
- The timber is a fine grained and dark wood that has been used for centuries for making fine furniture and gunstocks.
- The walnut leaf is leathery and when crushed smells of shoe polish.
- Its close relative, the American Black Walnut, has military connections. The walnut shells were powdered and used in dynamite and early aircraft propellers were made from its extremely durable wood.

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Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*

Description

The sycamore is Europe's largest and most common member of the Maple family. The bark, which is smooth and pale greyish green, curls and peels off in large hard flakes. The long stalked leaves are large, up to 18cm across and have 5 distinctive lobes.

Myths and Legends

- The Latin name for Acer also means sharp, referring to the use of Acer wood for spears, spikes and lances.
- According to the Egyptian 'Book of the Dead' twin sycamores stood at the eastern gate of heaven from which the sun god Re emerged each morning.
- The sycamore was regarded as a manifestation of the goddesses Nut, Isis and especially of Hathor, who was given the title Lady of the Sycamore.
- Sycamores were often planted near tombs.
- Burial in coffins made of sycamore wood returned the dead person to the womb of the mother tree goddess.
- In the wizarding world of the Harry Potter books, sycamore produces a fine looking wand. It is said to suit a wizard with an adventurous personality.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- The sycamore is not native to Britain, it was introduced from France in the Middle Ages.
- The tallest tree was recorded in Scotland in 1985, at a height of 40m, while the largest diameter recorded was in 232cm (1991 data)
- The timber is very pale cream, strong and hard with a smooth finish. Early uses in Britain were for writing tables, ox yokes and ornamental carvings.
- The wood is most widely used where there is contact with food as it is free from dye and does not taint eg. For kitchen table tops, butchers blocks and rolling pins, in fact anything requiring a clean, hard wearing wood that will withstand moisture.
- Flowers are numerous and provide nectar for bees, and the winged fruits twirl through the air like helicopter blades in October.
- Sycamore is very hardy, easy to germinate and fast growing so sometimes it is considered a 'weed'. However these properties also make it a good 'nursery' or shelterbelt tree, used to protect more delicate species from the prevailing wind.

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Field Maple *Acer campestre*

Description

The maple is a native British member of the Acer, or sycamore, family. The leaves grow in pairs and have five lobes. They are dark green when mature and turn a spectacular colour in autumn. It produces distinctive winged seeds.

Myths and Legends

- In Wales the tree was called *masarn* — the old "mazer", a wooden drinking bowl or goblet, was made from maple wood.
- The wood was used centuries ago for making harps and a harp made from maple wood was unearthed when a Saxon barrow was excavated. The famous Sutton Hoo treasure also revealed part of a Saxon harp made of maple.
- Carvings in maple can be seen in many thirteenth century cathedrals and churches.
- In parts of Europe, it was believed that maple branches around a doorway had the power to prevent bats entering.
- The herbalist, Culpeper, recommended the use of the leaves and bark to strengthen the liver.
- Like its cousin, the sycamore, wands made from maple wood are suited to wizards in search of adventure— according to J K Rowling. Their beauty is also noted.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- Like the Sycamore, the field maple produces paired winged seeds known as "keys". The wings lie in an almost straight line in field maples, and spin like helicopter blades as the seeds fall.
- Maple wood is heavier than sycamore, fine-grained and brown. It is much prized by wood turners and cabinet makers, especially for very fine goods needing precision work like musical instruments and bowling pins.
- It takes a high polish and is an excellent wood for making veneers (used to cover inferior woods with a fine top layer).
- Like many members of the Acer family, maple trees produce sweet sap in the spring which can be used for making wine or maple syrup. Sugar can be extracted from the wood by boiling.

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Horse Chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum*

Description

The Horse chestnut is a stately tree with branches turned up at the ends. It can grow to a height of 115ft(35m.) It produces candles of white flowers in May, followed by spiky fruits containing the much treasured conkers, in the autumn. The leaf has a fan of 5-7 large leaflets.

Myths and Legends

- The 'Conkers' game used to be played with hazel or cobnuts or even snail shells before horse chestnuts were introduced.
- If a piece of tree is cut off close to a joint it will present a perfect miniature of a horse's hock, foot, shoes and nails— this may have put the horse in the name of the tree
- It is a custom in Germany to plant Horse Chestnut trees in beer gardens— it provides a wide spreading attractive canopy but more importantly its roots are quite shallow so do not damage the beer cellars beneath!
- Horse Chestnut trees have become associated with peace because of a link with Anne Frank. She was encouraged and inspired by a tree growing outside the attic where she was hiding. Sadly she did not survive but the tree did survive for many years and saplings from its conkers have been planted to promote mutual understanding and celebrate diversity.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- The horse chestnut is a naturalized tree, native to North Greece and Albania and first brought to the British Isles in 1600 as a spectacular flowering tree. A leaf miner moth
- It is only distantly related to Sweet Chestnut.
- Conkers are inedible—unlike Sweet Chestnuts, but do have some medicinal qualities for example for the treatment of varicose veins.
- The wood, being soft and spongy, is of little use for timber but used for general products like packing cases and paper pulp. Apparently it was once used to make children's toys and for artificial limbs.
- The bark is smooth and greyish in colour and it can be used for making a yellow dye.
- The bacterial infection, bleeding canker, can kill Horse Chestnuts that are already weakened by disease or other environmental factors. Our 'Conker Alley' suffers badly and we are gradually replacing the trees along Burton Road with limes.
- A leaf miner moth followed the Horse Chestnut across Europe and has no predators in Britain—it causes cosmetic damage to the leaves.

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Blackthorn or Sloe *Prunus spinosa*

Description

A deciduous shrub common in the UK. Its branches and twigs are dark coloured with fierce spines. It has white flowers from March to May and bears small black fruits in September and October.

Myths and Legends

- This tree is linked to many customs of fertility. Used in May Day celebrations, it topped the maypole entwined in a hawthorn garland.
- However in some places it was thought that taking a branch inside the house foretold death.
- According to tradition, Christ's crown of thorns was made from blackthorn and it bloomed at midnight on Christmas Eve.
- The blackthorn flowers appear on bare twigs in early spring before the leaves. When a cold snap follows the start of the warmer spring weather it is still known as 'blackthorn hatch' or 'blackthorn winter' in some places.
- Some evidence suggests that in Neolithic times blackthorn sloes were used medicinally to purge the body.
- They are also associated with crossing the barriers into the spirit world....
- In Harry Potter's world they are considered a close and fitting match for a warrior wizard.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- The sloe is frequently confused with the related cherry plum. The purple/black sloes have an intensely bitter taste whilst cherry plum is usually sweeter and less dark in colour.
- People have been eating it for thousands of years. Researchers in Ireland have shown that medieval monks were partial to an alcoholic drink akin to gin which was made from sloes. Today the sloes are still gathered to make sloe gin.
- The fruit is also used to produce a red dye.
- Blackthorn makes excellent hedges as the sharp spines discourage animals from breaking through.
- The scratch from a blackthorn can often go septic.
- Blackthorn wood makes strong walking sticks and was also used in the past for cudgels. In the British Army, blackthorn sticks are carried by commissioned officers of the Royal Irish Regiment.
- Help yourself to the sloes at Rosliston but please leave some for the wildlife.

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Black Poplar *Populus nigra*

Description

From a distance the Black Poplar has many drooping branches that hold a vast amount of spade-shaped leaves. Up close you can see the famous dark, near black bark with numerous bumps and ridges. *Planted by volunteers from Rolls-Royce plc.*

Myths and Legends

- This species is said to be closely linked to the goddess of death, Hecate.
- In the past, people would often bury a lamb's tail underneath every new black poplar seedling, as an offering or sacrifice to Hecate.
- According to the legend, the tear-drop shaped globules of sap that are constantly dripping from the tree are the tears of Phaethon's sisters.
- Fallen catkins were known as 'Devil fingers' and considered unlucky if picked up.
- In the wizarding world, according to J K Rowling, the poplar wand is well suited to those of clear vision and personal integrity.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- The pods that come from the black poplar tree can be made into an ointment that can help the healing process of bruises, inflammation, and gout.
- The Black Poplar is native to Britain.
- This species was most commonly found on the sides of riverbanks or streams, however they are now used in farming hedgerows.
- This tree can grow over two meters a year. This is very fast for a deciduous tree and hybridised poplars are often grown as a commercial crop. For example at Rosliston we have a field of Beaupre Poplar which grew many times faster than any other tree on the site and could be seen from the Visitor Centre while all the other trees were still saplings.

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Guelder Rose *Viburnum opulus*

Description

This spreading shrub has few branches and grows to about 13ft (4m). It has fragrant clusters of white flowers in June-July and bright red berries in autumn.

Myths and Legends

- Guelder rose is the rose of Gueldre, i.e. of the ancient province of Guelderland, in Holland.
- However, an alternative view is that it is a corruption of Elder Rose, meaning that was thought to be a species of elder.
- It used to also be known as water or swamp elder because of its preference for growing in damp situations.
- It is associated with very old hedges and woodlands.
- In the Cotswolds, a crown of guelder rose is used to adorn the 'King of the May'.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- Two types of flowers are produced on the same head. The showy outer flowers, which are sterile, attract insects to the smaller fertile flowers further in.
- Bright red shiny berries appear Sept to October.
- The leaves, bark and untreated berries of the guelder rose are all poisonous to humans.
- The berries have been used in different ways by different nations. In Norway and Sweden they were used to flavour a paste of honey and flour. In Siberia they were fermented with flour and distilled.

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Cherry Plum *Prunus cerasifera*

Description

The cherry plum tree is a small tree growing to around 8m high. It has a purple tinged bark with small orange lenticels dotted all over. It is one of the first trees to flower in the spring, starting around mid-February.
Planted by volunteers from Rolls-Royce plc

Myths and Legends

- The fruit from this tree is said to bring people courage, calm thoughts and the ability to relax.
- In Japan the tree is believed to have been created by the goddess of Mt. Fuji to decorate the bottom of her mountain.
- The fruit is said to have brought long life to brave Japanese warriors, while the flowers were to represent how fast life can come and go.
- J K Rowling notes that it is particularly prized and represents high status for Japanese wizards.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- The cherry plum is native to south east Europe and west Asia. It has become naturalised in Britain and is fairly common in hedgerows.
- it is a popular species for use in the garden due to its early spring blossom, tasty fruit, small size and attractive purple-tinged leaves.
- Certain types of cherry plum are used for living sculptures or as bonsai trees.
- The fruit is often used to make a lovely jam.
- Cherry plums can have either white or pink flowers.
- It is often used as a rootstock for named varieties of apples, plums and pears because it is hardy and stays quite small.
- Small round 'uma' Japanese plums are considered a delicacy and used in various recipes including umeboshi—meaning salted plums.

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Wild or Common Pear
Pyrus communis / pyraster

Description

The common pear tree reaches up to 15m in height. Its brown-grey bark is finely but deeply cracked. Over time it becomes scaly and flakes off. Springtime blossom is followed by small pears in autumn.

Planted by volunteers from Rolls-Royce plc

Myths and Legends

- There is a superstition in China that if two people share a Pear they will become separated and never meet again!
- The Chinese also believe the pear to be a symbol of immortality.
- Pears are also supposedly sacred to the Greek goddesses Hera, Aphrodite and Pomona.
- The first mention of pears being bred, grafted and cultivated appear in ancient Greek and Roman writing.
- Harry Potter wand lore notes that a pear wand is a long-lasting wand of great beauty and magic. It is best suited to those of wisdom and good character.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- The common pear is native to Europe and western Asia and is a member of the rose (rosacea) family.
- More than 800 species of cultivated dessert pears have been bred from wild species like this one, including Conference and Comice pears.
- The wood from the tree does not splinter or warp when placed in water for a long time, which makes it a popular choice for outdoor projects like sculptures.
- Pear trees are very susceptible to the wind and often need protection or staking.
- Traditionally, pear wood was used to make kitchen utensils, as the wood does not add any flavour or colour to the food.
- As well as eating raw, pears are popular in cooking and also fermented into the alcoholic drink 'perry'.

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Bird Cherry *Prunus padus*

Description

The bird cherry is a fairly small species, rarely reaching more than fifteen meters in height. In spring it is covered by long sprigs of tiny fragrant white flowers, followed by dark glossy fruit.
Planted by volunteers from Rolls-Royce plc

Myths and Legends

- The Bird Cherry has also been referred to as "The Hag Tree", particularly in Scotland, since it was commonly associated with witches. Apparently this deterred people from using its timber!
- In former Czechoslovakia people often cut the branches of the tree on the feast of St Barbara, the fourth of December, so that by the time Christmas came the branches would have blossomed.
- Bark placed at the front door was supposed to ward off the plague.
- Herodotus, writing around 2500 years ago, described its use by a bald-headed tribe in Central Europe: black juice was made from the berries, with the leftovers then made into a cake.
- Cherry wood is prized by J K Rowling's wizards for its exceptional power. For that reason it should only be owned by wizards of sound judgement and exceptional self-control.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- The wood taken from the Bird cherry has lovely red and brown tones and is often used to make tobacco pipes.
- Its native region is north Asia and Europe. In Britain it is most commonly found growing wild in south Wales and East Anglia.
- The flora from this tree is toxic to most kinds of livestock.
- Unusually for the *prunus* species this type of cherry tree does not have root suckers on it.
- In the middle ages, bark from the tree was used in a tonic to help cure stomach aches. Whether it worked or not is another matter...
- The leaves, stems and fruit all contain the glycosides prulaurasin and amygdalin which are poisonous to some mammals.

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HEDGEROW & TREE MYTHS TRAIL



Elder
Sambucus nigra

Description

Elder usually grows as a low, bushy shrub. It is easily recognised as its branches are a lighter brown than surrounding trees and contain a white pith when broken. The leaves and the clusters of white flowers smell sweet. The black berries ripen in late summer.

Myths and Legends

- Elderberries gathered on St John's Eve, 23rd June, were thought to protect the collector against witchcraft and also bestow magical powers.
- In local superstition, the tree was considered unlucky if taken into the house, as it brought the devil in with it. In Needwood Forest, burning elder was said to raise the devil.
- In some parts of the country, elder was planted in gardens to ward off witches.
- Branches of it were sometimes placed near a grave to protect the body from lurking evil spirits.
- Because of the folklore surrounding it, elder was never used to make furniture. In the days of corporal punishment it was never used to cane children (or animals) in case it stunted their growth.
- Leaves picked on May Eve, 30th April, were said to cure toothache, bites from mad dogs, melancholy and adder bites...
- An elder wand, in Harry Potter's world, can only be mastered by someone with special powers. For that reason they are very rare.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- People tend to either love or hate the strong smell of the leaves and flowers.
- Hanging in large clusters, the black elderberries ('drupes') are collected by home wine makers in the autumn. Elderberry wine used to be very popular, with orchards of elders planted in Kent.
- The Romans used the juice of the berries as a hair dye.
- The berries can be used as a substitute for raisins.
- The cordial has long been used for colds and coughs and has recently been proved scientifically effective, containing antioxidants (for example the flavonoid 'anthocyanin') and vitamins A, B, C.
- Elderberries contain viburnic acid which causes perspiration and is useful in cases of bronchitis to sweat out the fever.
- Twigs with the central pith removed make good whistles and pop-guns. Elder was also used for other musical instruments.

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HEDGEROW & TREE MYTHS TRAIL



Giant Sequoia or Giant Redwood
Sequoiadendron giganteum
Coast Redwood *Sequoia sempervirens*

Description

These trees are members of the cypress family and can grow to over 100 metres in height. Their greyish red bark can be as much as a metre thick. Male and female cones are on the same tree.

Giant Redwood donated & planted by Repton School

Myths and Legends

- The trees were believed to have been named after a famous American Indian leader Sequoyah. His mother was Cherokee and his father was a German immigrant. Also known as George Guess, he was the writer that first recorded the language of the Cherokee tribe.
- It is also said that the word Sequoia is derived from the Latin for 'sequence', based on its position in a biological hierarchy.
- When the tree was first named an argument arose as to whether it should be called Washingtonia (after the first American president) or Wellingtonia after the Duke of Wellington. Look it up to find out which name is associated with the species today....
- Redwood timber is quite hard to come by and for that reason the wands are rare. They are considered lucky (or perhaps find themselves matched with naturally lucky owners!).

Facts, Figures and Uses

- Fastest growing trees in the world and can grow 30-60cm per year
- The tallest tree is a coast redwood in California. Its height is 112 metres, about the length of an average football pitch. It is 1000 years old
- The largest tree in the world is a giant sequoia or wellingtonia called 'General Sherman' found in Sequoia National Park in California
- The sequoia is naturally fire-resistant. Fire is very helpful to the growth of the sequoia forest because it clears out undergrowth and the heat dries out the cones allowing the seed to fall out.
- The male and female cones are on the same tree and can be spread by the wind as far as 200m from the parent tree.

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Rowan
Sorbus aucuparia

Description

Found throughout Britain these are slender trees with silvery-brown bark which reach 20m in height. They have creamy-white spring flowers and clusters of brilliant scarlet berries in autumn. Leaves appear early in April.

Myths and Legends

- The tree has many associations with witches particularly in the Celtic tradition where its name 'fid na ndruad' means wizards tree.
- In Ireland it was planted near houses to protect them from the spirits of the dead.
- In Scotland it was thought very unlucky to cut down a rowan.
- The wood was seen as having strong protective powers and was carried in the pocket to prevent rheumatism.
- The belief in rowan as a charm was because of the bright red berries—red was seen as a powerful colour against evil.
- The Isle of Man was one of the areas where there was a tradition of using rowans as protection against witches. Twigs of rowan were made into crosses called 'crosch cuirn' and placed over doorways.
- Rowan wands are said to be particularly effective for protection—according to wand lore in the Harry Potter books.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- Rowans are found in Scotland at nearly 1000m above sea level—making it the highest growing tree in Britain.
- The wood is tough and strong and was traditionally used for tool handles, cartwheels, and planks.
- Rowan berries can be eaten by humans and are sometimes used to make a jelly to accompany meat.
- The name "rowan" is derived from the Old Norse name for the tree "raun" a word believed to come from an older term for red, a reference to the bright red berries.
- The bright berries come out in early August and attract feeding birds particularly starlings, blackbirds and mistle thrushes. For this reason Germans call it the Vogelbeerbaum (literally the bird-berry-tree).

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Alder Buckthorn *Frangula alnus*

Description

A deciduous shrub that can grow to around 6-7 m. Alder buckthorn usually has number of stems but will occasionally form a small tree with a trunk diameter of up to 20 cm. The bark is dark blackish-brown, with bright lemon-yellow inner bark exposed if cut.

Myths and Legends

- It was credited with the power to protect against witchcraft, demons, poisons and headaches by Galen, a Greek physician of the 2nd century A.D., along with related tree species.
- An old legend says that to summon an elf one should dance in a circle of buckthorn until the elf appears, then say to the elf "halt and grant my boon" The elf will then grant you one wish.
- The wood is easily sharpened to make the skewers once used by butchers. These butcher's skewers were known as "dogs" and because of this in some parts of the country Alder Buckthorn is known as "black dogwood".

Facts, Figures and Uses

- Straight shoots were used to make walking and umbrella sticks.
- Alder Buckthorn charcoal is prized in the manufacture of gunpowder, being regarded as the best wood for the purpose.
- The bark can be used to make a yellow dye and the unripe berries can make a green dye.
- The scientific name 'Frangula' is a Latin word meaning breakable which refers to the brittle wood.
- It is very important to the survival of the Brimstone butterfly as it is one of just two food plants used by the species.
- The bark and, to a lesser extent, the fruit have been used in the past as a laxative.

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Western Red Cedar *Thuja plicata*

Description

Western Red Cedar is a narrow conical tree, growing up to 60 metres in height. It has thick, red/purple bark and its leaves are flattened and glossy green with white marks beneath. Cones are produced from August.

Myths and Legends

- A Native American legend tells of the origins of the Western Red Cedar: there was a generous man who gave the people whatever they needed. When the Great Spirit saw this, he declared that when the generous man died, a great red cedar tree would grow where he was buried. The cedar would be useful to all the people, providing its roots for baskets, bark for clothing, and wood for shelter.
- A huge number of archaeological finds point to the use of red cedar wood in indigenous societies over many years. Woodworking tools, such as carved antlers, dating from between 8000 and 5000 years ago, were discovered in digs near Vancouver, British Columbia.
- In J K Rowling's wizarding world, the cedar wand is found in the hands of a strong, perceptive and determined wizard. It makes a powerful wand, not to be crossed lightly.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- Native to Western United States of America.
- The species is monoecious, which means that both male and female flowers grow on the same tree. Male flowering cones are small and inconspicuous. Female flowering cones are small, reddish purple, and borne near the tips of branches.
- The cones are narrowing oval, around 1-1.8cm long with 10 or 12 leathery brown scales.
- The species name 'plicata' derives from the Latin word 'plicare' meaning 'folded in plaits' or 'braided', referring to the leaf patterns.
- The leaves have an aromatic scent of pineapple, even without crushing.
- Many uses of the Western Red Cedar relate to the lightness and resistance to decay of the wood. It's commonly used for construction of tools and boats like canoes.
- Trees provide shelter for wildlife, especially in the harsh winter months.
- The walls of the Outdoor Classroom at the Centre are made of UK-grown Western Red Cedar.

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Silver Fir *Abies alba*

Description

A coniferous tree, cone shaped and pointed at first, later becoming a tall column with a flattened top. It has mixed length needle like leaves and silver grey bark, smooth at first which cracks into small pieces with age.

Celebration!

Our trees were planted on 10th Dec 2019 to celebrate the 25th Birthday of Rosliston Forestry Centre and the 100th Birthday of the Forestry Commission/ Forestry England. The trees were planted by local residents, Forestry England, South Derbyshire District Council, the National Forest Company and site management & education staff—past & present.

Myths and Legends

- In many parts of Europe the Silver Fir is used as a Christmas tree and is often referred to as the 'Christmas Tree Fir'.
- The branches of the tree can be used to make spruce beer which the indigenous people of North America used as a cure for scurvy, especially during the winter, because of the naturally high vitamin C content. It is thought that spruce beer was also brewed in Scandinavia. European sailors adopted the idea after contact with the people of the American 'New World' and it spread across the world.

Facts, Figures and Uses

- Separate male and female flowers grow on separate clusters on the same tree in spring.
- Male flowers are yellow, growing beneath the shoot. The female flowers are green and upright.
- It is named 'silver' fir because the bark of mature trees looks silvery in colour.
- The needles last between 8 and 12 years.
- The trees provide good shelter for wildlife.
- The tallest tree measured was 68 metres in height.
- The tree produces an essential oils with soothing qualities which are used for things like bath products.
- The inner bark when cooked, dried and ground into a powder can be used as a thickening in soups etc or mixed with cereals when making bread.
- Both the bark and the buds are thought to have antibiotic and antiseptic qualities.
- Both the leaves and the resin are common ingredients in remedies for colds and coughs, either taken internally or used as an inhalant.

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Japanese Flowering Cherry:
Great White Cherry
Prunus serrulata

Description

A medium tree with a rounded crown, it is the largest flowered cherry tree. It produces bright white blossoms and copper spring foliage. Striking green summer leaves change to yellow and orange in the autumn.

Myths and Legends

- Cherry blossom often only lasts for less than a week, which is associated with the Buddhist ideal of living in the present moment
- Japanese warriors were often compared to cherry blossoms - they lived brilliantly but died young
- The Japanese tradition on picnicking under and viewing the cherry blossom is known as hanami, and was established as early as 710
- Cherry blossoms are cherished in Japan, and signify love and female mystique
- Sakura (cherry trees) are also a symbol of rebirth, representing agricultural reproduction, mountain deities transforming into gods, the beginning of spring, renewal, new dreams, optimism and a future of possibilities...

Facts, Figures and Uses

- This tree variety died out in Japan but, in 1932, botanist Major Collinwood Ingram found one growing in a Sussex garden. All modern examples of this variety are now descended from this single tree
- In the wild there are only a handful of native Japanese cherry trees. However over 100 varieties of cherry tree can now be found in Japan due to varieties being cultivated by humans for gardens and parks
- Most wild cherry trees have blossoms with five petals. However some cherry trees, called yaezakura, have 20 or more petals.
- The centuries of recording of Cherry blossom 'hanami' festival dates in Japan, when the blossom is at its peak, has helped to track climate change and its impact on flowering times
- Keele University hold a large collection of Flowering Cherry trees in their arboretum

Planted on 29 October 2018 to mark the twentieth anniversary of the relationship between Derbyshire and Toyota City, Japan.
By representatives of Toyota City Council, National Forest Company, South Derbyshire District Council and Forestry England.

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Space Sapling

Grown from a pip from the 'Flower of Kent' Apple *Malus pumila*

As a pip, our tree spent 6 months in micro gravity on the International Space Station - an experiment inspired by the work of Sir Isaac Newton.

Apple trees grown from pips are always different from the parent tree. To get the same variety you need to 'graft' a bud or branch from the parent tree onto a root from another tree.

Our tree will be a new variety with different apples! How will they taste...
...and how will they fall?

Our tree is one of 8 space saplings around the country and has an exciting story to tell: Pips were taken from an apple from the 350 year old 'Flower of Kent' tree at Woolsthorpe Manor, Sir Isaac Newton's family home near Grantham, Lincolnshire (now National Trust). The tree was said to have prompted Newton to question why the apple fell. This contributed to his world-changing work around gravity, *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, published in 1687, which has inspired Scientists ever since.

The UK element of the European Space Agency (ESA)'s mission to space in 2015-6 was named 'Principia' in his honour. Experiments related to his life and work were carried out on the International Space Station (ISS) by UK Astronaut Tim Peake including the 'Pips in Space' project!

The apple pips spent six months floating in micro gravity on the ISS. On their return to earth in 2016, the well-travelled pips went to Wakehurst Place, part of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, where they spent 90 days sitting on a bed of agar jelly at 5C to simulate the winter cold needed to trigger germination. In May 2017 they were warmed to 15C and the young seedlings started to emerge. They were nurtured into 'space saplings' and sent out on missions around the country, including here at Rosliston, in order to:

"Tell the story of Newton, space travel and seed science" (Dr Anne Visscher, Career Development Fellow, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew).

"We want as many people as possible find out about the intertwined stories of Newton, gravity, physics, space travel and horticulture. Maybe one of the trees will one day inspire the next Newton!" (Jeremy Curtis, Head of Education and Skills at the UK Space Agency).

Organisations were invited to bid for one of the 8 remarkable saplings and we were lucky enough to be chosen to be presented with one of them on 13 January 2020.

We have planted the Space Sapling alongside a 'Flower of Kent' tree and our own local variety, from 'King's Newton, the 'Newton Wonder'.

Our trees will inspire educational work linked to horticulture and astronomy
—please come join us!



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References

Rosliston Forestry Centre Tree Trail: references and acknowledgements

If using any sections from the Rosliston Tree Trail please acknowledge the Environmental Education Project as the Trail creators/ researchers. Contact us for an electronic copy of the logo – we will be delighted to hear from anyone who wants to use our work and keep to help you promote it:



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Most of the photos of leaves were taken by EEP. Others are sourced from the internet.

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