

## Know Your Natives Alder

*Alnus glutinosa*



- Alder is the only British native deciduous tree to develop cones!
- Its natural habitat is moist ground near rivers, ponds and lakes and it thrives in damp, cool areas. Wet and swampy, alder woods, or carrs, were thought to have a mysterious atmosphere.
- The green dye from the flowers was used to colour and camouflage the clothes of outlaws like Robin Hood, and was thought to also colour the clothes of fairies.
- When it's cut, the pale wood turns a deep orange, giving the impression of bleeding. Because of this, many people feared alder trees and the Irish thought it was unlucky to pass one on a journey.

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## Know Your Natives Alder Buckthorn

*Frangula alnus*



- Alder buckthorn is native to most of Europe and spreads as far as western China. It is widespread but rare.
- Alder buckthorn leaves are the main food plant of the brimstone butterfly. The flowers are valuable for bees, and the fruit an important food source for birds, particularly thrushes.
- Alder buckthorn, along with other closely related species, was credited with the power to protect against witchcraft, demons, poisons and headaches.
- A yellow dye is obtained from the leaves and bark. It is used in Russia and turns black when mixed with salts of iron. A green dye is obtained from the unripe fruit, and a blue or grey dye from the ripe berries.
- Alder buckthorn charcoal is prized in the manufacture of gunpowder, and is regarded as the best wood for the purpose. It is particularly valued for time fuses because it has a very even burn rate.
- The outer bark is dark brown but the inner bark is bright yellow when exposed.

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# Know Your Natives

## Ash

*Fraxinus excelsior*



- The old name for Andover, "on dubr", means "ash (tree) stream"
- A distinctive feature of ash are its black buds, which stand out in contrast to the paler twigs, making the tree easy to identify in winter.
- The flowers appear on the tree before the new leaves in spring. Unusually, ash can be either monoecious or dioecious. Some trees also alternate their flowering, bearing only male flowers in one year and females the next.
- In recent years, a fungal disease commonly known as 'chalara ash dieback' has spread to the UK, most likely via imported ash seedlings.
- In British folklore the ash was credited with a range of protective and healing properties. Most of these were related to child health.
- The Ash tree is special to Andover Trees United as it features in 2 arts and sustainability, '6 trees & 6 flowers', projects: 'Ash Tree Stream' and 'One Ash'. It will again become the focus of a further community project in 2021 that will explore the connections between Andover, it's people and its ash trees. Be sure to check out these projects on our website, link below.

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# Know Your Natives

## Aspen

*Populus tremula*



- The scientific name tremula means 'to tremble' and refers to the way the leaves flutter and move in the breeze.
- Native to cool regions in the northern hemisphere, aspens grow in clonal colonies, particularly in ancient woods and heaths and also on well-drained soil near rivers. It flourishes in open sunlight and moist soil and is intolerant of shade. In the UK, it is most common in the north-west of Scotland.
- A crown made of aspen leaves was said to give its wearer the power to visit and return safely from the Underworld. Aspen crowns found in ancient burial mounds may have been included to allow the spirits of the deceased to be reborn. Aspis, the aspen's Greek name, means shield, which was one of the many traditional uses of its wood.
- In Celtic mythology, the visual effect of an aspen trembling in the wind was said to be the tree communicating between this world and the next.

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## Know Your Natives

### Bay Willow

*Salix pentandra*



- Bay willow was named because of the similarity of its leaves to the bay tree. The leaves are oval shaped, thick, very glossy and dark green
- Bay willow is dioecious, meaning that its male and female flowers are produced on separate plants. Male catkins are yellow and female catkins are greenish. After pollination by insects, female catkins develop into a fruit capsule which contains a number of tiny seeds embedded in white down, which aids dispersal by wind.
- The bay willow is native to northern Europe and northern Asia. In the UK it is mainly found in Scotland and the north of England
- Willows so closely resemble poplars that they are thought to be descended from similar ancestors. In Shakespeare's Hamlet, Ophelia drowns after falling out of a willow tree.
- Traditionally, willows were used to relieve pain associated with a headache and toothache. The painkiller Aspirin is derived from salicin, a compound found in the bark of all Salix species. In medieval times in many parts of Europe, the bark was chewed to release the salicin for pain relief.

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## Know Your Natives

### Beech

*Fagus sylvatica*



- Beech is associated with femininity and is often considered the queen of British trees, where oak is the king. In Celtic mythology, Fagus was the god of beech trees.
- The tallest native tree in the UK is a beech that stands at 45m (2018) at the bottom of Hagg Wood, along the River Derwent in Derbyshire.
- Beech is monoecious, meaning both male and female flowers grow on the same tree. In April and May the tassel-like male catkins hang from long stalks at the end of twigs, while female flowers grow in pairs, surrounded by a cup.
- The cup becomes woody once pollinated, and encloses one or two beech nuts (known as beechmast). Beech is wind pollinated.
- In the UK, common beech is only considered truly native to south-east England and south-east Wales.

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## Know Your Natives

# Bird Cherry

*Prunus padus*



- Bird Cherry is also known as bird cherry, black dogwood, hagberry, hogberry.
- The bark is smooth, peeling and greyish-brown and emits an unpleasant, sharp odour.
- Unlike wild cherry, the edges of the leaves have fine, sharp serrations, with pointed tips and two glands on the stalk at the leaf base.
- After being pollinated by insects, the flowers develop into reddish-black, bitter cherries. Unlike wild cherry, bird cherry does not produce root suckers.
- If placed at the front door, the strong-smelling bark of the tree was believed to have magical properties that could ward off the plague.
- The flowers of bird cherries smell like almonds, and the sweet nectar gathered by honey bees makes great-tasting honey.
- The black fruits can be used for making liqueur or for dyeing wool; while a reddish-brown dye made from the bark was once used to colour fishing nets.
- Before industrial pesticides were available, the bark of bird cherry was used as a pesticide; the chemicals it contains protecting crops from rodent and insect attacks.

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## Know Your Natives

# Black Poplar

*Populus nigra*



- Only around 7,000 wild black poplars now grow in Britain and of these, only 600 are female trees.
- The leaves are shiny, green and heart-shaped, with long tips and a mild scent of balsam.
- Black poplar is dioecious, meaning male and female flowers are found on separate trees. Flowers are catkins (male catkins are red and female catkins are yellow-green), and are pollinated by the wind. Once fertilised, female catkins develop into fluffy cotton-like seeds, which fall in late summer.
- Black poplar is native to north-west Europe. A declining species in the UK, it is rare and grows in isolation. It is most prevalent in Shropshire, Cheshire, Somerset and East Anglia and grows best in boggy conditions, near ditches and floodplains.
- It is said that fallen red male catkins are Devil's fingers, and bring bad luck if picked up.
- Because of its natural fire resistance, black poplar was often used for floorboards, especially in the days of paraffin lamps.

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## Know Your Natives

### Blackthorn

*Prunus spinosa*



- Blackthorn is a hermaphrodite, meaning both male and female reproductive parts are found in one flower. White flowers appear on short stalks before the leaves in March and April, either singularly or in pairs.
- After pollination by insects, the flowers develop into blue-black fruits called Sloes
- Blackthorn was long associated with witchcraft, and it is said that witches' wands and staffs were made using blackthorn wood.
- Blackthorn timber is hardwearing and tough, light yellow with a brown heartwood. It was traditionally used for making walking sticks and tool parts. It burns well so is a good choice for firewood.
- Traditionally, blackthorn was used in a wealth of remedies including tonics and syrups that 'cleansed the blood', aided digestion and eased rheumatism. These tonics and syrups made use of the blackthorn's bark, flowers and fruit.
- These days, the sloes are still used to make wine, preserves and sloe gin. The sloes are an ancestor of our cultivated plums.

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## Know Your Natives

### Box

*Buxus sempervirens*



- In the UK, the best known wild populations of box are found on Box Hill in Surrey, the North Downs, the Chilterns and the Cotswolds, where it can grow in large numbers.
- You'll also see it planted in parks and gardens where it is a popular hedge plant. It can live for several hundred years
- Box wood is the heaviest of the native timbers and will not float in water.
- All parts of the tree are toxic and may irritate the skin or cause a stomach upset if ingested.
- in 2011 a new pest was detected in Britain's gardens – box-tree caterpillars. They feed on the leaves within the webbing they make over the foliage and can completely defoliate box plants in days. Already established in the London area and surrounding counties, they are quickly spreading and are likely to be a major pest problem in the future. However, they only eat box leaves so shouldn't be confused with other caterpillars.

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## Know Your Natives

### Crab Apple

*Malus sylvestris*



- The crab apple is one of the ancestors of the cultivated apple (of which there are more than 6,000 varieties), and it can live to up to 100 years.
- Crab apple flowers can range from pure white to deep pink and their apples can be red or yellow.
- The fruit can be roasted and served with meat or added to ales or punches. More commonly, it is used to make crab apple jelly and as a natural source of pectin for setting jams
- They have long been associated with love and marriage. It was said that if you throw the pips into the fire while saying the name of your love, the love is true if the pips explode. Apple wood was burned by the Celts during fertility rites and festivals, and Shakespeare made reference to crab apples in A Midsummer Night's Dream and Love's Labour Lost.

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## Know Your Natives

### Dogwood

*Cornus sanguinea*



- Dogwood is a small broadleaf shrub, typically found growing along woodland edges and in hedgerows of southern England. Mature trees can grow to 10m.
- Dogwood is hermaphrodite, meaning the male and female reproductive parts are contained within the same flower.
- After pollination by insects, the flowers develop into small black berries – sometimes called 'dogberries'.
- New twigs are bright red in colour, making them easy to spot during winter.
- The wood of the dogwood tree is one of the hardest and it is said that it was chosen to make the cross on which Jesus Christ was crucified.
- The origin of the name comes from the smooth, straight twigs which were used to make butchers' skewers. Skewers used to be called 'dags' or 'dogs', so the name means 'skewer wood'.

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## Know Your Natives

### Downy Birch

*Betula pubescens*



- Downy birch is more upright than silver birch and the bark is browner in colour with more obvious horizontal grooves and lacking the papery quality of the silver birch.
- The leaves are triangular in shape but more rounded at the base than silver birch leaves. Leaf stalks are downy, as opposed to hairless on silver birch.
- Downy birch is monoecious, meaning both male and female flowers (catkins) are found on the same tree. Appearing from April to May, male catkins are long and yellow-brown in colour. They hang in groups of two to four at the tips of shoots, like lambs' tails; while female catkins are smaller and bright green.
- Downy birch tends to grow on damper soils than silver birch and can even tolerate peat bogs and clay. Around the world, it can grow further north than any other broadleaf species.
- Downy birch provides food and habitat for more than 300 insect species.
- Woodpeckers and other hole-nesting birds often nest in the trunk, while the seeds are eaten by siskins, greenfinches and redpolls.

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## Know Your Natives

### Elder

*Sambucus nigra*



- Elder is widespread in many temperate and subtropical regions of the world. It's widespread across the UK, growing in woodland, scrub, wasteland and along hedgerows.
- It was thought that if you burned elder wood you would see the Devil, but if you planted elder by your house it would keep the Devil away.
- It is thought the name elder comes from the Anglo-Saxon 'aeld', meaning fire, because the hollow stems were used as bellows to blow air into the centre of a fire.
- The flowers and berries are mildly poisonous, so should be cooked before eating. The leaves are also poisonous.
- The flowers are often used to make wine, cordial or tea, or fried to make fritters. The vitamin C-rich berries are often used to make preserves and wine, and can be baked in a pie with blackberries.

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## Know Your Natives

### Field Maple

*Acer campestre*



- The UK's only native maple, it is found growing in woods, scrub and hedgerows, and on chalk lowland. It is widely planted in gardens and parks due to its compact habit, tolerance of pollution and rich autumn colours.
- As with all maple trees, the sap of the field maple can be used to make maple syrup.
- Medieval superstition said that if you passed a maple branch over a child, it would remove all traces of witchcraft.
- The flowers are small, yellow-green, cup-shaped and hang in clusters.
- After pollination by insects, flowers develop into large, winged fruits which are dispersed by wind.
- The leaves are small, dark green and shiny, with five lobes and rounded teeth. They fade to a rich, golden yellow before falling in autumn.

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## Know Your Natives

### Goat Willow

*Salix caprea*



- Willows in general are the host for large numbers of insects, being rivaled only by oak in that regard, and goat willow is no exception.
- Because goat willow flowers before its leaves appear, it provides an important source of nectar and pollen early in the spring for a range of pollinators, including bumblebees and hoverflies.
- Once pollinated by wind, female catkins develop into woolly seeds. Most willows can also propagate themselves by lowering their branches to the ground, where they then develop roots.
- Traditionally, willows were used to relieve pain associated with a headache or toothache, and the painkiller aspirin is derived from salicin, a compound found in the bark of all Salix species. In medieval times, in many parts of Europe, the bark was chewed to release the salicin.

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## Know Your Natives

# Grey Willow

*Salix cinerea*



- Unlike most willows, the leaves are oval rather than long and thin. However, unlike goat willow, the leaves are at least twice as long as they are wide. They have a fine silver felt underneath with rusty hairs beneath the veins.
- Grey willow is dioecious, meaning male and female flowers grow on separate trees.
- Once pollinated by wind, female catkins develop into woolly seeds.
- Several willow species native to the UK as many hybridise with one another, making them hard to identify. Grey willow often hybridises with the goat willow (*Salix caprea*).
- Grey willow grows to over 600m above sea level in Scotland.
- Traditionally, willows were used to relieve pain associated with a headache and toothache. The painkiller Aspirin is derived from salicin, a compound found in the bark of all *Salix* species.

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## Know Your Natives

# Guelder Rose

*Viburnum opulus*



- Guelder rose is a spreading, deciduous, upright shrub. It can reach up to 4m high and can spread from 2–5m.
- In spring, the leaves are green, and they change to a beautiful orange-yellow and red in autumn.
- Their berries are round and bright red appear in autumn in hanging bunches.
- The common name 'guelder rose' relates to the Dutch province of Gelderland, where a popular cultivar, the snowball tree, supposedly originated.
- Guelder rose grows in damp, neutral or chalky soils at low altitudes throughout the UK, but is rare in Scotland.
- The red berries are an important food source for birds, including bullfinch and mistle thrush. The shrub canopy provides shelter for other wildlife. The flowers are especially attractive to hoverflies.
- Guelder rose is one of the national symbols of Ukraine and is mentioned in many folk songs and featured in art and embroidery, and in Russia, *Guelder rose on the hill* is a traditional wedding song.

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## Know Your Natives Hawthorn

*Crataegus monogyna*



- The common hawthorn is also known as May tree, one-seed hawthorn, whitethorn, quickthorn.
- Hawthorn is a pagan symbol of fertility and has ancient associations with May Day. It was the ancestor of the Maypole and its leaves and flowers the source of May Day garlands as well as appearing in the wreath of the Green Man.
- Hawthorn was never brought into the home. It was believed that bringing hawthorn blossom inside would be followed by illness and death, and in medieval times it was said that hawthorn blossom smelled like the Great Plague. Botanists later learned that the chemical trimethylamine in hawthorn blossom is also one of the first chemicals formed in decaying animal tissue, so it is not surprising that hawthorn flowers are associated with death.
- Its blossoming marks the point at which spring turns into summer, and the old saying 'Cast ne'er a clout ere May is out' almost certainly refers to the opening of hawthorn flowers rather than the end of the month.

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## Know Your Natives Hazel

*Corylus avellana*



- Hazel is often coppiced, but when left to grow, trees can reach a height of 12m and live for up to 80 years (if coppiced, hazel can live for several hundred years)
- Hazel is monoecious, meaning that both male and female flowers are found on the same tree, although hazel flowers must be pollinated by pollen from other hazel trees. The yellow male catkins appear before the leaves and hang in clusters. Female flowers are tiny and bud-like with red styles.
- Hazel has a reputation as a magical tree. A hazel rod is supposed to protect against evil spirits, as well as being used as a wand and for water-divining. In some parts of England, hazelnuts were carried as charms and/or held to ward off rheumatism. In Ireland, hazel was known as the 'Tree of Knowledge', and in medieval times it was a symbol of fertility.

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## Know Your Natives

# Holly

*Ilex aquifolium*



- Mature holly trees can grow up to 15m and live for 300 years!
- Their branches (or 'boughs') have been long used to decorate homes in winter.
- The tree was seen as a fertility symbol and a charm against witches, goblins and the devil - It was thought to be unlucky to cut one down.
- Holly provides dense cover and good nesting opportunities for birds, while its leaf litter may be used by hedgehogs and small mammals for hibernation.
- The 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. The smooth leaves found at the tops of holly trees are a winter food source for deer. And the Holly berries are a vital source of food for birds and small mammals in winter.

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## Know Your Natives

# Hornbeam

*Carpinus betulus*



- The leaves of the hornbeam are a similar shape to beech leaves – oval with pointed tips. Hornbeam leaves, however, are smaller and more deeply furrowed than beech leaves and have finely toothed edges (whereas beech leaves have wavy edges). They become golden yellow to orange in colour in autumn and most stay on through the winter.
- Hornbeam is monoecious, meaning male and female catkins are found on the same tree
- After pollination by wind, female catkins develop into papery, green winged fruits, known as samaras.
- Hornbeam timber is a pale, creamy white with a flecked grain. It is extremely hard; in fact it has the hardest wood of any tree in Europe.
- It is likely that the hornbeam is so named due to the hardness of its timber – 'horn' means 'hard' and 'beam' was the name for a tree in old English.
- A tonic made from hornbeam was said to relieve tiredness and exhaustion and its leaves were used to stop bleeding and heal wounds.

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## Know Your Natives

### Juniper

*Juniperus communis*



- Common juniper is an evergreen conifer. Mature trees can reach a height of 10m and live for up to 200 years.
- Common juniper is dioecious, meaning that male and female structures grow on separate trees. Male structures are small, yellow and globular, and grow in leaf axils near the tips of twigs.
- Once pollinated by wind, the green female structures develop into fleshy, purple, aromatic, berry-like cones.
- In some areas, juniper is considered to be a deterrent against the Devil and witches. It was hung over doorways on the eve of May Day and burnt on Halloween to ward off evil spirits. It was said that you would prosper if you dreamed of gathering juniper berries in winter, and the berries themselves signified honour or the birth of a boy.
- Juniper berries were associated with love potions.

The most famous use of juniper berries today is in the flavouring of gin.

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## Know Your Natives

### Lime

*Tilia spp.*



- In the UK we have 3 native Lime tree species: Common, Large-leaved and Small-leaved.
- Common lime (*Tilia x europaea*) has tufts of white hairs at the end of twigs, whereas in small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*) these are rusty red. Large-leaved lime (*Tilia platyphyllos*) has hairs all over the underside. Common lime is a hybrid and is rare in the wild in the UK.
- Limes have long been associated with fertility. In France and Switzerland, limes are a symbol of liberty and the trees were planted to commemorate battles. In Finnish folklore, limes are trees of protection.
- Lime wood is soft and light, white-yellow and finely textured. It is easy to work and often used in wood turning, carving and furniture making. Lime bark was traditionally used to make rope. The wood does not warp and is still used today to make sounding boards and piano keys.

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## Know Your Natives Oak

*Quercus* spp.



- The UK has 2 native species of oak – the sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*) and the pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*).
- To differentiate between the two, look at the leaf stalk or petiole. On the pedunculate oak this is very short, typically less than 0.5 cm long, whereas on the sessile oak the petiole is 1-2 cm in length. The pedunculate oak also has two small lobes or auricles at the base of the leaf, in contrast to the wedge-shaped base of a sessile oak leaf.
- Throughout the major cultures of Europe people have held the oak tree in high esteem.
- Perhaps because of the oak's size and presence, much of its folklore concerns specific, individual oak trees. In Somerset stand the two very ancient oaks of Gog and Magog. These were named after the last male and female giants to roam Britain. The Major Oak in Sherwood Forest is alleged to be the tree where Robin Hood and his Merry Men hatched their plots.

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## Know Your Natives Plymouth Pear

*Pyrus cordata*



- Plymouth pear is a deciduous shrub that can reach 8–10m high
- Pale cream to pink flowers appear in late April and early May. They have a foul smell that has been described as decaying scampi or wet carpet, which attracts mainly flies. The flies will then pollinate the flowers.
- Plymouth pear is one of Britain's rarest trees and is thought to live exclusively in wild hedgerows in Plymouth and Truro. It might have once been a widespread species in mixed woodlands.
- It has an inbuilt control mechanism (called self-incompatibility) which prevents inbreeding. This is why the tree is still so rare.
- It is the only tree species to be protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Because of its rarity, seeds from its fruit have been deposited at Kew's Millennium Seed Bank.
- A keen gardener called Arthur Watson gifted a Plymouth pear he had nurtured for over 20 years to the Queen for her Diamond Jubilee. It now grows in a corner of the palace garden.

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## Know Your Natives

### Rowan

*Sorbus aucuparia*



- In the British Isles the rowan has a long and still popular history in folklore as a tree which protects against witchcraft and enchantment.
- The physical characteristics of the tree may have contributed to its protective reputation. Each berry has a tiny five pointed star or pentagram opposite its stalk. The pentagram is an ancient protective symbol. People also believed the colour red was the best protection against magic.
- People carried pieces of the tree to ward off witchcraft. They even used rowan sprigs to protect cows and their produce from enchantment.
- The tree was also said to give protection to the dwelling by which it grew, and residents would make sure not to damage them. To this day rowan trees can be seen growing beside rural dwellings in the Scottish Highlands and Ireland.

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## Know Your Natives

### Scots Pine

*Pinus sylvestris*



- Scots pine is the only truly native pine in the UK. It thrives in heathland and is widely planted for timber, but is also found in abundance in the Caledonian pine forest in the Scottish Highlands.
- Mature trees grow to 35m and can live for up to 700 years.
- After pollination by wind, the female flowers turn green and develop into cones. They mature the following season, so there are always cones of different ages on the one tree. Mature cones are grey-brown with a raised, circular bump at the centre of each scale.
- Interestingly, The needles on young trees grow longer than those on older trees.
- It is thought that in England, Scots pines were planted around farmsteads as windbreaks, and clusters of pines growing along old droeways helped travellers find out where they were going in inclement weather.
- In 2014, the Scots pine was voted the national tree of Scotland.

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## Know Your Natives

### Silver Birch

*Betula pendula*



- The Silver Birch is unmistakable in its striking white bark. The bark sheds layers like tissue paper and becomes black and rugged at the base. As the trees mature, the bark develops dark, diamond-shaped fissures.
- Silver birch is monoecious, meaning both male and female flowers (catkins) are found on the same tree, from April to May.
- It is a popular garden tree and often hybridises with our other native birch, the downy birch, *Betula pubescens*.
- Silver birch can be used to improve soil quality. Its widely spread roots bring otherwise inaccessible nutrients into the tree, which are recycled on to the soil surface when the tree sheds its leaves.
- It provides food and habitat for more than 300 insect species.
- In early Celtic mythology, the birch symbolised renewal and purification. Bundles of birch twigs were used to drive out the spirits of the old year, and gardeners still use the birch besom, or broom, to 'purify' their gardens.

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## Know Your Natives

### Spindle

*Euonymus europaeus*



- Spindle is a deciduous native tree, and mature trees grow to 9m and can live for more than 100 years. They can be easily identified in Autumn by their vivid pink fruits which have bright orange seeds.
- Spindle is an ancient-woodland indicator. If you spot it while you're out exploring, it could be a sign you're standing in a rare and special habitat.
- The spindle's botanical name, *Euonymus*, is from the Greek 'eu', meaning 'good' and 'onoma', meaning 'name'. This is said to have meant 'lucky'. However, in some areas, it was also thought that if the spindle flowered early, an outbreak of the plague was on the way.
- In the past spindle wood was used to make 'spindles' for spinning and holding wool (hence its name), as well as skewers, toothpicks, pegs and knitting needles. Today, spindle timber is used to make high-quality charcoal for artists.
- Both the leaves and fruit are toxic to humans – the berries having a laxative effect.

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## Know Your Natives

# Whitebeam

*Sorbus aria*



- Whitebeam is a deciduous broadleaf tree that is rarely found in the wild but is a popular ornamental tree in parks and gardens.
- Leaves are thick, oval and irregularly toothed, with the underneath covered in white, felt-like hair. When the leaves first unfold they look like magnolia flowers. They fade to a rich russet colour before falling in autumn.
- Whitebeam is hermaphrodite, meaning each flower contains both male and female reproductive parts. The five-petalled flowers appear in clusters in May, and are pollinated by insects and develop into scarlet berries.
- The berries are known as chess apples in north-west England and are edible when nearly rotten.
- Traditional uses of whitebeam timber included wood turning and fine joinery, including chairs, beams, cogs and wheels in machinery.
- During Tree Planting Fortnight in November 2020, members the community joined the ATU youth team in planting a commemorative whitebeam – dedicated to lives lost and lives changed from the Covid-19 pandemic. It can be found in the new 'native tree walk' section in Harmony Woods.

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## Know Your Natives

# Wild Cherry

*Prunus avium*



- The shiny bark is a deep reddish-brown with prominent cream-coloured horizontal lines called lenticels. The second part of its botanical name – avium – refers to birds which play a role in the tree's propagation by eating the cherries and dispersing the seed.
- Cherry trees are hermaphrodite, meaning the male and female reproductive parts are found in the same flower. Flowers appear in April and are white and cup-shaped, with five petals. They hang in clusters of two to six.
- After pollination by insects, the flowers develop into globular, hairless, deep-red cherries.
- In Highland folklore, wild cherry had mysterious qualities, and to encounter one was considered auspicious and fateful.
- Although the seeds are distributed by mammals and birds, cherry trees can also propagate themselves by forming a new shoot up from the roots.

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## Know Your Natives

### Wild Service

*Sorbus torminalis*



- The Wild Service is rare and hard to find but it's still a favourite with wildlife like the wood pigeon, whose gut softens its seeds for propagation.
- The fruit require 'bletting' (ie. decomposition) through freezing to make them edible.
- Although rare, it is often found in oak and ash woods and pockets of ancient woodland. It grows best in clay and lime-based soils. The wild service tree is native to the UK and parts of Europe, Africa and Asia.
- The wild service tree is an ancient-woodland indicator. If you spot it while you're out exploring, it could be a sign you're standing in a rare and special habitat.
- The fruits, also known as chequers, are said to taste like dates and were given to children as sweets. They can be made into an alcoholic drink and it is thought they influenced the naming of 'Chequers Inns', although it is unclear which came first – the name of the fruit or the inns.
- Chequers were still on sale around 100 years ago.

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## Know Your Natives

### Wych Elm

*Ulmus glabra*



- Elm trees in Britain can grow to become some of the tallest and largest native trees. They often had specific customs and folklore attached to individual, named trees such as the Dancing elms of Devon around which May Day dances were held (these trees have all sadly succumbed to Dutch elm disease).
- The elm's wood bends well, and the 'wych' in wych elm refers to its wood being pliant, and not to witches, who were said to shun elm trees. This characteristic made the wood largely unsuitable as a building material, nor does it make a good fuel. However, like alder wood, elm wood withstands wet conditions very well, making it a popular choice for the building of boat and barge hulls, bridge foundations, and cartwheels.
- In Celtic mythology, elm trees were associated with the Underworld. They had a special affinity with elves who were said to guard the burial mounds, their dead and the associated passage into the Underworld.

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## Know Your Natives

### Yew

*Taxus baccata*



- Yew is dioecious, meaning that male and female flowers grow on separate trees. These are visible in March and April. Male flowers are insignificant white-yellow globe-like structures. Female flowers are bud-like and scaly, and green when young but becoming brown and acorn-like with age.
- Unlike many other conifers, the common yew does not actually bear its seeds in a cone. Instead, each seed is enclosed in a berry-like structure known as an aril. The arils are bright red as to attract birds that eat them. The inedible seeds within them are very poisonous and are safely excreted some distance from the tree to continue propagation elsewhere.
- There are at least 500 churchyards in England which contain yew trees older than the buildings themselves. It is not clear why, but it is thought that yew trees were planted on the graves of plague victims to protect and purify the dead, and also in churchyards to stop 'commoners' from grazing their cattle on church ground as yew is extremely poisonous to livestock.

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References used:

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

<http://treesforlife.org.uk/>