

Tree & Leaf Identification



Silver Birch



Where

Parks, gardens and woods. In fact the silver birch grows in almost any open space.

Description

Smooth, silvery white bark with large dark cracks that get bigger with age.

Fact

The sap of this tree can be used to make wine or beer!

Aspen



Where

Gardens, plants and streets across the country. Aspens often grow in groups.

Description

The leaves have very long stalks which flutter in the wind. Hence the aspen's Latin name, 'Populus tremula', which means to tremble!

Fact

When the conditions are right, the seeds start to grow within hours!



Hazel

Where

Hedgerows, scrub and woodlands.

Description

Multiple stems and floppy, hairy leaves that feel rough to touch. You can see the hazel nuts from early summer, but be quick as they are the squirrel's favourite food!

Fact

In the spring hazel becomes so bendy that you can tie it into a knot without snapping it!



Dogwood

Where

Hedges in towns and gardens. Also common in downland and shrubs.

Description

An easy way to spot dogwood is to take a leaf and gently pull each side. It should rip straight down the middle and reveal tiny white strings of latex from the leaf's veins.

Fact

Our ancestors once used the long, straight dogwood sticks to eat with!



Beech

Where

Woods across the south of England and South Wales, where it is the main tree species. Has been widely planted in parks and gardens across the country.

Description

Smooth, silvery grey bark. Budding leaves are shaped like torpedoes. In the autumn, you can spot beech nuts in their (four-lobed) prickly casing.

Fact

You can use the oil pressed from beech nuts in oil lamps.



Holly

Where

Common in hedgerows, gardens and woodlands.
In fact, almost anywhere!

Description

An 'evergreen' (which means it's green all year round), with shiny, spiky leaves. Holly trees are male or female. In the autumn, female holly trees produce bright red berries, which birds love!

Fact

We once thought drinking milk in a bowl made from holly wood cured whooping cough.



Common Hawthorn

Where

Very common in hedgerows. Hawthorn can grow almost anywhere except poor, sandy soil.

Description

Knotted, twisted trunk with thorny branches. Delicate white, scented blossoms appear in April.

Fact

The hawthorn flower was an important symbol for the Pagan festival of Beltane (or May Day).



Common Oak

Where

Parks and public spaces throughout Britain. Oak trees are our traditional tree, many places in the country are named after them.

Description

Oak leaves are a distinct shape. Acorns appear in the autumn – and from a tiny acorn grows the mighty oak!

Fact

The ships in the famous Battle of Trafalgar were made from oak wood.



Sycamore

Where

Central, eastern and southern Europe. Thought to have been introduced to the UK during the Middle Ages, and is now common in British woods, parks, gardens and streets.

Description

Leaves have red stems and five points. Sycamore seeds ripen from green to brown in the autumn. When they fall off the tree, they fly like little helicopters!

Fact

If you peel a sycamore seed apart carefully, it is sticky. Children often stick them on their noses!



London plane

Where

Parks, gardens and city streets – even in London! It is the most common tree in London.

Description

Distinct wide leaves. Seeds are round balls with bristly hairs, and in the spring they break up into tiny, fluffy seeds.

Fact

We plant the London plane tree because it is resistant to pollution.



Horse Chestnut

Where

Parks, gardens and village greens across most of the country.

Description

Inside its round, spiky cases live the smooth, brown seeds, which we call conkers!

Fact

Used for horse medicine in the olden days – hence the name “horse chestnut”!



Ash

Where

Across the UK except the far north of Scotland.

Description

Blossoms bloom in April and the leaves bud in May. Look out for the big bunches of winged seeds (or keys) which hang from autumn to spring.

Fact

Ash wood is often used to make tool handles.



Scots pine

Where

Now planted across the country because its wood is so good for timber, and particularly common in the Scottish Highlands. It is Britain's only native pine.

Description

Reddish, scaly bark above and grey-brown bark on the lower branches. Its pine cones are small and slim.

Fact

In the past, Scots pines were planted near fields and buildings to let farmers know their cattle were welcome.



Crack willow

Where

They love water and are often by rivers and streams.

Description

Long, thin leaves (which can grow up to 15cm!) and yellowish stems. (It is in the same family as the more well-known weeping willow.)

Fact

It's called a "crack" willow because of the sounds its branches make when they snap or "crack"!

