

THE VALUE OF PLANTING DOWN THE OLDWAY'S

Common Oak



Overview: English oak is a large deciduous tree up to 20-40m tall. In England, the English oak has assumed the status of a national emblem. As common oaks mature they form a broad and spreading crown with sturdy branches beneath. Their open canopy enables light to penetrate through to the woodland floor, allowing bluebells and primroses to grow below. Their smooth and silvery brown bark becomes rugged and deeply fissured with age. Oak tree growth is particularly rapid in youth but gradually slows at around 120 years. Oaks even shorten with age in order to extend their lifespan.

Oak forests provide a habitat rich in biodiversity; they support more life forms than any other native trees. They host hundreds of species of insect, supplying many British birds with an important food source. In autumn mammals such as badgers and deer take advantage of the falling acorns.

Silver Birch



Birch woods (which may include downy or silver birch, or both) have a light, open canopy, providing the perfect conditions for grasses, mosses, wood anemone, bluebells, wood sorrel and violets to grow.

Silver birch provides food and habitat for more than 300 insect species - the leaves attract aphids, providing food for ladybirds and other species further up the food chain, and are also a food plant for the caterpillars of many moths, including the angle-shades, buff tip, pebble hook-tip, and Kentish glory. Birch trees are particularly associated with specific fungi including fly agaric, woolly milk cap, birch milk cap, birch brittlegill, birch knight, chanterelle and the birch polypore (razor strop).

Woodpeckers and other hole-nesting birds often nest in the trunk, while the seeds are eaten by siskins, greenfinches and redpolls

Hawthorn



Mature trees can reach a height of 15m and are characterised by their dense, thorny habit, though they can grow as a small tree with a single stem. The bark is brown-grey, knotted and fissured, and twigs are slender and brown and covered in thorns. It often hybridises with the UK's other native hawthorn.

Common hawthorn can support more than 300 insects. It is the food plant for caterpillars of many moths, including the hawthorn, orchard ermine, pear leaf blister, rhomboid tortrix, light emerald, lackey, vapourer, fruitlet mining tortrix, small eggar and lappet moths. Its flowers are eaten by dormice and provide nectar and pollen for bees and other pollinating insects. The haws are rich in antioxidants and are eaten by many migrating birds such as redwings, fieldfares and thrushes, as well as small mammals. The dense thorny foliage makes fantastic nesting shelter for many species of bird.

Beech



Mature trees grow to a height of more than 40m and develop a huge domed crown. The bark is smooth, thin and grey, often with slight horizontal etchings. The reddish brown, torpedo-shaped leaf buds form on short stalks, and have a distinctive criss-cross pattern. Due to its dense canopy, rarer plant species are associated with beech woodland, such as box, coralroot bitter-cress, and a variety of orchids including red helleborine. Beech woodland makes an important habitat for many butterflies, particularly in open glades and along woodland rides.

Beech foliage is eaten by the caterpillars of a number of moths, including the barred hook-tip, clay triple-lines and olive crescent. The seeds are eaten by mice, voles, squirrels and birds. Native truffle fungi grow in beech woods. These fungi are ectomycorrhizal, which means they help the host tree obtain nutrients in exchange for some of the sugar the tree produces through photosynthesis. Remember to take expert advice before picking or eating any wild fungi.

Because beech trees live for so long they provide habitats for many deadwood specialists such as hole-nesting birds and wood-boring insects. The bark is often home to a variety of fungi, mosses and lichens.

Hazel



Hazel is often coppiced, but when left to grow, trees can reach a height of 12m, where it can live for up to 80 years (if coppiced, hazel can live for several hundred years). It has a smooth, grey-brown, bark, which peels with age, and bendy, hairy stems. Leaf buds are oval, blunt and hairy.

Hazel leaves provide food for the caterpillars of many moths, including the large emerald, small white wave, barred umber and nut-tree tussock. In managed woodland where hazel is coppiced, the open wildflower-rich habitat supports many species of butterfly, particularly fritillaries. Coppiced hazel also provides shelter for ground-nesting birds such as the nightingale, nightjar, yellowhammer and willow warbler.

Hazel has long been associated with the dormouse (also known as the hazel dormouse). Not only are hazel nuts used by dormice to fatten up for hibernation, but in spring the leaves are a good source of caterpillars, which dormice also eat.

Hazel nuts are also eaten by woodpeckers, nuthatches, tits, wood pigeons, jays and a number of small mammals. Hazel flowers provide early pollen as a food for bees.

The trunks are often covered in mosses, liverworts and lichens, and the fiery milkcap fungi grows in the soil beneath.

If you require any further information on woodland trees please click onto the link below for Woodland Trust

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/>

