


# KNOW YOUR TREES

## Part 1 Deciduous natives

In the first of a four-part series, Lia Leendertz helps us become better acquainted with trees

WORDS LIA LEENDERTZ PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM



*A*s excitable new students at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh we thought our tutors were joking when, halfway through our first term, they presented us with a bundle of deciduous tree branches to identify. “But it’s winter,” we laughed. “There are no leaves!” They just smiled wryly and led us out to the arboretum. Over the winter months we slowly learned about these trees from the inside out: the shape, colour and arrangement of the buds; the feel, texture and, sometimes even, scent of the bark; the tree’s silhouette against the Edinburgh skyline. When the leaves finally appeared, it almost felt like cheating: who needs such fripperies when you have come to know a tree so intimately?

On the one hand, this knowledge has come to feel like a bit of a superpower, a spot of horticultural hocus pocus. On the other hand, knowing the difference between oak and ash, beech and hornbeam, feels like the sort of basic knowledge we should all have under our belts, like the ability to tie a slip knot and the setting point for jam. In this series, we will show you the key features to help you identify four groups of common trees, including conifers, hedgerow trees, and big park and street trees, starting this month with the native deciduous trees that you are likely to encounter on your own winter woodland walks. ▷

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### USEFUL INFORMATION

You’ll find all of the trees featured at Westonbirt, The National Arboretum, the perfect place for a winter walk.

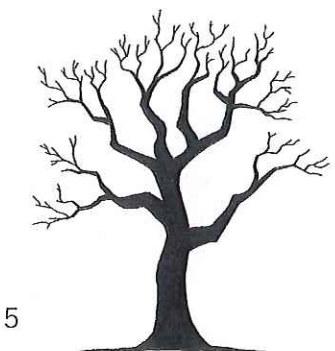
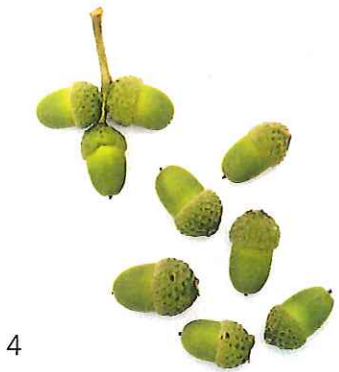
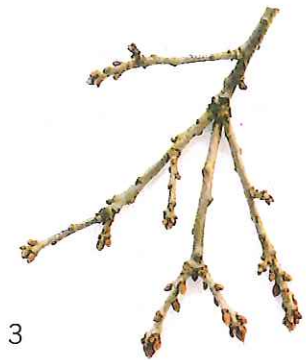
**Address** Westonbirt, Tetbury, Gloucestershire GL8 8QS.

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In autumn, oak leaves turn yellowy brown and can be held on the tree as late as January.



## Quercus robur common oak

The oak is the tree that is most strongly associated with the English countryside and is the UK's most common tree, particularly prominent in central and southern woodland. *Quercus robur* is known as the English, common or pedunculate oak, and is distinct from the other British native oak *Quercus petraea*, the durmast or sessile oak, a more upwards-reaching tree. The common oak has long been planted in forests for its strong timber, its bark and its acorns. Each tree can live for up to a thousand years. Within its wide, spreading canopy can live an ecosystem of birds, lichens, fungi, caterpillars, squirrels, dormice and bats. Look for oaks in ancient woodland, 18th-century parkland or standing alone majestically in farmland.

### 1 Bark

Young oaks have smooth, silvery-brown bark. As trees age, this grows rugged and is covered in finger-shaped platelets with deep fissures in between.

### 2 Leaves

Oak leaves are longer than they are wide and have five or six deep, rounded lobes and short stalks. Leaves first emerge in mid-May, turning yellowy brown in autumn,

and are often held on the tree late in the year.

### 3 Winter twig

The winter twig is smooth and silvery brown with brown clusters of buds concentrated at the tips. These alternate, but spiral around the twig in a haphazard manner.

### 4 Acorns

The oak's seeds are acorns: shiny, ovoid fruits held tightly in textured

cups. They start green and slowly turn brown, eventually loosening from the cup and dropping to the ground.

### 5 Silhouette

The oak tree silhouette is sturdy and wide, low and spreading, often increasingly so with age. The tree has a gnarled look, with each of the branches kinked and snaking outwards.



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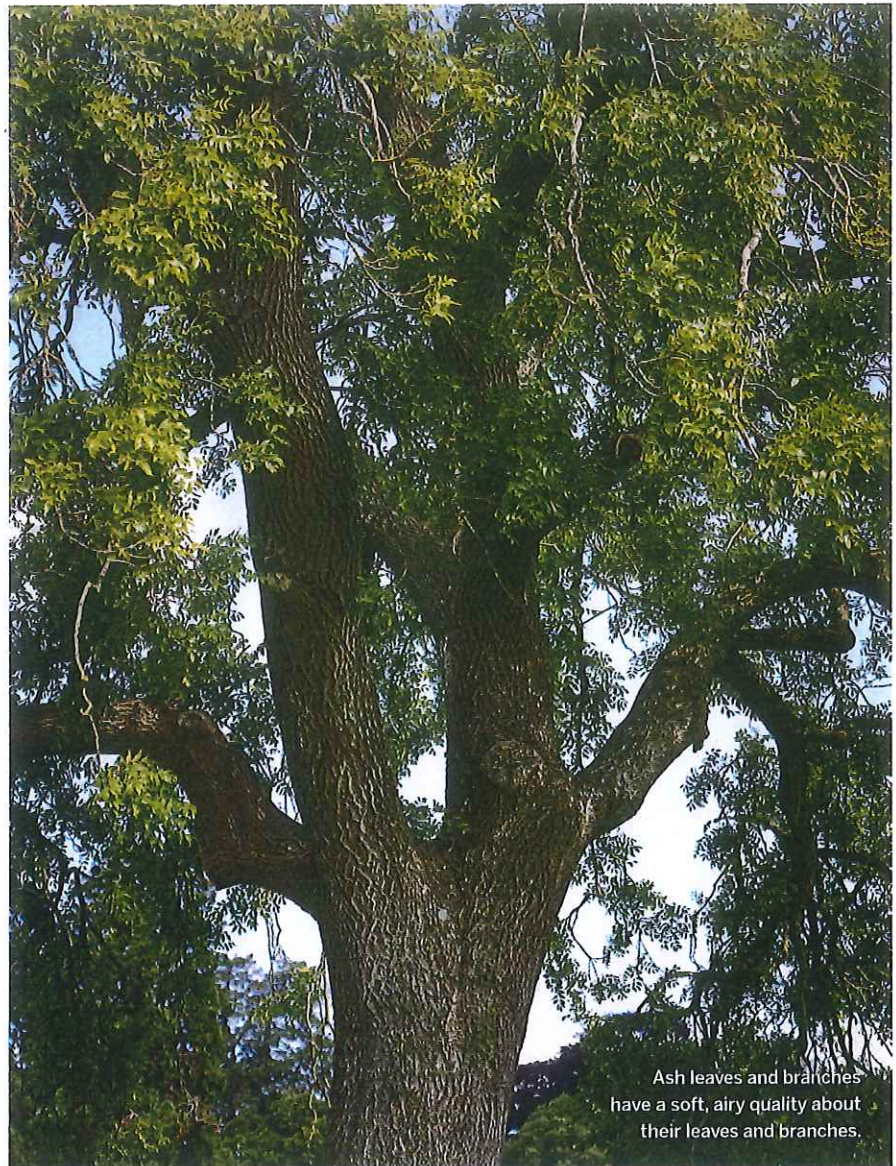
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Ash leaves and branches have a soft, airy quality about their leaves and branches.

## *Fraxinus excelsior* common ash

Ash is graceful, tall and striking in the landscape. The *excelsior* in its Latin name means high, elevated or lofty, and ashes can reach heights of around 45 metres. Ash is the third most common tree in Britain and has long been exalted for its strong, lightweight and easily worked wood, which is also of brilliant burning quality. But they are now under threat from Chalara dieback disease, which has caused widespread damage in continental Europe and has now spread to Britain. Evidence from Europe suggests that older trees may be able to withstand attacks for some time, before eventually being weakened enough to succumb to attacks from other pathogens. It is a worrying time for these beautiful trees.

### 1 Bark

Young ash bark is smooth and grey brown, but as the trees age it becomes deeply fissured, often in diamond shapes with a suggestion of zigzags.

### 2 Leaves

Each leaf comprises three to six pairs of elegant, tapering leaflets, arranged in pairs along the leaf stalk, plus a single leaflet at the end. Diva-like, the leaves

emerge in late spring and drop in early autumn.

### 3 Winter bud

Ash buds are very distinctive, making the ash tree one of the easiest to identify in winter. The fat, black, pointed buds are borne in opposite pairs.

### 4 Keys

The seeds, known as keys, hang in heavy, shaggy bunches from

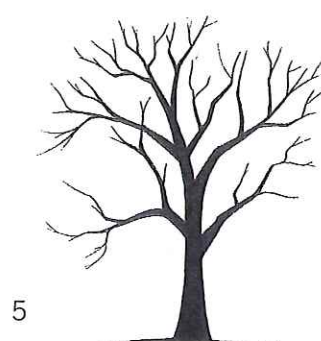
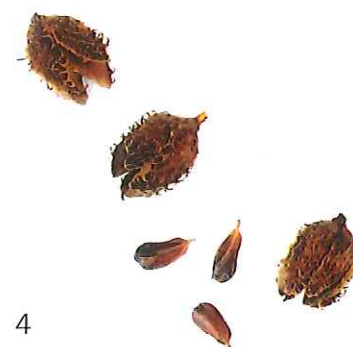
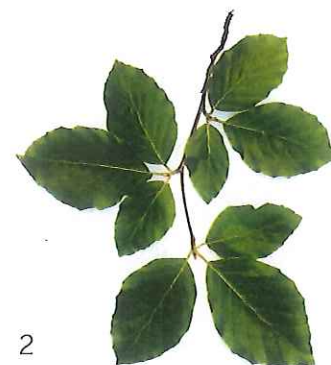
the tree: lime green in summer, yellow in early autumn, rusty brown in winter, when they are very prominent.

### 5 Silhouette

Elegant, graceful and tall, often with a domed canopy. When trees are mature the lower branches weep down towards the earth before turning up again at the tips.



With their dense canopies, beeches often form great stands of woodland trees.



## *Fagus sylvatica* beech

You will often find beech trees growing only among their own, particularly on free-draining, chalky and sandy soils. Beech is particularly good at snaffling every scrap of light, and in summer beech woodlands can be gloomy, strangely empty places. Beech seedlings can happily grow beneath the canopies, being expert at capturing low light themselves, but little else can, and the bigger trees finish the job by sending their roots snaking across the surface, reducing germination opportunities further. In autumn this monopolistic behaviour can be forgiven, when the trees turn into a mass of a pure shimmering copper, until even the air seems to take on a golden, honey-tinged glow – one of the great spectacles of the tree year.

### 1 Bark

When trees are young the bark is grey and smooth with some horizontal markings. As the trees age, the bark becomes rougher with snaking vertical plates, sometimes cracked horizontally.

### 2 Leaves

Leaves emerge lime green in spring, unfolding like fans and covered in silvery, silky hairs. They turn dark green in summer, and

vibrant copper in autumn. Young trees hold leaves all winter.

### 3 Winter twig

Thin, elegant, dark-brown stems hold large, sharply pointed buds that are placed alternately and are angled away from the stems, rather than held close to it.

### 4 Beech mast/nuts

In autumn clusters of pale-brown, spiky seed cases drop to the

ground and peel themselves open, each revealing three shiny, three-sided beech nuts within.

### 5 Silhouette

The beech silhouette is tall and broad and straight limbed. It has a great number of branches that reach confidently up and out from the main trunk.



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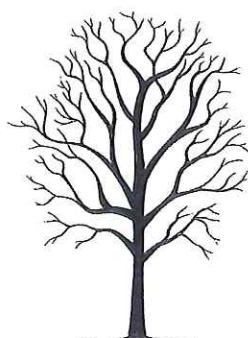
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Despite their often diminutive size and modest looks, field maples can live for 350 years.

## *Acer campestre* field maple

Field maple is often found sprouting merrily from the tops of old hedges, the some-time hedge member that got away, only to flaunt its escape for many years to come, daring the hedge trimmers to do their worst. It is still very often used as a hedge, as it has small leaves and takes happily to being moulded and shaped. It is a bit of a shame that they have come to be thought of as hedging material, as they can form sweet, compact trees with pretty autumn foliage. that you might recognise as the butter-yellow element of the native mixed-hedge autumn tapestry. Field maples are sometimes planted in gardens or parks, but are most often seen in the wild, in woods and scrubland, and on chalk downland.

### 1 Bark/twigs

The bark and twigs take on a 'corky' appearance from a fairly young age, looking as if they have been deeply notched and carved. Even the twigs have a 'winged' look.

### 3 Leaves

Bright, mid-green leaves have the classic *Acer palmatum* shape with five rounded lobes. The leaf stalk is red, and exudes a white sap when broken.

### 5 Silhouette

*Acer campestre* has quite a shrubby look to it but can also grow into a sweet and compact tree. It has a round, dense crown and is low branching.

### 2 Flowers

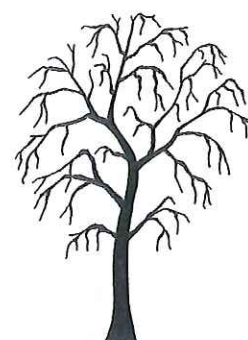
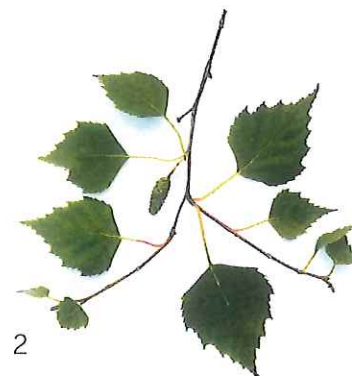
Appearing in clusters hanging along the branches in spring, the flowers are cup-shaped and yellow and green, and contain both male and female parts.

### 4 Winged seeds

Large, winged seeds develop by late summer, starting off green with a pink tinge and turning brown in autumn. They are paired together and set along a horizontal plane.



A popular garden and park tree, the silver birch comes into its own in winter.



## Betula pendula silver birch

Although silver birch can be found all over the country, it is at heart a tree of the north, of moors, commons, heaths and mountainsides. It is a pioneer species, shedding large amounts of seed each year and germinating freely and determinedly, even in poor soil and harsh conditions. As such, it was one of the first trees to follow the retreating ice after the ice age, and will often be the tree that fills the gap left by a heathland fire. In summer woodland it can look rather lost and insignificant, but when autumn comes its delicate leaves light up golden. It steps into the limelight even more determinedly in winter, when its bark glows bright and ghostly against a muted backdrop of browns, beiges and rusts.

### 1 Bark

Pure white or – more poetically – silver bark peels away to reveal even whiter bark beneath. Black horizontal lines appear with age and the base of the trunk grows black.

sometimes holding on until the catkins appear in spring.

### 3 Male catkins

These male catkins are long and yellow, and dangle from the ends of the branches.

tiny seeds visible, are shorter, smaller and stockier than the male, and start out bright green, but after successful pollination they thicken and change colour to a reddish brown.

### 2 Leaves

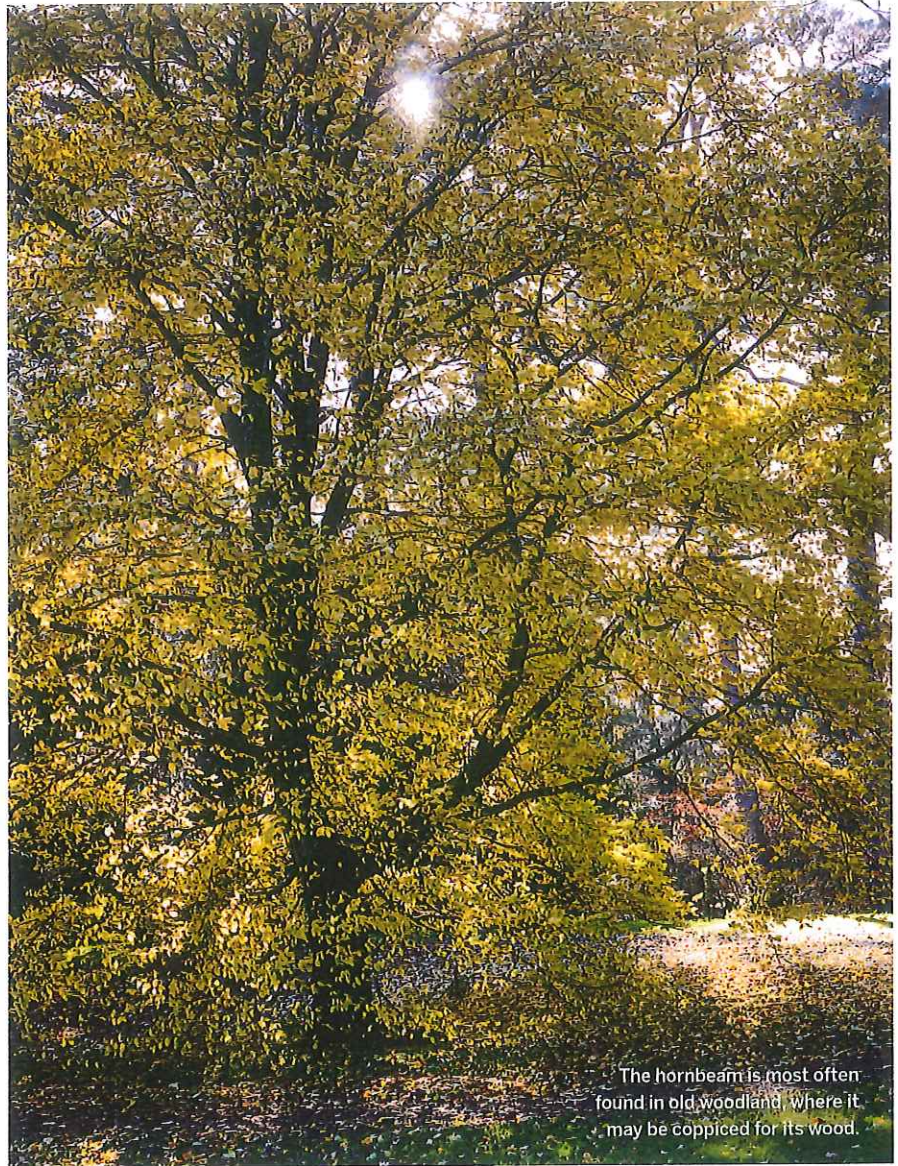
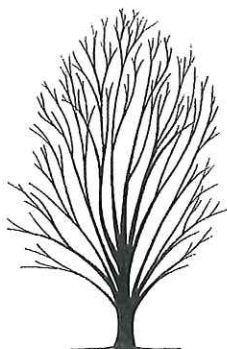
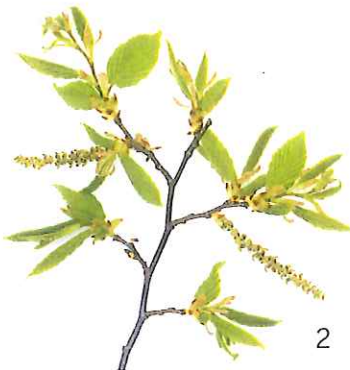
Small, triangular, mid-green leaves turn gold in autumn. The silver birch is among the last of the trees to drop its leaves,

### 4 Female catkins

Silver birch is monoecious, meaning both male and female catkins are found on the same tree, from April to May. These female catkins, with

### 5 Silhouette

Silver birches are tall, delicate and graceful trees, and the tips of the branches droop down towards the earth to give a slight weeping effect.



The hornbeam is most often found in old woodland, where it may be coppiced for its wood.

## *Carpinus betulus* common hornbeam

Poor old hornbeam is often mistaken for beech, which it resembles on several fronts. There are a couple of identifying features that enable you to tell them apart easily, though, most notably the catkins in spring and the hop-like fruits in autumn and winter. It is a more robust-looking tree too, with more determinedly corrugated leaves, and what could pass for rippling muscles below the bark surface. And it is not just an impression of strength: hornbeam has the toughest wood of all and was long commonly known as 'iron wood', used to make cogs, axles and spokes before iron was readily available. In gardens it is usually trimmed and shaped into smart hedges.

### 1 Bark

The pale-grey bark has vertical markings and the trunk sometimes develops a twist and muscular ridges as the tree ages. On the twigs buds lie flat against the stems.

### 2 Catkins

Long, dangling catkins form on the tree in spring. These are the male catkins. Female catkins form on the same tree but are smaller and less noticeable.

### 3 Leaves

Like beech leaves but smaller and with a deeper groove. A beautiful fresh green in spring, they turn yellow then soft brown in autumn, and on small trees or hedges won't drop until spring.

### 4 Fruit/seeds

Fruits, or samaras, are short chains of three winged nuts that bunch together to look like hops, and hang in the tree long after leaves fall.

### 5 Silhouette

A tall and broad woodland tree, handsome and well-balanced. The lower branches will droop as the tree grows and mature specimens make wonderful climbing trees.

# Lisa Delplace

The principal and CEO of US landscape design company Oehme, van Sweden on pragmatism in gardening and how the OvS spirit continues to flourish in the 21st century

WORDS TIM RICHARDSON PORTRAIT CHARLIE HOPKINSON

It's a pretty standard interview question: so what was the garden you grew up with like? Lisa Delplace's response initially sounds fairly standard, too: it was her mother who was the gardener at the family home on the outskirts of Detroit, where she created "the blowsiest ever border" with mop-headed hydrangeas, peonies and roses. But then, as an afterthought, Lisa mentions that in winter her father "turned the entire back yard into an ice hockey pitch", pooling water evenly across the lawn, flattening out bumps and clearing snow. "My dad and brothers played hockey – our house became a nexus for all the boys in the neighbourhood," she recalls.

Perhaps this seasonal transformation at least instilled in the young Lisa a sense that a garden might be a functional space that caters to the needs of its owners. When she graduated in 1988 from the Masters programme in landscape design at Michigan State University, she came top of her class. It was at this point she started looking for a job, and it so happened that the very first interview she had was in Washington DC with James van Sweden. Extrovert and exacting, he was one half of the design duo Oehme, van Sweden (OvS), the landscape company founded in 1977 with Wolfgang Oehme that rapidly established itself as the US specialist in naturalistic planting.

"Jim hired me within 15 minutes," Lisa recalls, "so I didn't go anywhere else. Some of my professors were like, 'Those grass guys, they'll never amount to anything. It won't last.' They had all gone through Harvard in the 1960s – all clean lines and Modernism – so they really bristled at it."

But last it did. And so did Lisa. Barring a four-year hiatus with a firm in Vermont, she has spent her entire 30-year career with OvS and is now CEO and joint design principal with two colleagues who have been with the company just as long. In a US context it's a smallish firm (around 25 people), which Lisa says is a deliberate policy that allows the principals to remain 'hands-on'.

"The OvS style was considered a metaphor for the American prairie or meadow," she observes. A key early work was the landscape at the Federal Reserve Building in Washington DC, where Oehme's signature plantings of perennials and grasses – essentially a distillation of the style developed by Karl Foerster in post-war public parks in East Germany – initially caused dismay among those expecting smart box hedges. "We forget that what OvS was doing in the 1970s was truly shocking to people," Lisa says. "It was a very bold gesture – and people were attracted to that."

Oehme died in 2011 and van Sweden two years later, so the question arises about legacy – how can you perpetuate a house style

that is so intimately bound up with two powerful personalities who are no longer with us? Lisa defends the case robustly, stating that she and her colleagues are remaining true to the OvS spirit. But doesn't this style look dated now? I ask, recalling the day I spent with van Sweden when he proudly told me that he and Oehme only ever had a palette of 25 to 30 plants 'on the truck' at any one time, and that they never exceeded this number of species. By the 1990s the OvS look had become an immediately recognisable 'brand', with certain plants (notably *Echinacea* and *Rudbeckia*) familiar to the point of cliché.

Lisa responds with, "I want to challenge you on that." Which is, I think, her way of saying, "You are talking complete baloney."

Lisa's challenge is that the OvS methodology developed fundamentally after the turn of the 21st century. "The plant lists are much broader and our work is so much more diverse now," she asserts. "For example we have just done a big ranch project in Montana and there's not a rudbeckia in sight."

But doesn't that, in turn, mean that the OvS brand is simply being diluted? "No, I don't see that as a problem at all," Lisa answers. "We continue to push forward with a plant palette that is just as engaging. I have just finished a project in Portland that is very OvS in style because of what I call the 'massing structure' of the plantings. In wild meadows you begin to see or read patterns over acres and acres. In our work the drifts are stronger, the massing is a little denser. We are designing – that's where the gesture comes in. I don't see it as a right or a wrong, but I do see it as a design decision."

She adds that there is now a greater emphasis in their practice on the challenges of sustainability, specifically rainwater run-off or storm drainage, which is today the single biggest problem in American landscape design: "You have to account for every single raindrop," Lisa notes, ruefully. Gone are the days when the likes of Jim and Wolfgang could simply roll up in their old VW Beetle and start planting, yet the loyalty across three decades of key colleagues means that OvS as a company clearly retains much of its original spirit and idealism. Led by Lisa, the naturalistic planting style pioneered at OvS remains as relevant to 21st-century USA as it ever did. □

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## USEFUL INFORMATION

Oehme, van Sweden, 800 G Street SE, Washington, DC 20003. USA.  
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IN THE JANUARY ISSUE Designer and TV presenter Adam Frost.

*"We forget that what OvS was doing in the 1970s was truly shocking to people. It was a very bold gesture – and people were attracted to that"*





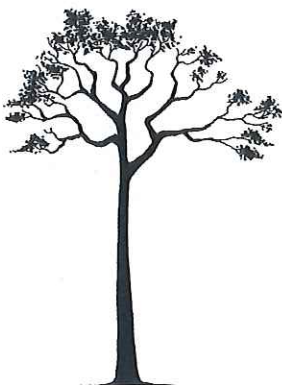
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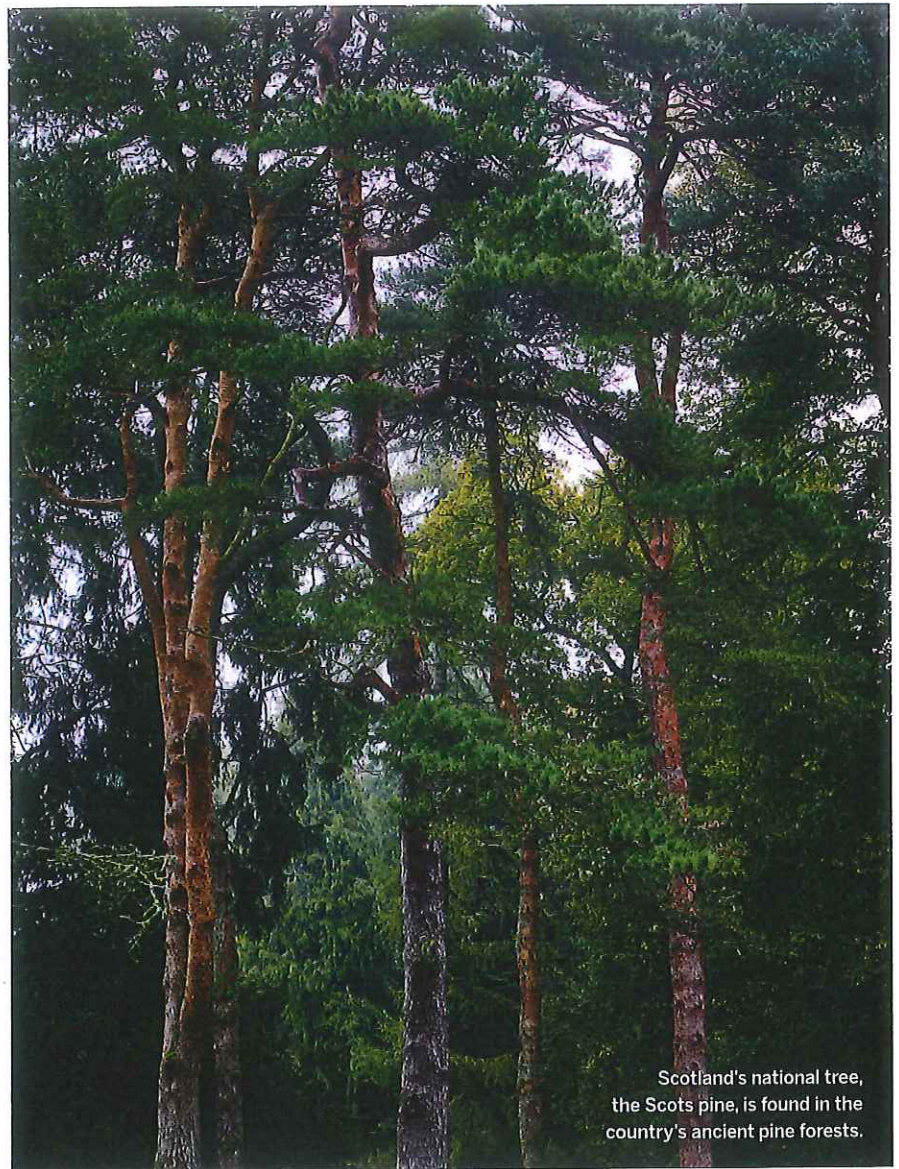
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Scotland's national tree, the Scots pine, is found in the country's ancient pine forests.

## *Pinus sylvestris* Scots pine

Scots pine is the national tree of Scotland, and it is in Scotland that you will see it at its finest, in ancient pine forests and in majestic stands on heathland. Its leaning, red trunks glow in the low, northern light, and its spacious, gappy canopy is never dense enough to create a dark and gloomy forest floor. All of those found in England, Wales and Ireland have been planted or have naturalised from plantings – even those of the New Forest, where it looks so at home, were only introduced in the 1600s. It followed hard on the heels of the retreating glaciers at the end of the ice age, settling in the far north of the UK and carrying on beyond, well into the Arctic Circle. This quick, post-ice age settlement makes it one of our oldest natives, as well as being one of only three native conifers.

### 1 Bark

The bark is flaky and reddish brown towards the crown of the tree and darker brown and covered in shiny scales towards the base.

### 2 Buds

Clusters of waxy brown buds can be found at the tips of the branches. Female flowers, which are small, round and red, are borne at the tips, while male

yellow flowers are further down the branch.

### 3 Needles

Pine needles are long and soft with a twist, and are borne in pairs. They are glaucous bluey green in summer and darker green in winter.

### 4 Cones

Young cones are bright green with a brown raised dot at the tip of each

scale, and over time the whole cone turns woody and brown.

### 5 Silhouette

Scots pines are tall, towering trees. Their elegant trunks have very few lower limbs and often lean to one side. Scots pines always look top heavy, holding a dome of foliage high in the air.



Long-lived yew is a popular hedging tree – but beware, every part is poisonous.



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## *Taxus baccata* yew

Dark and brooding yews are incredibly long lived – one known as the Fortingall Yew in Perthshire is dated between 2,000 and 3,000 years old. Perhaps it is their longevity and the seeming permanence they have in the landscape, as well as their sombre nature, that has seen them associated with both death and immortality, and they are often found in churchyards. As they age their lower limbs take root and the original tree hollows out, so a really ancient tree can become a thicket, and then a ring. Yew timber is highly prized because of the contrast between the creamy white sap wood on the outside of the tree and red-brown twirling heartwood. Determinedly continuing its deathly theme, every part of the plant is toxic, except for the red flesh surrounding the (toxic) seeds. It is native and can be found naturally occurring on chalk in southeast England and limestone in the north and in shady oak woodland.

### 1 Bark

Thin bark is rich reddish brown in colour and scaly, and becomes deeply and characterfully ridged and furrowed with age. The tree often hollows out from the inside.

### 2 Needles

Broad, flat, dark green and relatively widely spaced, with

a point. Usually arranged in two rows on either side of the stem, but on upright growth they will spiral around the stem.

### 3 Red fruits

Female trees produce bright-red fruits. The fleshy red aril, or seed covering, is the only part of the tree that is not toxic, although the

seed within it is. Birds pass the seed undigested.

### 4 Silhouette

Dense, broad and low-growing trees with many low-lying branches that often touch the ground and can mean that some mature specimens make excellent climbing trees.



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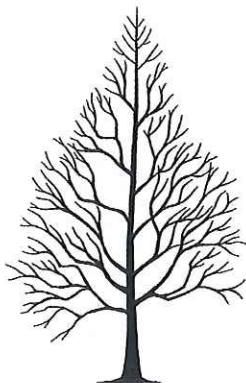
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One of only a few deciduous conifers, larch has foliage that yellows in autumn before falling.

## *Larix decidua* larch

As one of the few deciduous conifers the European larch is an oddity. Its foliage turns yellow in autumn and drops while that of most of the other conifers stays resolutely dark green and clings to the branches. This makes larches softer and more feathery-looking than most conifers, and makes their forests gentler places too. The falling needles create a rich and hospitable mulch beneath the trees, which, combined with the increased light levels, allow for a pretty and varied understorey of bluebells and forest shrubs that would never be found under the dense and dark canopy of most conifer forests. Larches are native to the mountains of central Europe and not native to Britain. However, they are found in huge swathes in Scottish plantations, where they were planted in vast number in the 1800s for timber and for reforestation. You will also see them in parks and gardens.

**1 Bark**  
Pinky brown to pale brown in colour, and developing fissures and knobby plates with age. Twigs have a golden and pinky colour that glows in winter sunshine.

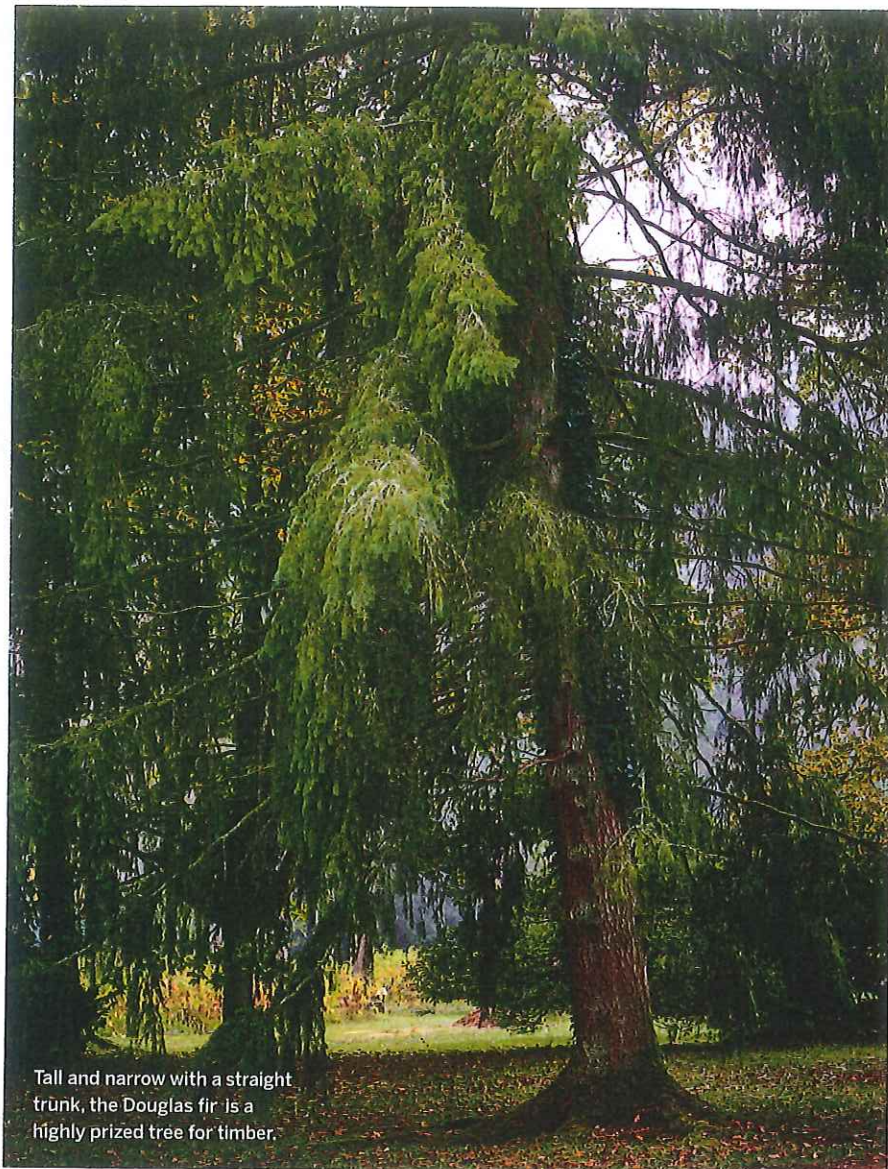
**2 Needles**  
The bright-green soft and flattened needles are bunched together and

arranged radially in tufty whorls attached all along the stems by woody nubs.

**3 Cones**  
Short, oval-shaped cones emerge green in the summer and then slowly turn woody and brown towards autumn – just as the foliage is turning yellow.

**4 Autumn colour**  
Needles emerge bright green in spring, turn butter yellow in autumn and drop in winter.

**5 Silhouette**  
When young, its upwards sweeping branches give the larch a classic coniferous cone shape that becomes broader over time.



Tall and narrow with a straight trunk, the Douglas fir is a highly prized tree for timber.



## *Pseudotsuga menziesii* Douglas fir

The grand and beautiful Douglas fir is a native of northwest America and hails from the same climate as the giant redwoods: mossy, rainy and cool. It also prefers an acidic soil and so in the UK the most spectacular forms are found on the west coast of Scotland, which best mirrors these conditions. Its Latin and common names recall an era of British plant hunting: discovered by botanist and naturalist Archibald Menzies on Vancouver Island in 1791, it was introduced into the UK by botanical explorer David Douglas in 1827. One of the tallest trees in Britain (at over 60m) is a Douglas fir that grows on the Duke of Atholl's estate near Dunkeld. They are brilliant timber trees – tall, narrow and straight in trunk – and have been planted en masse throughout Scotland in particular, but their good looks and dramatically drooping branches have earned them places in many of the grand and mossy west-coast Scottish gardens.

### 1 Bark

When young, the bark is grey green and has a citrusy scent. As the tree ages, bark takes on a rich brown and becomes elaborately corky and craggy, with horizontal grooves.

### 2 Needles

The flat, soft needles have rounded tips and are distributed all around

the stem. They have an intense resinous citrus scent when crushed.

### 3 Cones

The cones, which hang down from the branches, start life green then turn yellow, pink, and finally light brown and woody. A three-pronged bract protrudes from each scale.

### 4 Terminal bud

Buds are distinctive: reddish brown, scaly and pointed. They look a little like fat beech tree buds.

### 5 Silhouette

The central trunk is tall and straight, and the branches swoop down then up. The foliage hangs heavily from each branch, in pendulous swags.



Young Sitka spruces are tall and narrow becoming more cylindrical as they age.

MANY THANKS TO WESTONBIRT, THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM WHERE THE MAJORITY OF THESE IMAGES WERE TAKEN, AND TO WESTONBIRT DENDROLOGIST DAN CROWLEY FOR HIS ASSISTANCE WITH THIS FEATURE.

## *Picea sitchensis* Sitka spruce

*Picea sitchensis*, the Sitka spruce, is grown in huge number in the UK but not often as an ornamental. Since its introduction to the UK in 1831 (by David Douglas, of Douglas fir fame) it has been planted as a timber tree over thousands of acres of boggy ground in northern Europe and has become one of Europe's most important timber trees. Its plantations are dark and forbidding places. It shows good growth even on poor soils and has become naturalised in some parts of the UK and Ireland. It is native to the west coast of America, right up as far as Alaska. In fact it is named after the town of Sitka on Baranof Island off Alaska's southeast coast, which was Alaska's capital when it was still part of Russian America. Conditions there are wet under foot, mossy, and foggy, and yet the Sitka spruce grows heartily away anyway, which is the key to its commercial popularity.



### 1 Bark

The bark is purplish grey in colour and thin and scaly. When the tree is mature it develops roughly circular scales that flake away.

### 2 Needles

Spruce needles are stiff, spiky and sharp, and arranged all the

way around the stems. Each is attached to the stem via a woody peg. Needles have a rich fruity scent when crushed.

### 3 Cones

Cones are long and cylindrical and hang down from the branches. They start out green, and then turn reddish brown

before turning a darker brown. Each of the cone's scale has a crinkled edge to it.

### 4 Silhouette

Sitka spruces are tall, narrow and conical when young, becoming cylindrical as the tree ages. Lower limbs are often lost with age creating a gappy look.

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**AN ANGLO-INDIAN VIZAGAPATAM IVORY VENEERED  
COTTAGE WORKBOX**  
*circa 1790-1820*  
£3,000 - 4,000 \*



Lot 245  
**AN ITALIAN SILVER CHARGER**  
reputedly chased by Stanislao Borghi for the Milanese jeweller  
Cusi in 1925  
£3,000 - 5,000 \*



Lot 47  
**A LARGE CHINESE LACQUERED WOOD FIGURE OF A  
BODHISATTVA SEATED ON AN ELEPHANT**  
£6,000 - 8,000 \*



Lot 596  
**A MAHOGANY AND CROSSBANDED 'JUPE' TYPE CIRCULAR  
EXTENDING DINING TABLE TOGETHER WITH ITS LEAF CARRIER**  
£10,000 - 15,000 \*

# Bonhams

MONTPELIER STREET • KNIGHTSBRIDGE

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\* Plus buyer's premium and other fees. For details of the charges payable in addition to the final hammer price, please visit [bonhams.com/buyersguide](http://bonhams.com/buyersguide)



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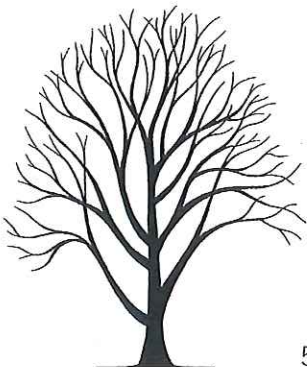
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The rowan is equally at home in suburban front gardens as in rocky mountain crevices.

## *Sorbus aucuparia* rowan

The rowan tree lives a double life. Due to its extreme hardiness and its tolerance of tough conditions, rowan is found higher up mountainsides than any other tree except the silver birch, and is often called the mountain ash because of this. But it is also one of the most domesticated of trees, often planted well away from its wilder habitat. It frequents gardens in towns and in the countryside, where it never gets too big for its bounds and its neat habit, pretty spring blossom and autumn display of lipstick-red berries can be appreciated up close. This association of homes and rowans is not purely ornamental, however, and harks back to a belief that the rowan has protective qualities. It has long been widely planted near doorways as protection against witches and other bad spirits.

### 1 Bark

The bark is smooth, shiny and grey. Winter twigs are grey and young trees have hairy buds.

### 2 Leaves

The leaves comprise between six and eight pairs of leaflets, and bear a similarity to ash leaves. Each individual leaflet has a serrated edge.

### 3 Flowers

Creamy-white heads of five-petaled flowers appear in April and May. They have an unpleasant smell, but are attractive to insects.

### 4 Berries

Heavy bunches of beautiful, bright-red, shiny berries are produced in September and

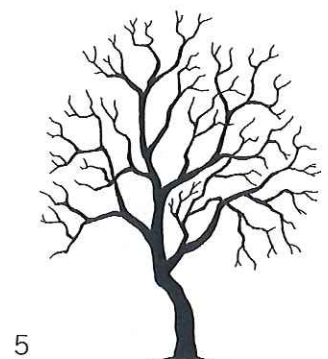
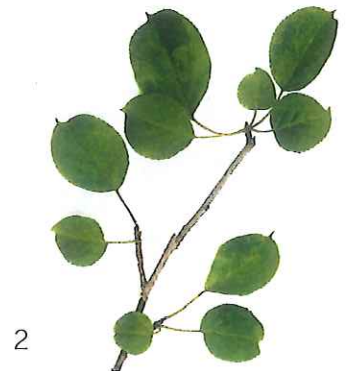
October. Each individual berry bears a tiny star. Birds, especially waxwings, love to feast on the berries.

### 5 Silhouette

A graceful and open-canopied tree, neat, round-headed and open in stature. It grows to a maximum of around 15m and can live for as long as 200 years.



A favourite in gardens, the crab apple is prized for its spring blossom and autumn fruit.



## *Malus sylvestris* crab apple

One of the prettiest small trees there is, crab apple is more often seen in gardens than it is in the wild. Its compact size and two distinct seasons of interest make it suitable for small gardens: in spring it is covered in big white and pink blossom, and in autumn it bears beautiful miniature apples that can hang on the tree for months. However, it can still be found in relics of old oak woodlands and in sheltered spots on the edges of forests, as well as in hedgerows. It is an ancestor of the cultivated apple and can live for up to 100 years, becoming ever more gnarled and twisted as it ages. Lichens cover the branches of older trees and the crab apple is one of the few plants that plays host to mistletoe, so you may see evergreen bunches of this Christmas favourite in the branches once the leaves have fallen.

### 1 Bark

The rough, flecked, grey-brown bark cracks as it ages, the trunk grows gnarled and twisted, and the twigs can develop spines.

### 2 Leaves

Mid-green leaves are round to oval, with serrated edges and a pointed tip that leans to one side. They are borne alternately along the branch.

### 3 Flowers

The beautiful, simple, open blossom appears around April. The pink buds open to pure-white, five-petalled flowers with pink backs to the petals. It has a sweet scent that is attractive to insects.

### 4 Crab apples

Round, green, cherry-sized apples are produced in September and

slowly ripen to yellow by around October. They are a good source of winter food for birds.

### 5 Silhouette

The crab apple grows to around 10m in height and has a wide, rounded, spreading canopy that is often open and irregular. It grows craggy, twisted and characterful with age.





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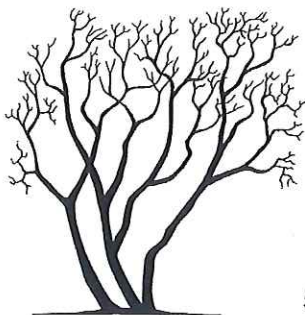
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More shrub than tree, the wayfarer's common name derives from its historic roadside habitat.

## *Viburnum lantana* wayfaring tree

The wayfaring tree – more often shrub-like – is so pretty that it is widely sold in garden centres and is often planted and cultivated, particularly in shrub and woodland gardens. Its appeal straddles two seasons: spring, when it is covered in umbels of creamy-white flowers, and autumn, when its berries turn from red to black. As well as being a feature of gardens, it is a native that can be found growing on chalky soils in scrub and in hedgerows, and on woodland edges. It is often found along footpaths and roadsides; the 16th-century herbalist John Gerard gave it the name wayfarer on account of its proliferation along the lanes of southern England. The tubular flowers attract hoverflies, which are able to reach the nectar at the base. Birds and small mammals eat the berries in autumn.

### 1 Bark

The young stems are slightly hairy with white tips. Look for yellow-green buds in winter, facing each other on the stem and close to it.

### 2 Leaves

Leaves are greyish-green with pale, downy undersides. They are oval, pointed and slightly crinkled, with round-toothed edges.

### 3 Flowers

Flat umbels of funnel-shaped flowers appear at the ends of the stems in May. The buds are green, but turn creamy as they open into five-petalled flowers.

### 4 Berries

In autumn, the tree carries little bunches of oval, flattened berries that turn red and then black,

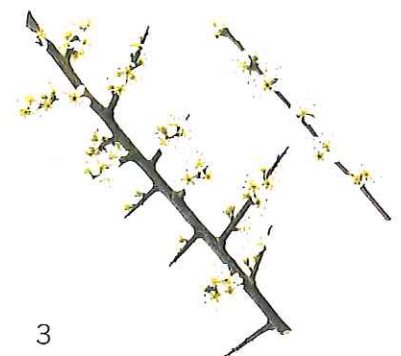
although often both colours appear on the tree at the same time. They are poisonous to humans, but harmless to birds.

### 5 Silhouette

The wayfaring tree most often grows as a large shrub, reaching up to 5m in height and often as broad as it is tall. It rarely grows as a single-stemmed tree.



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## *Prunus spinosa* blackthorn

Blackthorn is well known to foragers and raises a smile at Christmas among those who like to sip on sloe gin made by steeping berries in sugar and alcohol; learn how to identify the plant early in the year so you can gather the berries in autumn. It is found most often in hedgerows, the remnants of old stock hedging, its spiny nature making it impenetrable, but you can also spot it in scrubs, copses and woodland. Its flowers appear particularly early in the year – you can tell it apart from hawthorn by the flowers' timing and their appearance on bare wood. This makes it a particularly useful plant for wildlife, feeding early flying insects in spring, providing a caterpillar feast through summer, and then, of course, those berries for the birds in autumn and winter – as long as the foragers don't get there first.

### 1 Bark

The bark and twigs are grey-brown becoming almost black with age. Side shoots grow straight from the branch and develop into thorns.

### 2 Leaves

The leaves are small and oval, with a pointed tip and hairs on the veins on the undersides. They grow alternately up the stem.

### 3 Flowers

The flowers appear before the leaves early in the year, around February or March. They are white with five petals and yellow stamens, and cluster thickly around the bare branches.

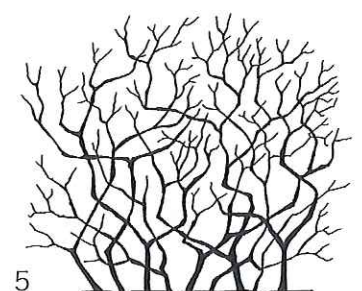
### 4 Berries

Berries, known as sloes, are an unmistakable, deep blue-black,

colour, perfectly round and ready to pick from October onwards but at their sweetest after a frost (or a spell in the freezer).

### 5 Silhouette

Spiny, dense and crooked growth makes blackthorn a good stock-proof hedge. Plants can grow up to 7m but are usually around 3m, resembling a shrubby thicket.



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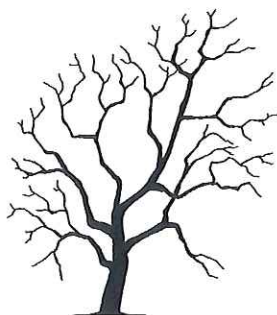
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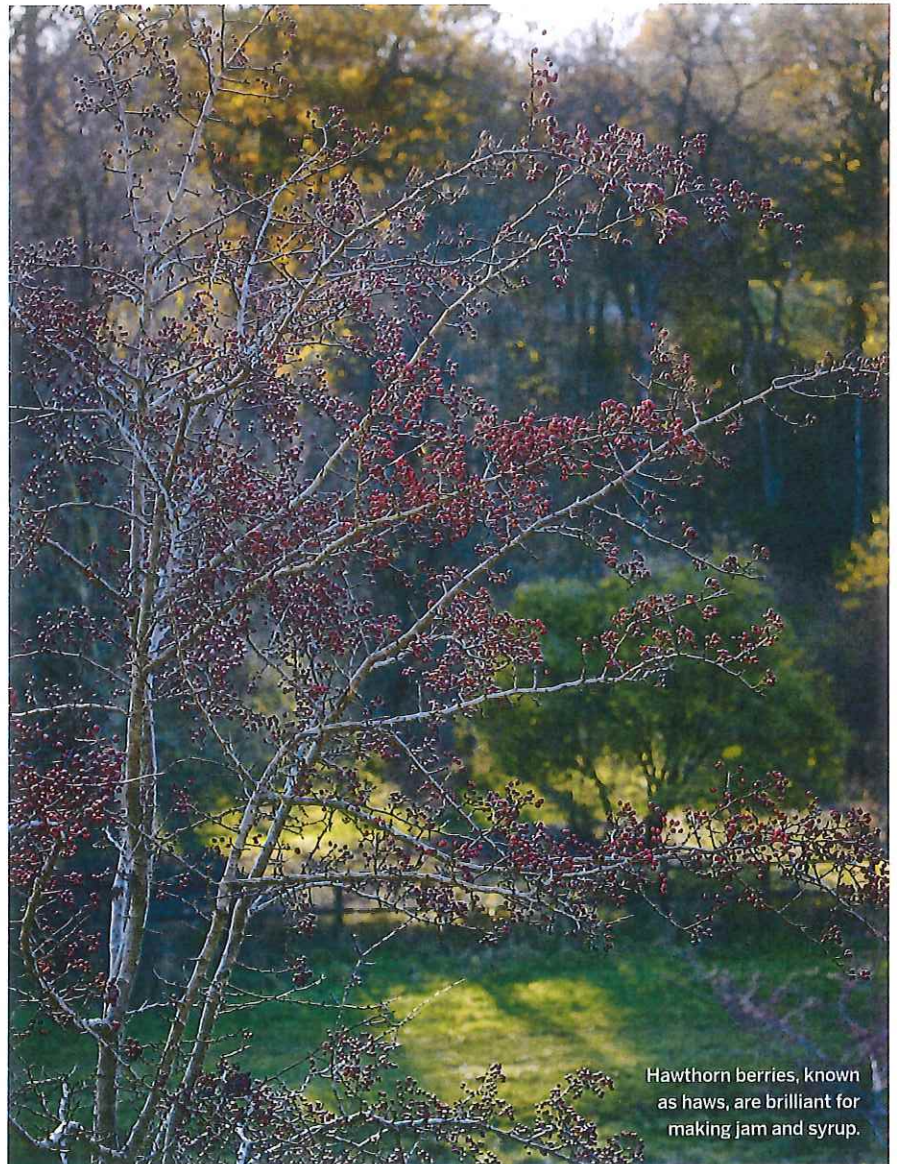
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Hawthorn berries, known as haws, are brilliant for making jam and syrup.

## *Crataegus monogyna* hawthorn

Hawthorn is one of the most common plants in the English countryside, and is most often seen as a hedge around permanent pasture. This is because it has been the principal plant of field enclosure since Tudor times, its dense, spiny growth making a perfect stock-proof hedge. It has several common names – hawthorn, quickthorn, whitethorn and May – the latter after the month in which it produces frothy white flowers, one of the spectacles of the natural year. It is also seen as a gnarled and characterful small tree, particularly in more remote areas. Leaves and flowers are sometimes added to salads, and the berries are used in jam making and to create syrup rich in vitamin C. There are many superstitions around hawthorn, and bringing branches into the house is associated with illness and death.

### 1 Bark

Very young stems have a reddish colour turning red-brown, with thorns protruding below the leaf joints and sometimes at the tips of the shoots. Older bark is brown, fissured and cracked.

### 2 Leaves

The small, bright-green leaves are as broad as they are long and

deeply lobed, cut at least halfway to the central leaf rib. They turn buttery yellow in autumn.

### 3 Flowers

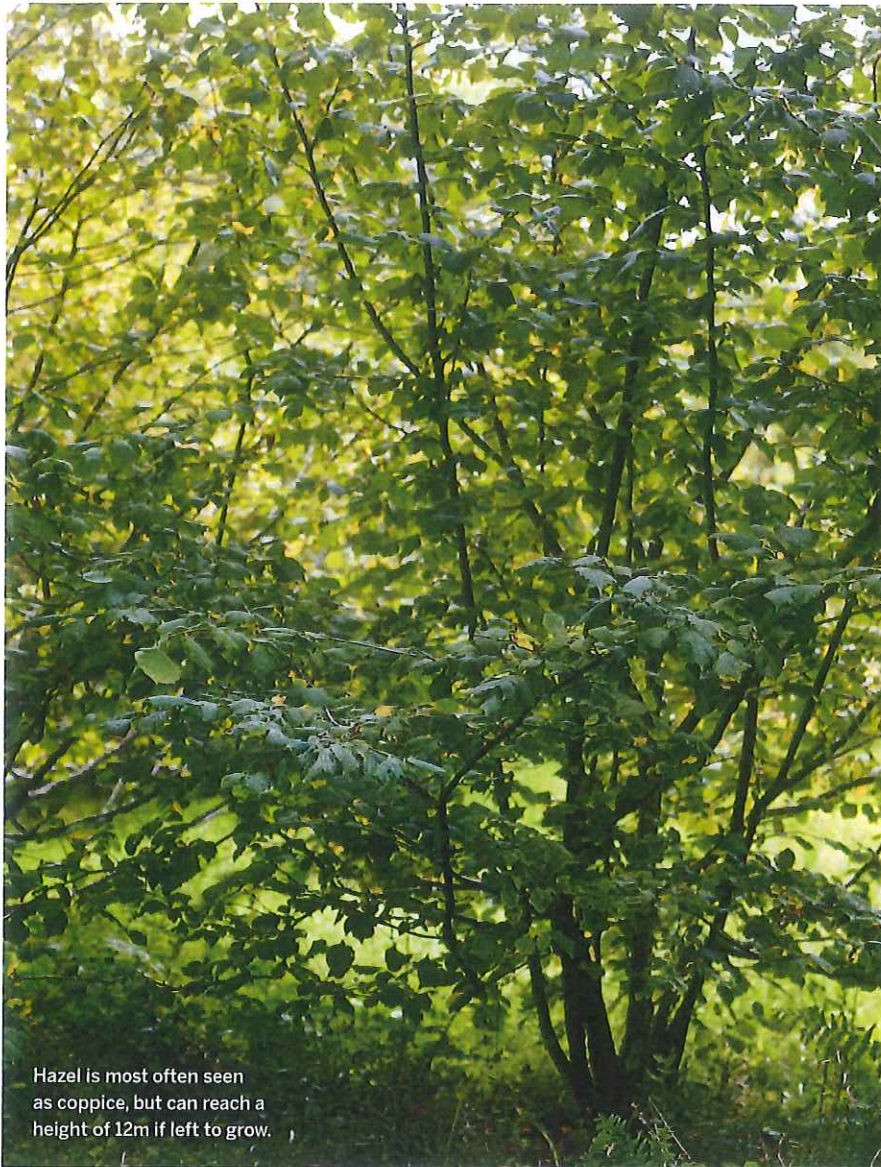
Small, white, five-petaled flowers appear after the leaves in May (an easy way to distinguish hawthorn from blackthorn). They have a strong and not particularly pleasant scent.

### 4 Berries

Around October, the dark-red haws mature in clusters. They are loved by birds, particularly in the later part of winter.

### 5 Silhouette

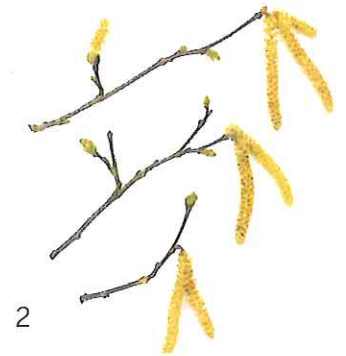
Most often grown as a thick hedge, but in remote spots it can be seen as a gnarled and twisted small tree with a spreading, uneven canopy.



Hazel is most often seen as coppice, but can reach a height of 12m if left to grow.



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## *Corylus avellana* hazel

One of the most useful woods, hazel is everywhere. Its stems split and twist easily and so have been long used for making wattle-and-daub walls as well as fencing and hurdles. They regenerate brilliantly from the base each time they are cut back, and are most often seen as coppiced trees, sometimes making up the understory of oak, birch or ash woodland, sometimes in stands of their own. It also appears in hedgerows and lowland scrub. You may see non-coppiced trees, but they generally don't live very long, only reaching around 70 years of age as opposed to the 500-plus years of managed hazel. Coppicing lets in light, so hazel coppices make beautiful woodlands rich in flora. You will often find that the woodland floor of a hazel coppice comprises bluebells, anemones, dog violets and sorrel.



4

### 1 Bark

Older stems are light brown and smooth with yellow pores. Younger stems are sometimes bronze in colour with a peeling outer layer, and the young twigs have a downy texture.

### 2 Catkins

Catkins appear in autumn and winter and often open as early

as January. Catkins are the male flowers and are long and yellow, while the female flowers are tiny and red.

### 3 Leaves

The textured leaves are broad and rounded with a point at the tip. Leaf edges are unevenly toothed, and the stalk and underside are covered in fine, downy hairs.

### 4 Nuts

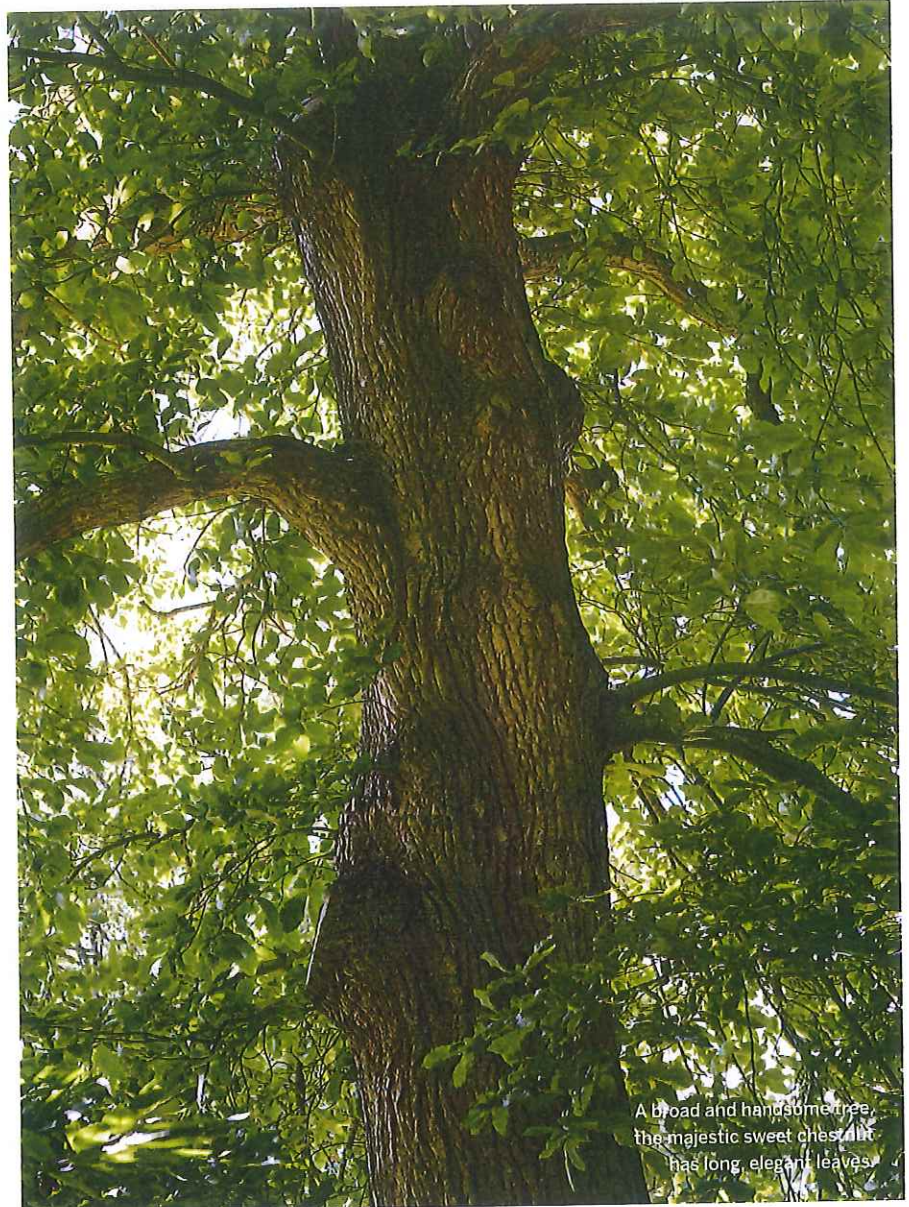
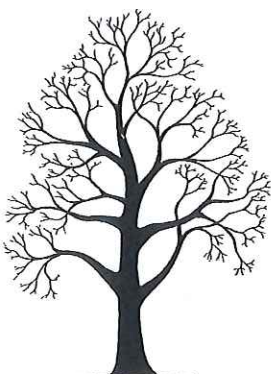
Nuts form and mature in September and October, turning from soft and green to hard, shiny and brown. They are held on to the plant by a papery husk.

### 5 Silhouette

Most often coppiced, with multiple stems rising from ground level, making a wide, low thicket.



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A broad and handsome tree, the majestic sweet chestnut has long, elegant leaves.

## *Castanea sativa* sweet chestnut

Sweet chestnuts feel like native trees, but this is perhaps because they have been in the UK for so long. In fact they are native to southern Europe and Asia Minor, but were brought here by the Romans, who planted them across the empire. Sweet chestnut is loved for its edible nuts, collected as they fall in autumn and delicious roasted. In parts of the Mediterranean such as Corsica where it is mountainous and impossible to grow wheat, sweet chestnuts are grown in vast numbers and the nuts ground down to make flour, which has become a staple in the local diet. In the UK the tree is found in woodlands and parkland, and is particularly common in the southeast of England, where it was once grown in large numbers and coppiced for poles and for charcoal production. Sweet chestnuts can live for up to 700 years.

### 1 Bark

The young bark is greyish-purple and scored with vertical cracks. As the tree ages, these develop into fissures that appear to spiral around the trunk.

### 2 Leaves

The leaves are long (up to 20cm when mature), dark green and serrated. They have a prominent

fold at the midrib and veins running parallel to each other.

### 3 Nutcases/nuts

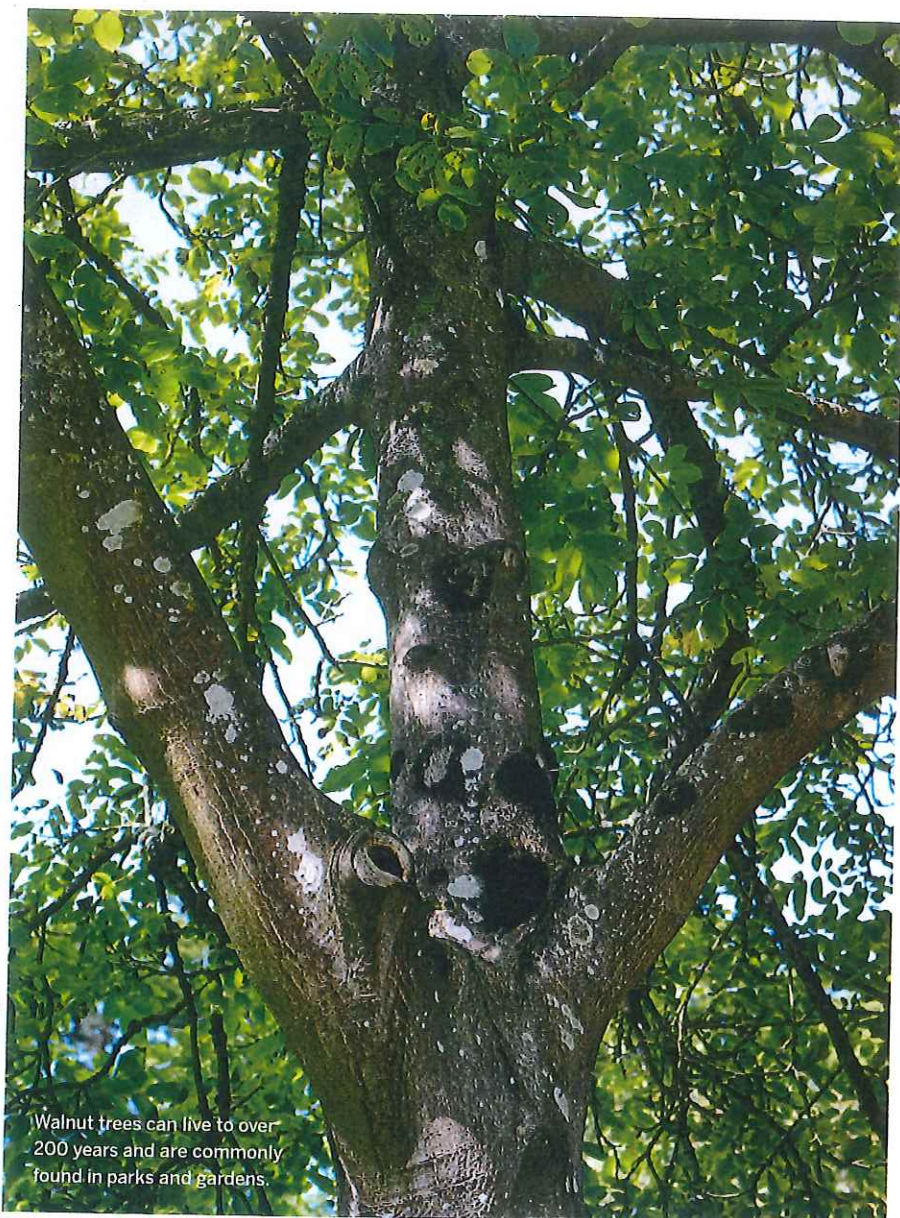
Around October, the edible nuts fall to the ground in green cases covered in long, bendy spines. The casings are distinct from those covering the horse chestnut's conkers, which have short, hard spines.

### 4 Flowers/catkins

Sweet chestnut trees produce both male and female flowers. In June or July, long yellow male catkins appear, with green rosette-like female flowers at their base.

### 5 Silhouette

Sweet chestnuts grow to around 35m in height, and have a broad, rounded crown.



Walnut trees can live to over 200 years and are commonly found in parks and gardens.



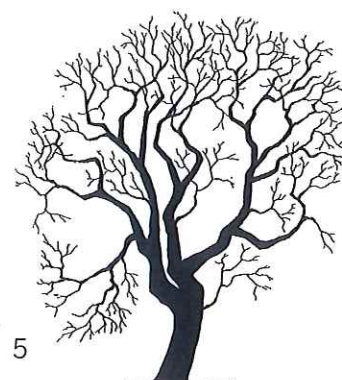
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## *Juglans regia* walnut

Despite originating in the area from southeast Europe to southwest China, *Juglans regia* is known as the common walnut in Britain, and the English walnut in the USA. We have no real claim to it other than it having grown here for a very long time. No one is exactly sure how and when it arrived, although it was almost certainly before or during Roman times. It is a broad and handsome tree and bears its big, creamy, bitter nuts well in British conditions, although they have traditionally been picked green and pickled as well as eaten mature. Other plants will not grow beneath walnuts, because their fallen leaves and debris contain juglone, a naturally occurring herbicide. Walnuts grow particularly well in deep, fertile soil and in areas with shorter winters. The wood of the walnut tree is extremely beautiful; with its creamy sap wood, dark heartwood and intricate wavy grain, it is much coveted by woodworkers.

### 1 Bark

Young walnut trees have smooth, greenish-brown bark. As the tree ages, the bark develops fissures and turns a silvery grey colour.

### 2 Leaves

Each leaf has between five and nine leaflets. They are shiny and dark green, and are paired

along the leaf stalk, with a single leaf at the end of the stalk.

### 3 Nuts

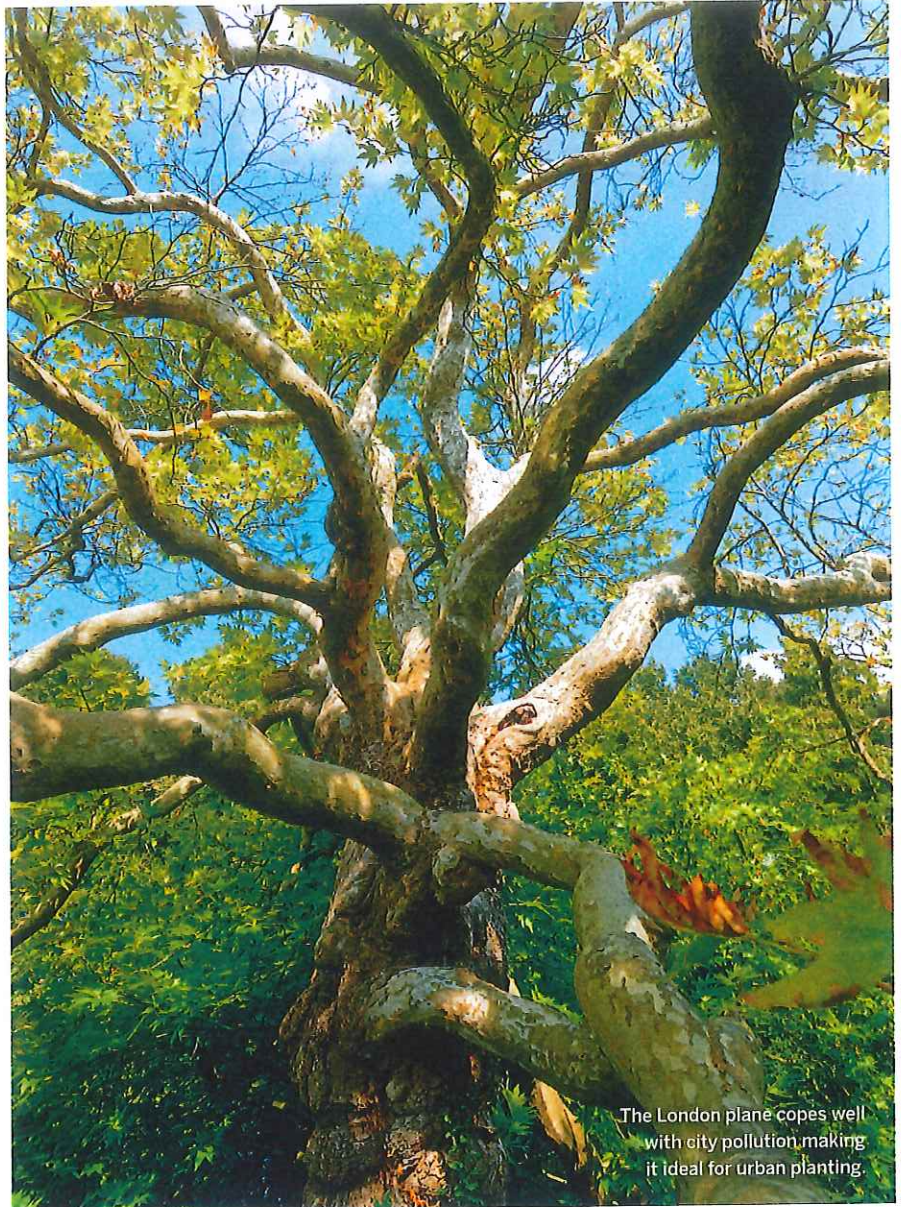
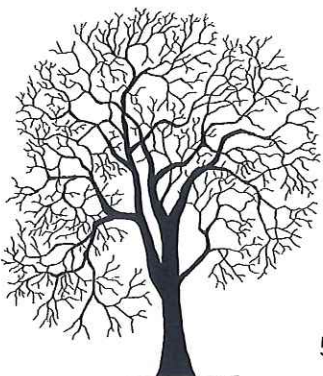
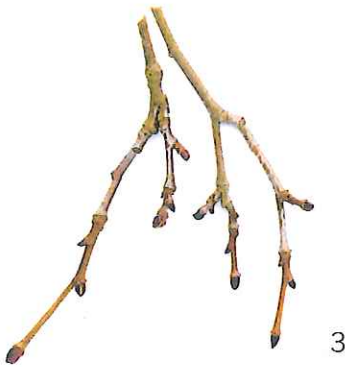
Green walnut cases can be seen on the tree from midsummer, and can be picked as green walnuts for pickling in July. The nuts ripen and turn woody around October.

### 4 Winter twig

Twigs have horseshoe-shaped leaf scars where the leaves have fallen. Cut a twig open and it has a spongy pith.

### 5 Silhouette

Walnuts form a short trunk and a broad crown when growing in full sun and can reach around 35m.



The London plane copes well with city pollution, making it ideal for urban planting.

## *Platanus x hispanica* London plane

If you live in a city, and particularly in London, the London plane is likely to be the tree you see most often. It is thought to be a hybrid of *Platanus orientalis*, the oriental plane, and *Platanus occidentalis*, the American plane, their seedling discovered in Vauxhall by John Tradescant the younger in the mid 17th century. It has been estimated that the London plane accounts for around half of all the trees in London, and this is partly because it is so happy in urban conditions. Its beautiful bark shrugs off plates all year round, and with it any pollution and deposits that have built up; it requires little root space; and it is very malleable and happy to be pruned, as witnessed in European cities where it is also used in great number but often trained as a shade tree or down the centres of avenues. Trees can live to be hundreds of years old. There is a fine specimen at Bishop's Palace in Ely, planted in the 17th century.

### 1 Bark

The bark has a distinctive camouflage pattern, with plates of brown, grey, mustard yellow and olive green that flake away to reveal new colours as the tree grows.

### 2 Leaves

Leaves are simple and maple-like. When they are forming in spring

they produce lots of irritating short hairs called trichome fibres (the cause of the infamous 'Chelsea cough' at the flower show in May).

### 3 Bud arrangement

The buds are arranged alternately along the stem. In winter they are smooth, shiny and cone-shaped, and may have a red sheen.

### 4 Seed balls

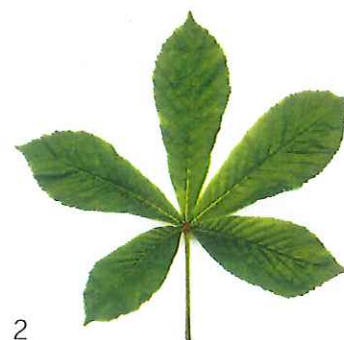
Perfectly round seed balls hang from the tree in bunches, becoming particularly visible in winter after the leaves drop.

### 5 Silhouette

Tall, with a long, straight trunk and rounded crown. Planes are often pollarded in cities.



The striking 'candles' of the horse chestnut are the most obvious of tree flowers.



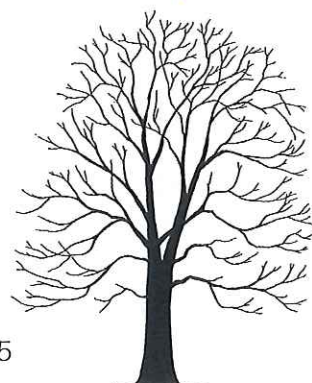
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## *Aesculus hippocastanum* horse chestnut

Horse chestnuts originate in a small area of southeast Europe, but have long been planted in the UK as ornamental trees in parks, large gardens and on village greens, because of their attractive, large, palm-shaped leaves and beautiful displays of pink and white, candle-like flowers in spring. In autumn, of course, they also produce conkers, non-edible nuts that are nonetheless well loved for their potential to be hung on strings, turned into shiny, brown weapons and sent into battle against other conkers. They are big and handsome trees with a spreading habit, but unfortunately in recent years horse chestnuts have been attacked by the leaf-mining moth *Cameraria ohridella*, and from July onwards dry crispy patches start to appear on the leaves, which turn dead looking long before autumn. This threatens their existence as ornamental trees, and we may sadly be seeing fewer of them as the years go by.

### 1 Bark

The bark is smooth and pinkish-grey when the tree is young. As the tree ages, the bark becomes greyish-green and more scaly, with large, smooth flakes.

### 2 Leaf

Leaves are large and palm-shaped with between five and seven

leaflets, each narrow at the base and becoming broad and rounded towards the tip.

### 3 Winter bud

Buds are arranged in pairs down the stem, with each pair set at an angle of 90 degrees to the previous pair. Look for horseshoe-shaped leaf scars, complete with nail holes.

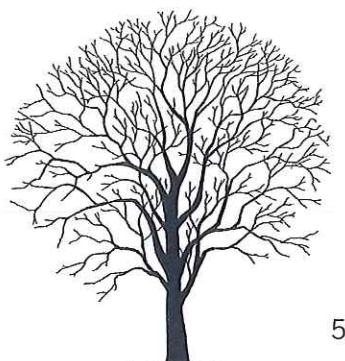
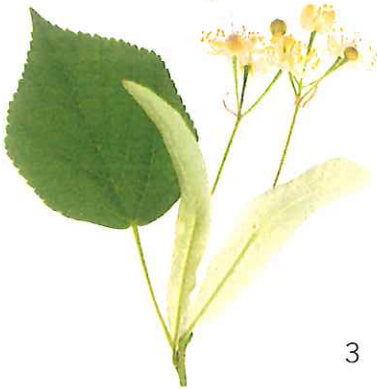
### 4 Flower

Big, dramatic, pink and white 'candles' of flowers are produced all over the tree in May.

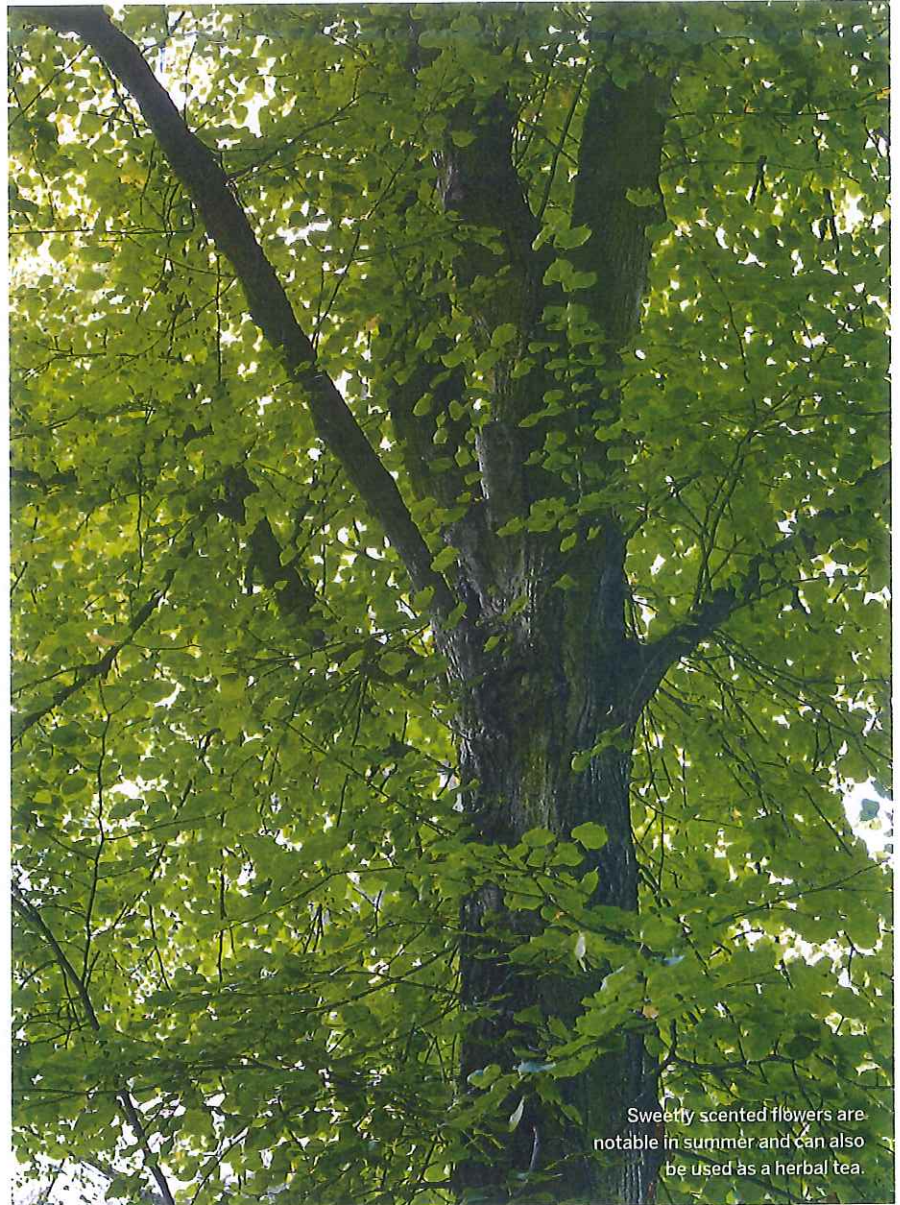
### 5 Silhouette

Grows up to 39m with a domed crown. On older trees, the lower branches often sweep down and curl upwards at the tips.





MANY THANKS TO WESTONBIRT, THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM WHERE THE MAJORITY OF THESE IMAGES WERE TAKEN, AND TO WESTONBIRT DENDROLOGIST DAN CROWLEY FOR HIS ASSISTANCE WITH THIS FEATURE.



## *Tilia x europaea* lime

If you park your car below a tree and return to find it sticky, you have found a lime. The stickiness is excess sap secreted by the many aphids that feast on the leaves but despite this obvious drawback, it is widely planted as a street tree, perhaps because it is easy to propagate and tolerant of pruning: as with London planes it is often pollarded to keep it to size and prevent it from bothering double decker buses. It is also widely found in parks and large gardens, growing unrestricted. Lime is one of the tallest broad-leaved trees you will see in the UK, with bright-green leaves and covered in sweet-scented flowers that attract hundreds of bees in July. Common lime is a naturally occurring hybrid between small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata*, and large-leaved lime *Tilia platyphyllos* and it occurs in the wild wherever both trees grow. Limes are also known as lindens, a name often reflected in street names.

### 1 Bark

The young twigs are reddish-brown and hairy towards the ends, with reddish-brown buds in winter. On mature trees the bark is grey with dark grey fissures.

### 2 Leaves

The leaves are mid-green, supple and delicate with a lop-sided heart

shape. On the back there are tufts of hairs in the leaf axils.

### 3 Flowers

Flowers are attached to a light-green, leaf-like bract. They hang in bunches and have five yellowish-white petals with long stamens. The blossom can be used to make a herbal tea.

### 4 Fruits

Once the flowers have been pollinated they turn into round, pale-green, one-seeded fruits.

### 5 Silhouette

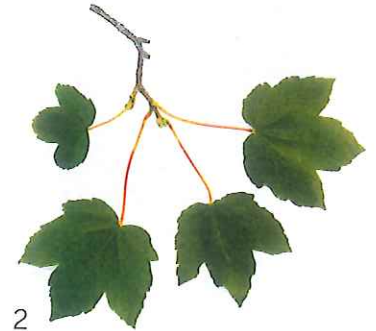
A tall and columnar tree, often with a mass of burrs and brushwood emerging from low down on the trunk. Grows up to 50m in height.



The sycamore establishes itself easily from seed and is tolerant of wind and coastal exposure.



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## *Acer pseudoplatanus* sycamore

Sycamores are perhaps the least loved of our big trees. They produce a great many seeds, which germinate readily and grow quickly, and their heavy leaf fall smothers plants growing below. For these reasons, they are often regarded as weeds, and are chopped down or rooted out. In spring, the sycamore has attractive reddish foliage that emerges from bright-red buds, but unfortunately it does not share the vibrant autumn colouring of other members of the acer family. The foliage is also often marred in summer by tar spot, *Rhytisma acerinum*, which covers the leaves in black blotches but appears to do nothing to slow the tree's extreme vigour. On the plus side, sycamore – which originated in southern Europe and has been grown in the UK since the 1500s and naturalised here since the 1800s – is very tolerant of sea spray, and can grow well in coastal situations where few other broad-leaved trees will thrive.

### 1 Bark

The bark of the sycamore is a lovely, smooth pinkish-grey when the tree is young. As the tree ages, it develops into shaggy plates in shades of pink, brown and grey.

### 2 Leaves

The palm-shaped leaves have five lobes. The surface of the leaves is

often marked by tar spot, or pitted with the bright-red galls of the sycamore gall mite *Eriophyes macrorhynchus*, although these hard, raised structures often do not cause serious damage.

### 3&4 Keys

The winged seeds are borne in pairs and called double

samaras. They are bright green at first, turning woody and brown by autumn, when they flutter to the ground in a helicopter motion.

### 5 Silhouette

Tall with upwards-reaching limbs and a broad, rounded crown. The sycamore grows to about 35m and can live to around 400 years.