

Leaf guesser



Use these descriptions to identify a tree by its leaves or other features.

Types of leaf



Simple

One whole leaf joins to the twig by a stalk



Compound

A leaf stalk holds several smaller "leaflets"



Needle

Thin, sharp and pin-like. Can grow in single, pair or clusters.



Needle-like

Thin leaves that are usually much flatter than needles.

Leaf edges



Entire (smooth)

Unbroken with no naturally occurring notches or teeth.



Undulate (wavy)

A wavy or softly waving edge.



Lobed

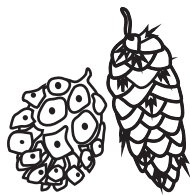
Multiple deep indentations around the edge.



Serrated

Pointy, saw-like teeth around the edge.

Other things to look for



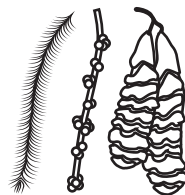
Cones

The scaly woody fruits that grow on coniferous trees.



Flowers

As clusters or solitary flowers with petals.



Catkins

Cylindrical cluster of flowers that hangs down.



Samaras

Winged seeds that are taken by the wind.



Thorns

Sharp woody growths from the twig of the tree.



Fruits and Nuts

Berries, nuts and other fruits which appear after pollination.



Yew

Description

Flat, dark green, needle-like leaves which grow in rows along the twig.

Flowers and berries appear on separate trees. The male flowers are small white-green bobby spheres and the female flowers become bright red berries called arils.

Did you know Yews are poisonous to humans and animals. They are often found growing in graveyards.



Sweet Chestnut

Description

Simple, dark green, oblong leaves with serrated edges and a pointed tip. The topside of the leaf is glossy.

Long, yellow catkins as flowers which develop into shiny, red-brown fruits surrounded by a spiky, green case

Did you know the Romans ground Sweet Chestnuts to make a coarse flour for cooking.



Douglas Fir

Description

Short, soft, flat needles which have white-green stripes on their underside.

Bears red, cone-like flowers which become long, oval-shaped cones with three-pointed "bracts" protruding from the scales.

Did you know a Native American myth says that the pointed "bracts" found on the cones are the tails and legs of mice that have hidden in the cones to escape forest fires.



Blackthorn

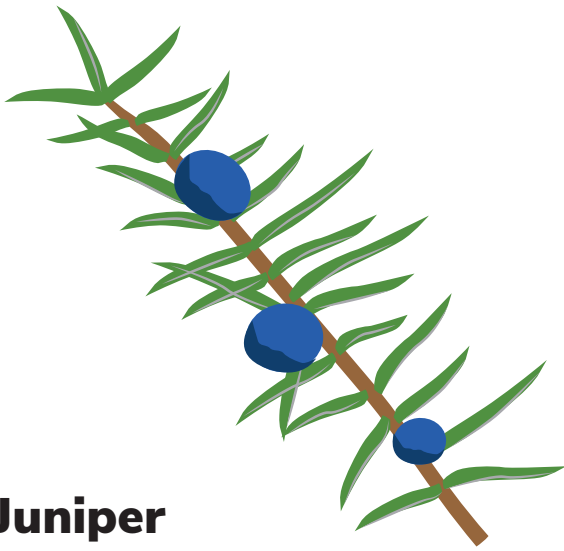
Description

Small, simple, green, oval leaves with slightly serrated edges, tapered where the leaves join the twig.

Branches have long, sharp thorns.

Small, white flowers appear in March which turn into blue-black fruits called sloes.

Did you know it is said that witches made their wands from Blackthorn.



Juniper

Description

Flat, green, sharp, needle-like leaves with silvery-white stripes on the underside.

Dark blue, berry-like cones form on the branches.

Did you know the wood from the juniper is used to make pencils.



Birch

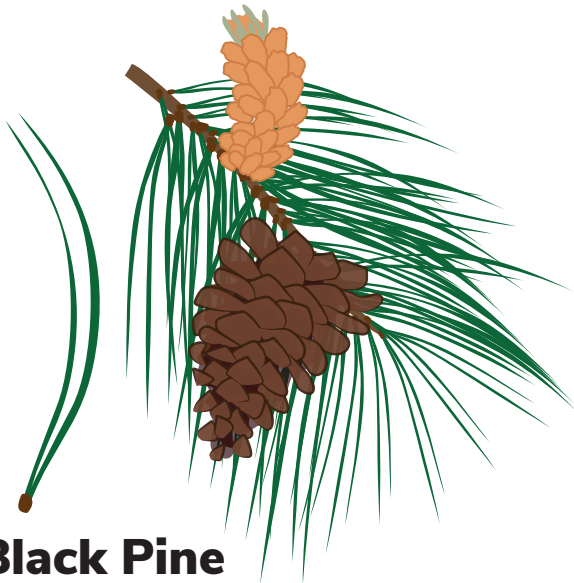
Description

Small, simple, oval (almost triangular) leaves with serrated edges and a pointed tip.

Leaves often hang in pairs.

Long, yellow catkins as flowers which develop into dark brown, cone-like fruits.

Did you know Birch bark can be soaked until moist in water, and then formed into a cast for a broken arm.



Black Pine

Description

Long, stiff, green needles joined in pairs at the base. The needles can be straight or curved.

Grows red or yellow cone-like flowers which become hard, scaled cones that fall to the ground regularly.

Did you know Black Pines are grown for their timber, as well as for use in paper making. They can live for over 500 years.



Hawthorn

Description

Small, simple, green, lobed leaves with a serrated edge.

Branches have long, sharp thorns.

Small white or pink flowers appear in May which turn into red fruits called haws.

Did you know Hawthorns make great hedges and home for wildlife, providing pollen for insects and shelter for birds. The berries can be used to make ketchup.



Ash

Description

Compound leaf with serrated oval leaflets on opposite sides of the leaf stem. The leaflets taper to a point.

Bears wing like seeds called “samaras” or “keys” in clusters that are carried by the wind.

Did you know in Norse mythology, the world was supported in the branches of a magical tree called Yggdrasil, which was said to be an Ash.



Field Maple

Description

Small, dark green leaves with five lobes and rounded teeth.

Bears winged seeds known as “samaras”, ‘keys’ or ‘helicopter seeds’ that have a pink tinge.

Did you know some people used to believe that maple branches hung around a doorway stopped bats entering.

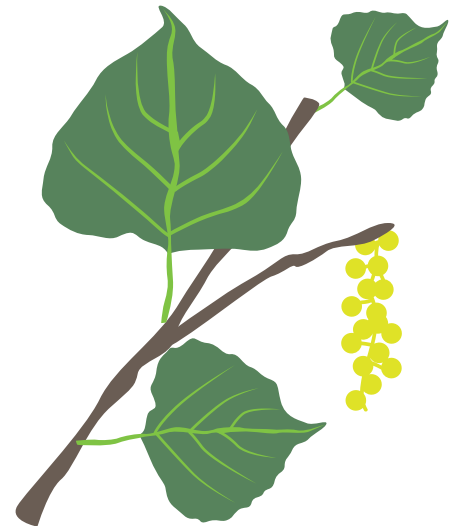


Oak

Description

Simple, lobed leaves with a smooth edge. Bears long, bobbled catkins which become fruits called acorns. Part of the acorn sits inside a cup. The acorn turns from green to brown and falls to the ground.

Did you know Sessile Oak acorns are stalkless, growing directly on the branch. English Oak acorns have stalks. Both are found in the UK.



Black Poplar

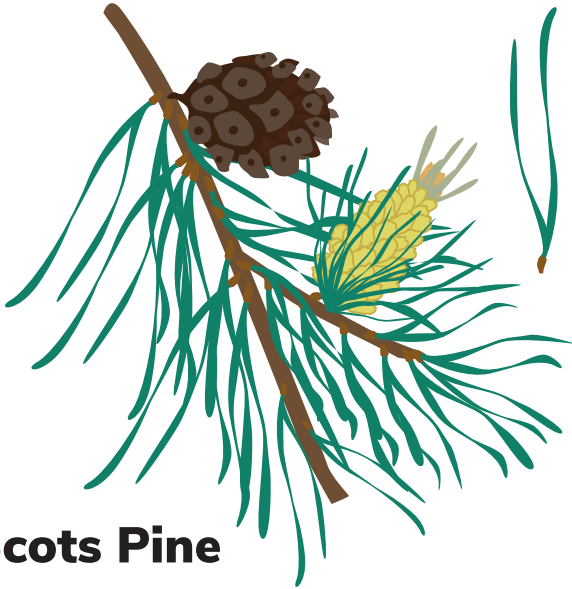
Description

Simple, triangular-shaped leaves with a wavy edge. Tapering to a point.

Male trees carry red catkins, female trees are yellow-green.

Female catkins develop into fluffy cotton-like seeds, which fall in late summer.

Did you know Poplar is naturally fire resistant and was once used for floorboards, and spars on thatched roofs.



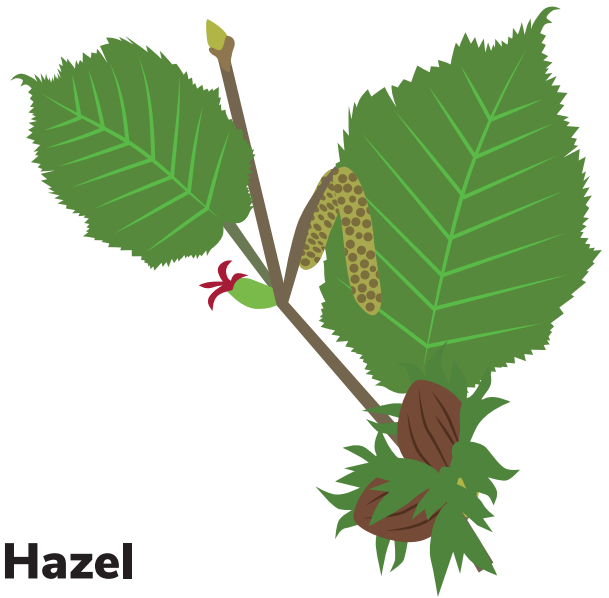
Scots Pine

Description

Short and slightly twisted blue-green needles joined in pairs.

Yellow green flowers become round scaled cones. One tree usually has cones of lots of different ages on, mature cones have a bump in the middle of each scale.

Did you know the bark at the base of the tree will be brown, but towards the top of the tree known as the “crown” it will appear red.



Hazel

Description

Simple round to oval leaves with serrated edges and tapering to a point.

Has catkins and small red bud like flowers which produce oval fruits with leafy bracts. The fruits mature into hard brown hazelnuts.

Did you know Hazel trees live for around 80 years but if cut back in a special way called “coppicing” they can live for several hundred.



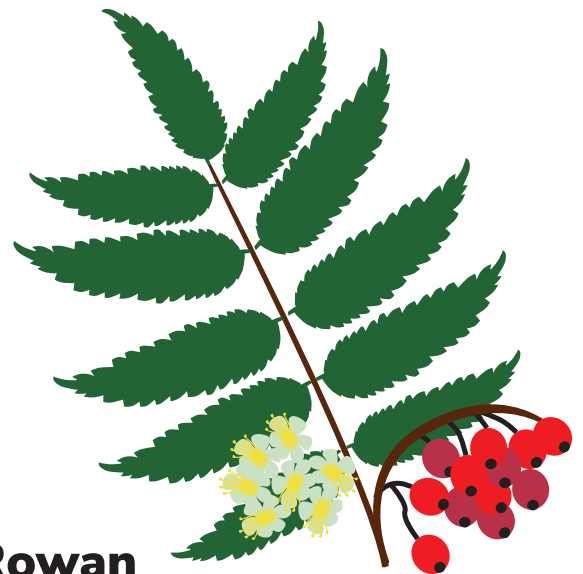
Holly

Description

Simple, wavy and spiky, oval leaves with a glossy shine. Older trees will have some slightly smoother leaves.

Bright red berries form, which stay on the branch all winter.

Did you know it was once thought to be unlucky to cut down a Holly tree.



Rowan

Description

Compound leaf with serrated oval leaflets that are pointed at the end.

Bears clusters of white flowers which become bright red berries.

Did you know Rowan is also known as the Mountain Ash because of its similar leaves. Its old Celtic name, “fid na ndruid”, means “wizards’ tree”.



Beech

Description

Oval and pointed leaves with a wavy edge. Young leaves have white hairs, but lose them as they mature. Bears green and orange flowers which become hard, spiny cups that produce a small, triangular, brown nut.

Did you know in France the edible nuts, or “masts”, are sometimes roasted and used as a coffee substitute.



Sycamore

Description

Simple leaf with five-pointed “palmate” lobes. Leaf stalks on younger trees are red. Small, green-yellow flowers hang in pointed “racemes”. After pollination, female flowers develop into winged fruits known as “samaras” or “helicopters” that hang in a v-shape.

Did you know that in Wales, Sycamore trees were used in the traditional craft of carving “love spoons” as romantic gifts.



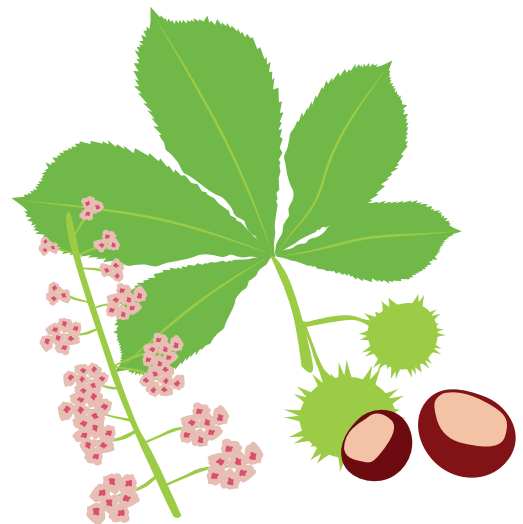
Wych Elm

Description

Simple, oval leaves tapering to a point with a serrated edge. Leaves have an asymmetrical base where they join the stem.

Seeds are round, flat and have a thin, paper-like casing.

Did you know Elm wood is water resistant and was used for lots of things including making wooden water pipes.



Horse Chestnut

Description

Compound leaf with pointed serrated leaflets from a central stem.

Bears small, pink flowers arranged in compound cone shapes. These become shiny red-brown fruits wrapped in a green, spiky case, known as “conkers”.

Did you know Horse Chestnuts originally came to the UK from Turkey in the 1600s.



White Willow

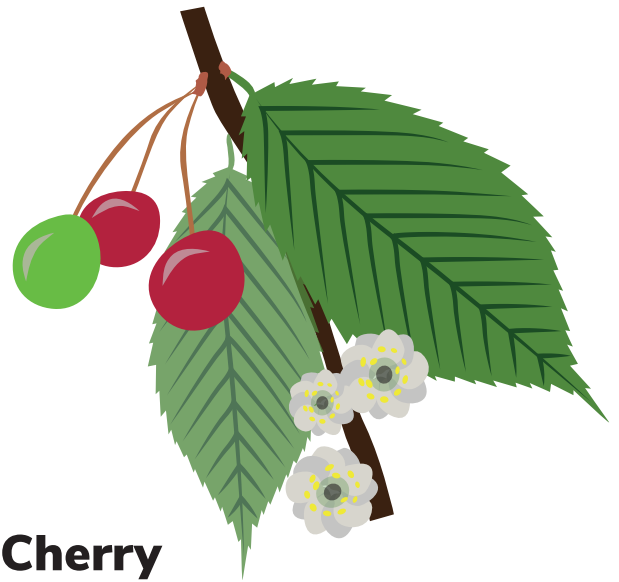
Description

Long, pale green, oval leaves tapering to a point at each end.

Bears long, yellow-green catkins which release cotton-like seeds into the wind.

Known as a “weeping willow” for its low hanging branches.

Did you know the painkiller Aspirin is derived from salicin, a compound found in the bark of Willow trees.



Cherry

Description

Serrated, oval leaves with a pointed tip

White, blossom flowers become smooth, globular fruits which grow on stalks and change from green to red as they ripen.

Did you know the sticky resin was once thought to promote a good complexion.



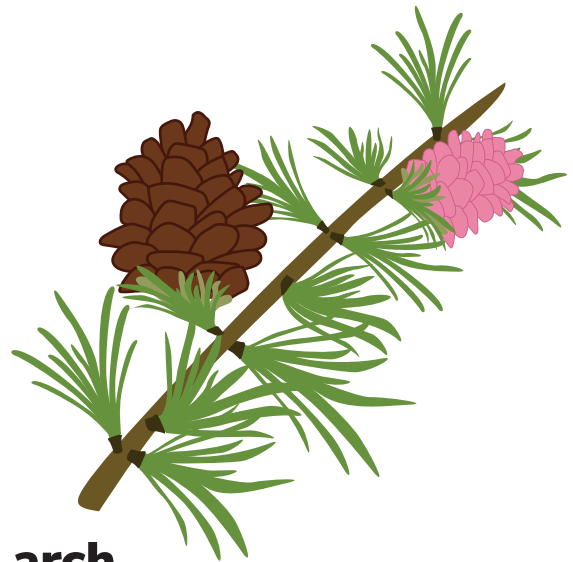
Lime

Description

Simple, heart-shaped leaves with a serrated edge tapering to a point. Indented at the base of the leaf where it joins to the stem

White flowers which develop into small brown, ridged fruits that hang in clusters

Did you know that during the Second World War the flowers were used to make tea, when real tea was hard to get.



Larch

Description

Short, soft needles which grow in tuft-like clusters along the branches that fall in winter.

Bears cones which begin as pink flowers and turn into hard, brown cones that can stay on the branch over winter.

Did you know the Larch is great for wildlife and the seeds are a favourite snack of the rare, native Red Squirrel.