

The Wee Tree Name Guide



Why is naming and knowing trees relevant?

Learning to identify and name trees and putting that skill to use gives a positive context and provides key tools for addressing two of the most pressing concerns of the climate emergency: loss of biodiversity and inequality. It also brings Learning for Sustainability through Outdoor Learning to life.

The Wee Tree Name Guide is part of the Identifying Trees resource, also created by Outdoor & Woodland Learning Scotland. The Identifying Trees resource along with others highlighted within, such as the Woodland Trust Tree ID app, will help provide further information on how to identify trees and should be used together to gain a deeper knowledge and insight into this topic.

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CONTENTS

	Page		Page
Alder	2	Hawthorn	32
Ash	4	Hazel	34
Aspen	6	Holly	36
Beech	8	Juniper	38
Birch (Silver)	10	Lime	40
Birch (Downy)	12	Lodgepole Pine	42
Cherry (Wild)	14	Pendunculate Oak	44
Horse Chestnut	16	Sessile Oak	46
Crab Apple	18	Rowan	48
Douglas Fir	20	Scots Pine	50
Elder	22	Sitka Spruce	52
Wych Elm	24	Sycamore	54
English Elm	26	Whitebeam	56
European Larch	28	Goat Willow	58
Field Maple	30	Yew	60

Alder

English

Alder (common).

Latin

Alnus glutinosa, *Alnus*: alder, *glutinosa*: sticky.

Scots

aller/allar, ern/arn.

Gaelic

Feàrna (alder), Crann- feàrna (alder tree).

Interesting note

Sticky '*glutinosa*' refers to the roots.

Found in wet places.

Identification tip

The word "carr" in a place name is the flat waterlogged landscape which is transitioning from wetland to woodland. Alder often found in these landscapes.



Ash

English

Ash (common).

Latin

Fraxinus excelsior, *Fraxinus*: ash.
excelsior: noble exalted ever upward.

Scots

Aish.

Gaelic

Innseann (ash), Craobh-uinnsinn (ash tree).

Interesting note

This beautiful tree is dying out because of Ash Dieback Disease.

Identification tip

Black buds. Bunches of keys seeds. The end of the branch tips sweep upwards. Pinnate leaves – individual leaflets from a main stalk which together form the leaf (similar to rowan).



Aspen

English

Aspen.

Latin

Populus tremula, *Populus*: people,
Tremula: trembling.

Scots

Quaikin aish.

Gaelic

Critheann (aspen), Craobh crithinn (aspen tree).

Interesting note

Aspen leaves appear to shimmer in the wind.

Identification tip

Long flattened leaf stalks.



Beech

English

Beech (common).

Latin

Fagus sylvatica, *Fagus*: beech,
sylvatica: of the forest.

Scots

Beech.

Gaelic

Faidhbhile (beech),
Craobh-fhaidhbhile (beech tree).

Interesting note

Grows on a wide range of well-drained soil types.

Identification tip

Edges of the leaves are wavy and hairy.
Smooth grey bark.



Birch (Silver)

English

Silver Birch (common).

Latin

Betula pendula, *Betula*: Latin for birch,
pendula: pendant, hanging.

Scots

Birk, Birkenshaw (Birchwood).

Gaelic

Beithe (birch), Craobh-bheithe (birch tree).

Interesting note

Has a range of fungi that are commonly associated with it like birch milk cap, birch polypore.

Identification tip

Silvery white bark, all year round, which sheds in layers. Drooping ends of branches when mature.



Birch (Downy)

English

Downy Birch.

Latin

Betula pubescens, *Betula*: Latin for birch,
Pubescens: hairy.

Scots

Birk, Birkenshaw (Birchwood).

Gaelic

Beithe (birch), Craobh-bheithe (birch tree).

Interesting note

Grows further north than any other broadleaf species.

Identification tip

Twigs are soft and hairy to touch when new in spring.



Cherry (Wild)

English

Wild Cherry.

Latin

Prunus avium, *Prunus*: of plum family,
avium: of the birds.

Scots

Gean.

Gaelic

Siris (Cherry), Craobh-shiris (cherry tree).

Interesting note

Avium refers to birds which play a role in dispersing the seed by eating them, then excreting the seeds.

Identification tip

Leaf stems have two red glands at the top.

Bark is reddish-brown and has horizontal lines.



Horse Chestnut

English

Horse Chestnut.

Latin

Aesculus hippocastanum, *Aesculus*: 'edible acorn';
Hippocastanum: hippo: horse; *castanea*: chestnut.

Scots

Chestnut.

Fruit called: Cheggies, Chessies, Conkers.

Gaelic

Geanm-chò (chestnut),
Craobh gheanm- chò (Chestnut tree).

Interesting note

The seed is used for playing conkers, between 2 people. The World Conker Championships are held annually in October.

Identification tip

The leaf scars left on twigs after the leaves have fallen have a distinctive horseshoe shape, complete with "nails". Dark shiny red-brown buds are sticky.



Crab Apple

English

Crab Apple.

Latin

Malus sylvestris, *Malus*: 'bad' or 'evil',
sylvestris: 'growing wild' or 'of the woods'.

Scots

Scrab, Scribe, Screyb.

Gaelic

Fiadh-ubhal (crab apple),
Craobh-ubhail fhiadhain (crab apple tree).

Interesting note

Malus, bad or evil, refers to the apple in the Biblical garden of Eden. Small bitter fruit.

Identification tip

The edges of the leaf bud scales have a short row of hairs.



Douglas fir

English

Douglas Fir.

Latin

Pseudotsuga menziesii: false tsuga,
menziesii: named for Archibald Menzies, 19th
century Scottish botanist and seed collector.

Scots

No specific Scots language name.

Gaelic

giuthus MhicDhùghlais.

Interesting note

Tsuga is the Japanese name for a hemlock tree,
so the Douglas Fir really is a false Tsuga.

Identification tip

The seed cones hang straight down from the tree
branches. From each scale protrudes a unique
three-pointed bract.



Elder

English

Elder (common).

Latin

Sambucus nigra, *Sambucus*: named from the *Sambuca*, a stringed instrument made from the elder wood; *nigra*: black (the berries are black).

Scots

Bourtree/Boortree.

Gaelic

Crann-dromainn (elder tree).

Interesting note

Hollowed out stems of young elder made pipes to blow on a fire; the Pipe or Bore Tree in English. The branches naturally bend, creating a bower, hence bower-tree or bourtree. Flowers used for cordial and berries for wine and jelly.

Identification tip

The leaves consist of 5–7 oval and toothed leaflets which smell unpleasant when touched or bruised.



Wych Elm

English

Wych Elm.

Latin

Ulmus glabra, *Ulmus*: Latin for Elm,
Glabra: smooth.

Scots

Wych Elme: Scottish Elm.

Gaelic

Ailm – (genus) Tuilm (Wych Elm).

Interesting note

After Dutch Elm disease, this once common street tree is hard to find. Old specimens are rare but can be found in the north of Scotland. “Wych” refers to the wood being pliable.

Identification tip

Base of the individual leaf halves meet the stem asymmetrically. Bunches of penny seeds. Leaves longer than other Elms.



English Elm

English

English Elm.

Latin

Ulmus procera, *Ulmus*: Latin for Elm,
Procera: high/lofty/upraised.

Scots

Elme.

Gaelic

Ailm – (genus),
Craobh-leamhain (English Elm tree).

Interesting note

After Dutch Elm disease, this once common street tree is hard to find on our streets.

Identification tip

Base of the individual leaf halves meet the stem asymmetrically.



European Larch

English

European Larch.

Latin

Larix decidua, *Larix*: Latin for larch,

Decidua: Latin de (down) and cadere (to fall).

Scots

Lerrick/Larick, Laurick.

Gaelic

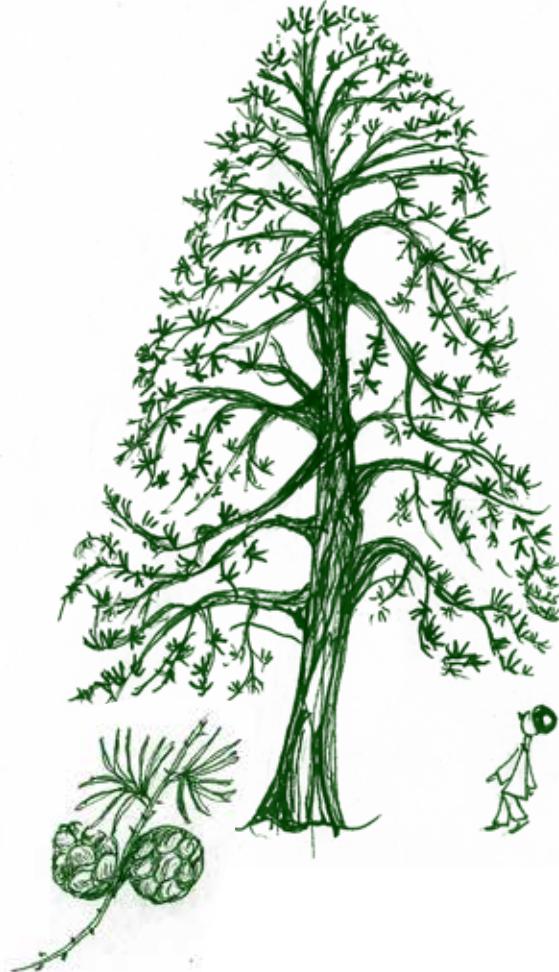
Learag (larch) Craobh-learaige (larch tree).

Interesting note

Larch is one of the few deciduous conifer trees. The Latin name *decidua* gives us the word deciduous.

Identification tip

Larch needles turn brown in autumn and drop off. In spring the vivid green needles grow back. Female flower is red and grows into small cones (less than 1cm). Needles are in bunches.



Field Maple

English

Field Maple.

Latin

Acer campestre and *Acer* species,
Acer: Acrid (the Maple genus),
campestre: found in plains or similar flat
or level places.

Scots

Maser/Masar, Macer/Mazer.

Gaelic

Malpas-coitcheann (maple of the common
grazing land).

Interesting note

Acrid is also means sharp in Latin. This refers to
the hardness of maple wood which was used for
spears by Roman soldiers.

Identification tip

Twigs develop a corky bark with age. Leaves turn
golden yellow in the autumn.



Hawthorn

English

Hawthorn (common).

Latin

Crataegus monogyna, *Crataegus*: hardness, referring to the quality of the wood, *monogyna*: one ovary; one seed.

Scots

Hathorne/Haw-tree. Haw – fruit.

Hawbrek (Ayrshire): Hawthorn blossom.

May: flower

Gaelic

Sgeach (hawthorn berry),

Craobh-sgithich (hawthorn tree).

Interesting note

The Scots saying “Ne'er cast a cloot till may is oot”. Don't start thinking the weather is warm before the may flower is out, and think that summer is here! A cloot is a cloth/ clothes. The saying refers to the flower and not the month.

Identification tip

Spiky needle-like thorns. Leaves are like miniature oak leaves but with toothed lobes, cut to half way to the stem.



Hazel

English

Hazel (common).

Latin

Corylus avellana, *Corylus*: from the Greek *krylos*, meaning Hazelnut, *avellena*: of or from Avella, Italy.

Scots

Hissel/Hissil, Hazzle/Hasill.

Gaelic

Calltann (hazel), Craobh-challtann (hazel tree).

Interesting note

Can be coppiced: cut back to less than 20cm to re-grow in straight stems. Used for walking stick, hurdles, thatching spars.

Identification tip

Grows multi-stemmed producing long straight sticks straight from the ground. Bendy twigs. Has catkins in spring and nuts in autumn.



Holly

English

Holly.

Latin

Ilex aquifolium, *Ilex*: Latin name for holly,
aquifolium: holly like leaf.

Scots

Holin(e), Holyn(e).

Gaelic

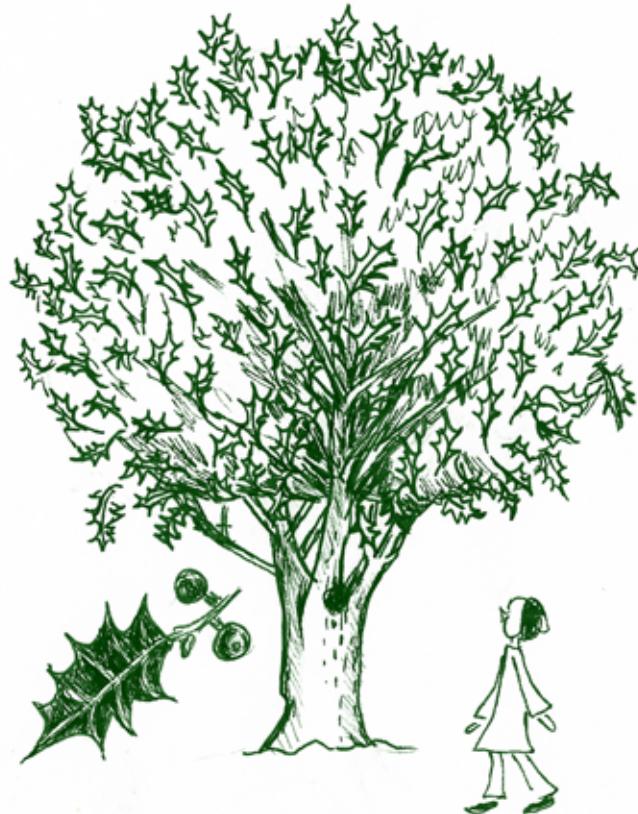
Cuileann (holly), Craobh-chuilinn (holly tree).

Interesting note

Only the female tree produces berries.
You need both a female tree and a male tree to
be near enough one another to be pollinated to
get the berries.

Identification tip

Glossy spiky leaves. Used at Christmas for
decoration when the berries are still on
the branch.



Juniper

English

Juniper.

Latin

Juniperus communis, *Juniperus*: from the Latin *iuniperus*, classic name for the genus, *Communis*: ‘common’ and maybe ‘grows in company with other plants’.

Scots

Aiten, Etnach/Aitnach: of the juniper.

Gaelic

Aiteann (genus – juniper), Dearc-aitinn (juniper berry).

Interesting note

Juniper is one of only three native conifers in the UK (others are Yew and Scots Pine).

Identification tip

Small bush. Very slow growing. Compact blue/black berries which can be used in cooking and a botanical flavour component in gin.



Lime

English

Lime.

Latin

Tilia spp., *Tilia*: Latinized name for the Linden (or lime) tree, *Tilia platyphyllos*: Large-leaved lime, *platy*: broad, *phylllos*: leaves, *Tilia cordata*: Small-leaved lime, *Cordata*: heart-shaped, *Tilia x Europea*: hybrid.

Scots

Lime, Lim, Lyme, Linden, Lynd.

Gaelic

Teileach (lime), Craobh-theile (lime tree).

Interesting note

Everything becomes sticky in summer (honey dew from greenfly). Nectar in some lime flowers is narcotic to bees and makes them drowsy.

Identification tip

Heart shaped leaves. Shoots grow from the trunk (called epicormic growth).



Lodgepole Pine

English

Lodgepole Pine.

Latin

Pinus contorta, *Pinus*: old name for pine,
contorta: twisted.

Scots

No specific Scots language name.

Gaelic

No specific Scots Gaelic language name.

Interesting note

Were cut and used for central pole of Native American teepees – thus the lodge pole.

Identification tip

Long needles that twist in bunches of two (hence *contorta* name).



Pendunculate Oak

English

Pendunculate Oak.

Latin

Quercus robur, *Quercus*: Latin name for oak,
Robur: Hard timber, strength.

Scots

Aik/Ake, Oak.

Gaelic

Darach (Oak), Craobh-dhairaich (oak tree).

Interesting note

Also known as English Oak – Acorns on stalks like a small pipe. Oak forests support more forms of life than any other type of forest.

Identification tip

Produces acorns. Oak leaves are lobed.



Sessile Oak

English

Sessile Oak.

Latin

Quercus petraea, *Quercus*: Latin name for oak,
petraea: From petra, meaning solid/strong.

Scots

Aik/Ake, Oak.

Gaelic

Darach (Oak genus), Dhairaich-neo-ghasagach
(Sessile Oak tree).

Interesting note

Acorns are fixed to the twig – no stalk. Sessile Oak is the official national tree of Ireland.

Identification tip

Produces acorns. Oak leaves are lobed.



Rowan

English

Rowan (also known as mountain ash).

Latin

Sorbus aucuparia, *Sorbus*: classical name for this genus, *aucuparia*: bird catcher.

Scots

Rowan, Roddin (berry), Rodrikin.

Gaelic

Caorann (rowan), Craobh-chaorann (rowan-tree).

Interesting note

Used to be thought to ward off witches.

Often planted in Scottish churchyards and manse (Church Minister's house) gardens.

Identification tip

Cluster of red berries in the autumn. Pinnate leaves – individual leaflets from a main stalk which together form the leaf (similar to ash).



Scots Pine

English

Scots Pine.

Latin

Pinus sylvestris, *Pinus*: old name for pine,
sylvestris: 'growing wild' or 'of the woods'.

Scots

Scots Pine.

Gaelic

Giuthas-Albannach.

Interesting note

Scotland's National Tree as voted for in a public vote in 2014.

Identification tip

Red orange bark which flakes off in plates. One of Scotland's 3 native conifers, and only native pine.



Sitka Spruce

English

Sitka Spruce.

Latin

Picea sitchensis, *Picea*: from 'pitch' (sticky resinous black or dark brown substance, semi-liquid), *sitchensis*: of or from Sitka, Alaska (U.S.).

Scots

Spruse, Spruis.

Gaelic

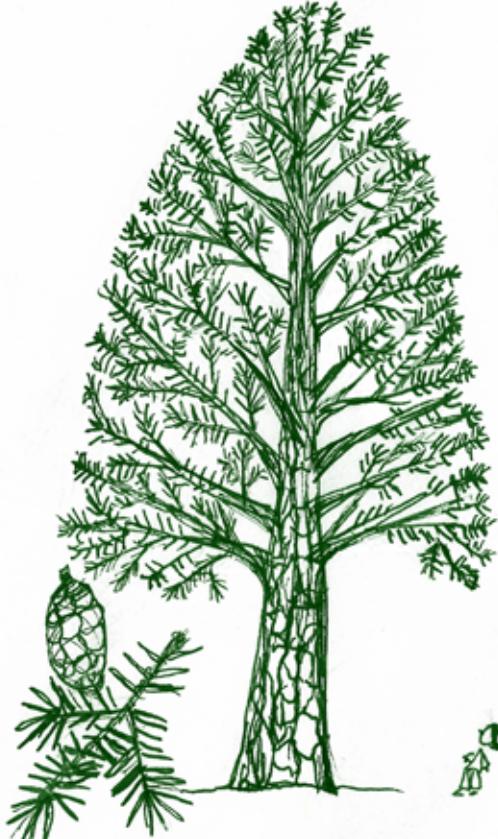
Giuthas-Sitka.

Interesting note

Main tree grown for timber in the UK – Timber crop produced in 40-50 years.

Identification tip

Blue green needles. Sharp and jagged.



Sycamore

English

Sycamore.

Latin

Acer pseudoplatanus, *Acer*: acrid (the Maple genus), *pseudoplatanus*: false, *Platanus* (the Greek name for the Plane tree).

Scots

Plane or Great Plane.

Gaelic

Sice (Sycamore), Craobh-shice (sycamore tree).

Interesting note

Acrid is also from a Latin word meaning sharp, apparently in reference to the hardness of maple wood which was used for spears by Roman soldiers.

Identification tip

Palm shaped leaf, with 5 points. Seeds like little helicopters that spiral down to ground when ripe. Can travel long distances on the wind and so can self-seed far from the original tree.



Whitebeam

English

Whitebeam (common).

Latin

Sorbus aria, *Sorbus*: classical name for this genus,
aria: from the Latin, referring to ancient Persia.

Scots

No specific Scots language name, though it may take the same name as rowan.

Gaelic

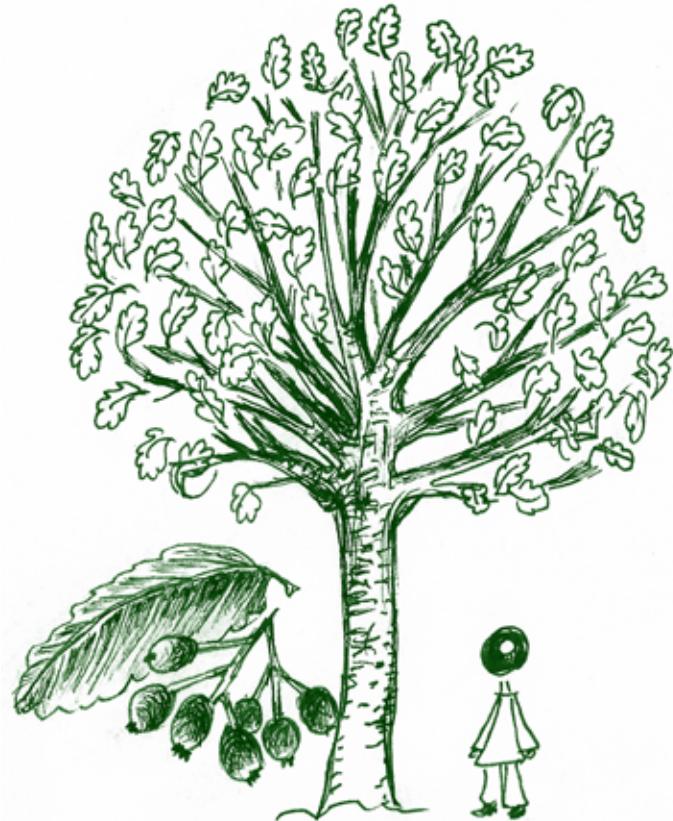
Gall-uinseann (*sorbus aria*).

Interesting note

Same family as rowan. Whitebeam is a white fine grained timber used for furniture making and wood turning.

Identification tip

Hairy leaf. Silvery green leaf, with down like hairs on the leaves. Berries like rowan.



Willow

English

Willow.

Latin

Salix caprea, *Salix*: from Greek 'isalos': 'waterline' where willows grow, *Caprea*: wild she-goat.

Scots

Sauch, Saugh. Stems: widdie, wuidie, withie.
Greetin sauch is a weeping willow.

Gaelic

Sùileag (Goat Willow), Craobh-sheilich (willow tree).

Interesting note

There are at least 18 willows native to Britain, the most common in Scotland being goat willow (*Salix caprea*), grey willow (*Salix cinerea*), woolly willow (*Salix lanata*), eared willow (*Salix aurita*), white willow (*Salix alba*) and crack willow (*Salix fragilis*).

There also the osier willows that are used for making willow sculptures in school grounds.

Identification tip

Catkins look like cat's tails, hence 'pussywillow'.



Yew

English

Yew.

Latin

Taxus baccata, *Taxus* is the old name for yew, *baccata* from Latin ‘bacca’ or ‘berry’ with berry-like fruit.

Scots

Yew.

Gaelic

lubhar (yew), craobh- iubhair (yew tree).

Interesting note

Taxus is thought to be possibly from Greek ‘taxon’ meaning ‘bow’. Yew commonly used to make longbows as it is flexible and strong. Often found in old church yards.

Identification tip

Seed and leaves are poisonous if eaten.
Dark green flat needles.





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