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Picture 1

©Peter Birch via Flickr

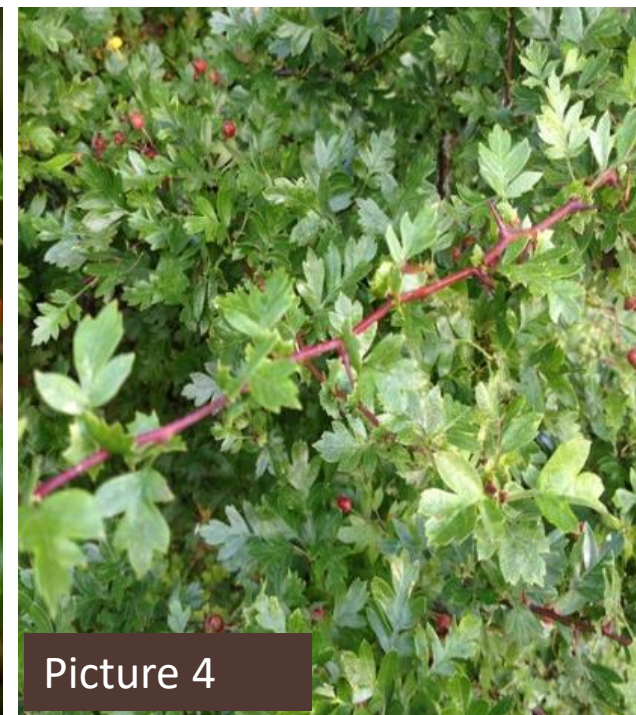


Picture 2

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Picture 3



Picture 4



Picture 5



Picture 6

Can you name these Irish trees? Try our online quiz to learn more about them [here](#).

• Picture 1

• Picture 2

• Picture 3

• Picture 4

• Picture 5

• Picture 6

Silver Birch

Common Name: Silver Birch

Irish Name: Beith gheal

Scientific Name: *Betula pendula*



Description

The silver birch is a small to medium sized deciduous tree. It has fine branches and small leaves, white bark with dark ridges and cracks. There are two types of birch in Ireland, Downy and Silver. The Silver Birch overall looks more 'weepy' like a Weeping Willow tree, and the leaves are more pointed than heart-shaped, in comparison to the Downy Birch.

Habitat found

Silver Birch will grow in poor soils, but likes a sunny position, and it needs good drainage. Birch woods occur widely, especially on marginal soils, lake edges and on dried out bogs. It makes a good ornamental garden tree, as it does not grow too large, so you may find it in parks, gardens and on school grounds.

Image by Gilles San Martin via Flickr.com



Image by Jon Sullivan via Flickr.com



Parent plants lose their leaves in winter. Seeds will lie in the soil for the Winter.

With the warm weather in Spring mature trees start to grow leaves and flowers.

Little seeds from last year's trees will also start to grow in the soil as small trees or 'saplings'.

As Spring progresses the leaves grow and the flowers form a cluster called a 'catkin'.

Pollen is blown between catkins on different trees. If any tiny flower gets pollen from another one it is fertilised and turns into a tiny seed.

The catkins, with all of their tiny fertilised flowers then become more like a small tower of seeds by Autumn.

These new seeds dry out, and break apart and are carried on the wind a small distance from the parent tree.

Life Cycle



Image by Maja Dumat via Flickr.com

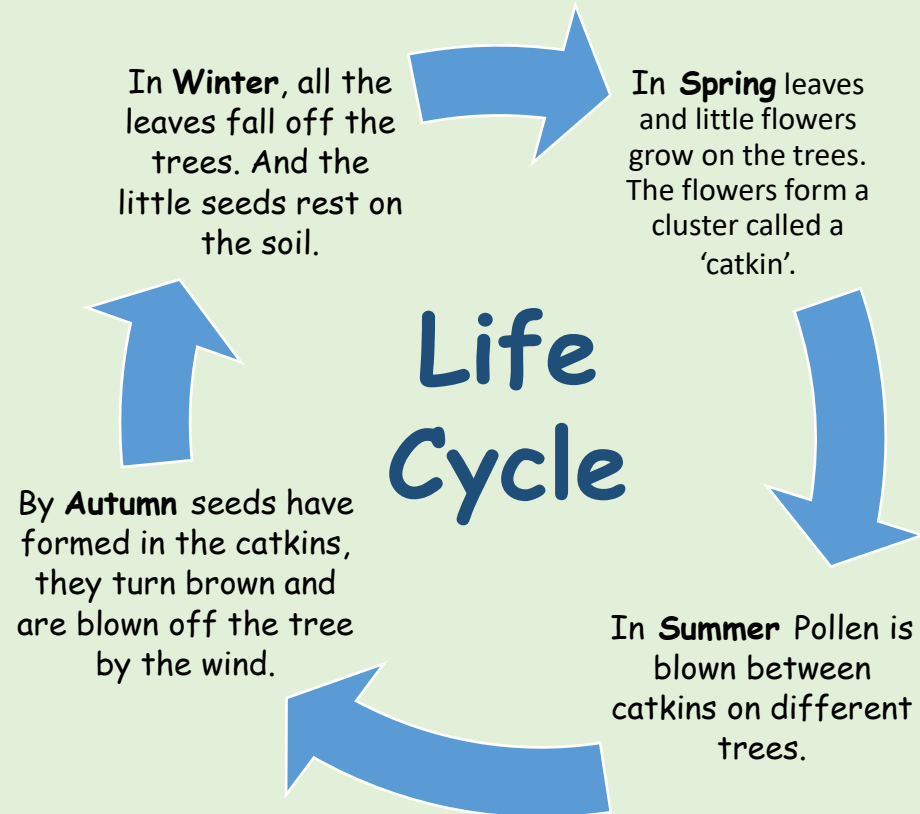
Fun Facts!

In early times "toghers" or walkways, usually across bog land were made from birch. Nowadays, it is more commonly used in making plywood.

Flower: April – May
Fruit: Seeds late Summer to Autumn

Silver Birch Tree

Draw birds in a Silver Birch Tree:



Draw a Birch Leaf and Catkins in Spring:

Sessile Oak

Common Name: (Sessile) Oak Tree

Irish Name: Dair ghaelach

Scientific Name: *Quercus petraea*



Description

The traditional Irish oak species is The Sessile Oak; one of two native Oaks. There are three key ways to recognise the Sessile Oak: 1) it has acorns on short or no stalks, 2) the leaf outline is only lightly grooved, and 3) leaves are borne on long stalks. In contrast the other one, the Pedunculate Oak, has acorns which grow on long stalks and has deeply grooved leaves on very short stalks.

Habitat found

There are small remnant Oak woods in most counties. Sessile Oak is found more commonly on poor acid soils, in hilly regions. It is the main species to be found in Ireland's most familiar woodlands, e.g. Killarney. Native Oaks are an important habitat for hundreds of insects and many birds and mammals. Oak trees can grow to 40m tall, and can live for over 1,000 years!



Image by Peter Birch via Flickr.com

Flower: May

Fruit: October

Did you know?

Oak Trees also rely on animals such as Squirrels and Jackdaws to spread acorns far away from the parent tree. Animals do this accidentally! For example when a squirrel has eaten its fill, it will then collect extra acorns, and bury them in the ground for later or for fear that food will be scarce in the winter. If the winter is mild, or the animal is forgetful, and can't remember the storage place, the acorns get left in the ground. They then become new Oak Trees in Spring!

Oak trees are deciduous - this means they drop their leaves in Autumn and Winter. This allows them time to rest during a period when there is very little energy available from the sun.

Oak trees start to grow new shoots and leaves in Spring when they get energy from the extra sunlight at this time of year

Life Cycle

Acorns will form in the summer. These will grow big and fat and eventually fall off the tree naturally by the end of Autumn, if not taken by an animal before then.

Tiny flowers grow in late Spring; male flowers appear as dangling catkins; female flowers occur in stiff reddish stalk-less clusters. Each tree will have both male and female flowers.

The male flowers spread their pollen using the wind - when a female flower receives pollen it can then produce seeds. Oak tree seeds are called 'Acorns'.



Image by Peter Birch via Flickr.com

Fun Facts!

One in every five town-land names in Ireland refers to a tree! And more than 10% of these have some link to the word 'dair', the Irish word for oak. Eg. Cill Dara, the Irish for Kildare means 'Church of the Oak'. Can you think of any others?



Sessile Oak

Draw acorns on the trees in Autumn.
Can you see any animals trying to eat them?

In **Winter** Acorns will fall to the ground, or be carried away from the tree by hungry animals such as squirrels or jackdaws

In **Spring** Oak trees grow their branches a little longer. Acorns from last year will also sprout and turn into new trees.

Life Cycle

By **Autumn** the mammy flowers, which have got pollen from the daddy flowers, will turn into chunky seeds called Acorns.

In early **Summer** the trees make mammy flowers and daddy flowers. Pollen is carried on the wind from daddy flowers and can land on mammy flowers on other Oaks far away.

Draw Sessile Oak leaves:

Holly

Common Name: Holly

Irish Name: Cuileann

Scientific Name: *Ilex aquifolium*



Description

This is a well-known small tree. The evergreen, glossy leaves are spikey and stiff; the upper side is darker green than the lower side. It has small white flowers (6-10mm) from May to July. By August these have turned into green berries (just on the female trees). This is followed in late autumn by the familiar bright scarlet berries.

Habitat found

This small native tree is widespread in woodlands and hedgerows throughout Ireland. It forms the shrub layer in some of our oldest woodlands. The Holly leaves are a main food-plant (along with Ivy) of the Holly Blue Butterfly's caterpillars. The berries are a great source of food for many birds (e.g. The Song Thrush and Mistle Thrush) during winter.



Image by Kentish Plover via Flickr.com

By **Winter** these berries have turned bright red; and have the typical appearance of the common festive decorations in Ireland. Many seeds (located in the berries) are spread by birds!



Holly is an **evergreen tree**, and so has **green leaves all year round**.



In **Spring**, with the increasing temperatures and sunlight, the plant grows new shoots.



Small white flowers blossom in **Summer** from May through to July.



Fertilisation happens when a flower on a female tree receives the pollen from a flower on a male tree. A fertilised flower will then turn into a berry.



In **Autumn** green berries can be seen on the trees.



Life Cycle

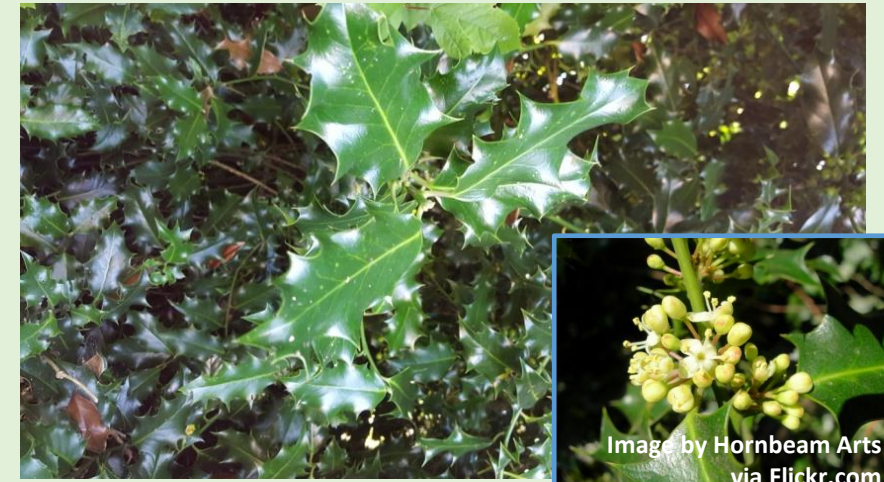


Image by Hornbeam Arts via Flickr.com

Fun Facts!

- Holly trees are either male or female! - only the female can bear berries, but both sexes bear flowers. It is therefore important to plant several Holly trees together to make sure that the female trees can be fertilised by the male pollen, and thus go on to produce fruit.
- In European folklore, Holly trees were associated with protection from lightning, so people used to plant them near to their homes!

Flower: May – July

Fruit: November – January



Holly

Draw Holly leaves:

Draw Holly in the Winter:

These berries turn bright red in **Winter**, before they fall to the ground, with little seeds inside.

In **Spring** Holly trees grow their branches a little longer. Seeds from the winter berries will also turn into new Holly trees.

Life Cycle

By **Autumn** the flowers, which have been pollinated by insects, will have turned into round green berries.

In **Summer** small white flowers grow on the plants. They will attract insect visitors such as the Holly Blue Butterfly.

Hawthorn

Common Name: Hawthorn/Whitethorn

Irish Name: Sceach gheal

Scientific Name: *Crataegus monogyna*



Description

Hawthorn leaves have toothed lobes and can grow up to 6cm long. The tree itself can reach a height of up to 18m. The branches are dense, twisted and very thorny. Small white scented flowers begin to appear in May and grow in clusters all over the tree. These flowers then turn to fruits called 'Haws' in July which ripen to a rich red colour in autumn. The Hawthorn tree is deciduous, meaning it loses its leaves in winter and they grow back in spring.

Habitat found

Hawthorns are found all over Ireland and grow on all types of land. They are common in hedgerows, but can also be seen growing in fields by themselves. The tree can support up to 300 species, including bees, moths, small mammals, and birds which feed on its haws and nest in its dense branches. This tree also acts a good source of protection and cover for other young trees such as oak.

Flower: May – June

Fruit: July– November



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In **Winter**, the Hawthorn bushes and trees try to save energy. They lose their leaves and stop growing altogether when the weather is cold.

In **Spring**, the Hawthorn tree begins to grow again and produce new leaves.

In early **Summer** (May) small clusters of white, and sometimes pinky flowers appear. The flowers produce nectar which attracts insects.

The visiting insects accidentally transfer pollen between different Hawthorn trees' flowers as they feed on the nectar.

Such pollinated flowers can now turn into fruit, called 'haws'. Each fruit contains one seed.

The seeds are spread to new locations by the animals who eat them (pooping!). Seeds will germinate in the soil in **Autumn**.

Life Cycle



Fun Facts!

- In Irish folklore, having a Hawthorn tree on your land is seen as good luck.
- Fairies are said to be found where Hawthorn, Oak and Ash trees grow together.
- Hawthorn trees can live up to 700 years.



Hawthorn

In **Winter**, the trees save energy by losing their leaves and stopping growth altogether when the weather is cold.



In **Spring**, the Hawthorn tree begins to grow again and produce new leaves.



In early **Summer** (May) small clusters of flowers appear. Insects visit these to feed on nectar.



Insects transfer pollen between different Hawthorn flowers, and 'pollinate' them. Then berries called 'haws' are able to grow. The haws are tasty and contain seeds.



Seeds are spread to new locations by the animals who eat them. Seeds will germinate in the soil in **Autumn**.



Life Cycle

Draw a Hawthorn leaf:

Draw an animal (e.g. A Woodmouse or Woodpigeon) eating Haw berries:

Draw Hawthorn flowers:

Ash

Common Name: Ash

Irish Name: Fuinseog

Scientific Name: *Fraxinus excelsior*



Description

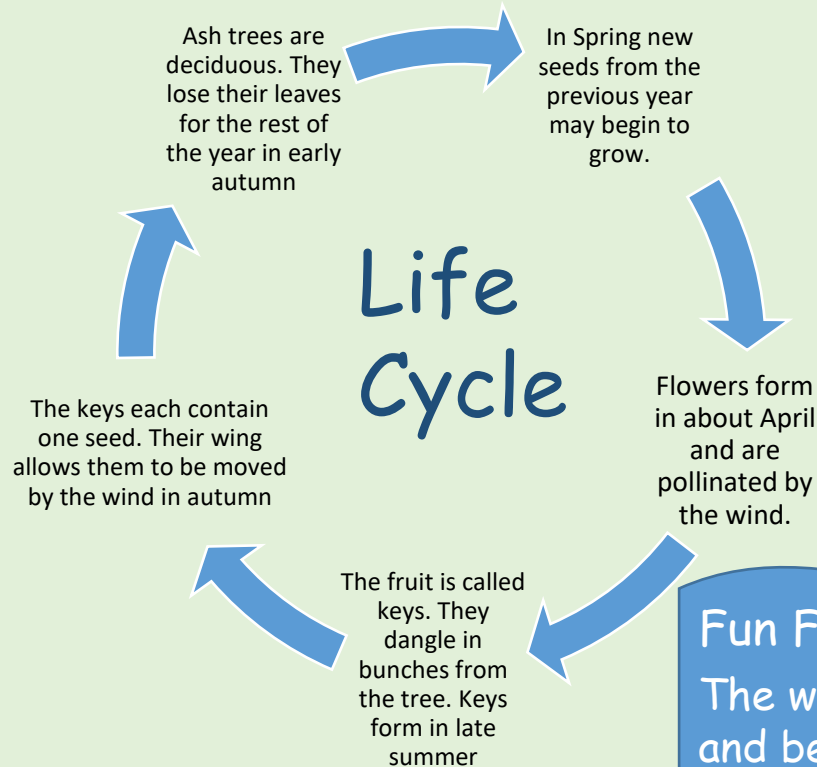
Ash trees can grow up to 40 metres tall. They have a greyish bark. Their leaves grow as leaflets with several leaves growing from the same stem. Their seeds are called keys and hang down in bunches. They look like one wing of the helicopter seed. They start off green and turn brown before falling off.

Habitat found

Ash trees are common and widespread throughout Ireland. They are often seen in hedgerows and in woodlands as well as in parks and gardens and school grounds.



Life Cycle



Fun Facts!

The wood from Ash trees is extremely dense and because of that it is often used in furniture making and to make hurley and camogie sticks.

Flowers: Spring

Fruits: Late summer

Leaves: Late to arrive in spring and quick to drop in autumn

Ash

Draw a picture of how you think an ash tree infected with ash dieback may look .

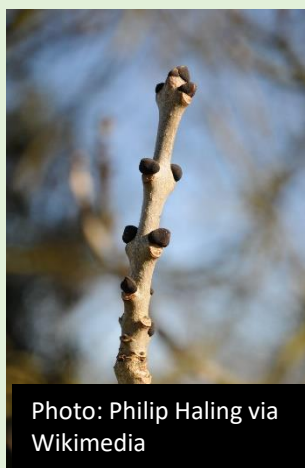


Photo: Philip Haling via Wikimedia



Threats

Although ash is widespread in Ireland these trees are under threat. Ash trees are at risk of a fungal infection called “ash dieback”. This has become widespread throughout Europe. It causes discolouration of the bark and leaves, dieback of the shoots and branches and can lead to the death of the tree. A very small number of trees are resistant (are able to fight off the infection). This is important because fungicides (which may kill the fungal infection) are difficult to use as treatment.

Ash keys start off green and turn brown when the seed inside is ready. They are then blown off the tree.

In winter ash trees look quite distinctive. Their branches are grey with black tips and look like pencils!

Ash leaves are slow to bud. They often appear later than their flowers in April

Ash flowers are small and dark with no petals. They don't attract insects so must rely on the wind to pollinate them

Ash keys rattle in the wind as they knock against each other in late summer.

Life Cycle

Draw a picture of an ash tree in late autumn. Does it have leaves or keys?

Did you know..

Ash trees are very important for animals living in the same ecosystem. They support a huge variety of different species of insects. Their keys are also an important food source for birds, squirrels and mice.

Fun Fact:

Ash trees are dioecious. This means that trees are either male or female (have only male or female flowers) although some trees can have male and female flowers on different branches. Only female trees will produce fruit (keys). This is slightly unusual but holly trees are another example of a tree which will be either male or female.

Rowan Tree

Common Name: Rowan / Mountain Ash

Irish Name: Caorthann

Scientific Name: *Sorbus aucuparia*

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Description

The Rowan is a medium sized tree which grows to about 15 metres tall. It has distinctive Ash-like leaves, although it is not actually a species of Ash. The leaves are green on both sides, with up to 9 pairs of oblong, toothed leaflets.

Habitat found

It grows in most types of soil. In the wild it is found in 'glens' or little valleys, beside mountain streams, in woods and rocky places. It is a popular tree for planting in gardens and in parks, so you are likely to find one not too far from your school!



Flowers: May – June
Fruit: August – October

Rowan trees are deciduous: this means that they drop their leaves in winter. This helps them to save energy – as there is not much point having leaves in the winter if there is very little sunshine to make food from.

The Rowan begins to grow again in Spring. Its dark green leaves first appear in April.



Large, flat heads of numerous creamy-white 5-petalled flowers bloom in May and June.

Once a flower receives pollen from another Rowan flower (usually carried there by an insect!) it turns into a berry, and the familiar clusters of red berries appear in this way in late Summer and Autumn.

The berries feed many types of birds in the Autumn. The birds help the tree to spread its seeds far and wide in their droppings!

Life Cycle

Fun Facts!

A Mistle Thrush (the 'first cousin' of a Song Thrush) will defend a Rowan tree, keeping other birds away; therefore having its very own 'restaurant' or feeding place for the winter.



Rowan Tree

Draw a bird eating the berries from the Rowan Tree in Autumn:

In **Winter** the berries fall to the ground and the seeds will get washed into the soil. The tree also drops its leaves

In **Spring** Rowan Trees start to grow new leaves.

Life Cycle

By **Autumn** these flowers have turned into bright red berries, with seeds inside.

In **Summer** groups of small white flowers grow all over the tree.

Draw Rowan Tree leaves: