



**name:** \_\_\_\_\_



## What is a Native Tree?

**A tree which has started its life growing naturally in a place, without any human involvement, is called a native tree.**

In Ireland, these native trees have developed over thousands of years. Together with surrounding plant life, animals, fungi and microbes to create an ecosystem - like a happy town filled with townspeople of the animal, plant and insect kingdom.

In fact, Ireland's native trees are an important habitat for our plants and wildlife providing essential food and shelter whilst making vital oxygen for animals and humans. Native trees provided the early Irish with fuel, food, shelter and building materials and now help also to filter dust, pollution and provide welcome breaks in park areas.



## ...what is the Native Tree Trail?

The Native Tree Trail will help to introduce you to a selection of Ireland's native trees. Some you may already know and some may be a new surprise! All have survived through history and its invaders, famines, battles and storms to become the original Irish trees. Now more than ever it is important to value and protect our native species for the future generations to come.

## START THE TREE TRAIL!

1

There are fifteen native trees to find in Johnstown Park! To find them you will need to navigate your way around the park using the Trail Map on the following page.

2

To help you in your search look out for the native tree sign posts which contain more information.

3

Once you find the native tree, use a crayon and record your trail by taking a rubbing from the sign (as shown below). Rough paper for this is included in this booklet





johnstown park map



...find the native trees in the park!

### NATIVE TREE TRAIL KEY

1	Apple	6	Oak	11	Hazel
2	Scots Pine	7	Ash	12	Alder
3	Aspen	8	Holly	13	Elder
4	Hawthorn	9	Mountain Ash	14	Birch
5	Willow	10	Yew	15	Cherry



## apple

**The native wild apple tree is quite rare in Ireland. Though some have been found in hedgerows and woodlands in north Dublin!**

Bees pollinate the early spring flowers of the apple tree and are just one of the ninety insects that the apple tree provides a home for.

Another form of wildlife that benefits from the apple tree is our native birds, who loves to eat the trees autumn crop of greenish-yellow apples.

### **DO YOU KNOW?**

*Apple is a deciduous tree, this means the leaves fall from the tree and grow again every year!*

*...take your rubbing here...*



## scots pine

**This native tree died out in Ireland hundreds of years ago.**

Thankfully it was re-introduced after the 1800's and once again started to grow in the wild parts of Ireland, where they can now be expected to live for 200 years or more.

They are one of Ireland's best conifer's (needle-like leaves) for wildlife, as in addition to food for the finches, owls will often use it for nesting, and insects use its mature bark for shelter.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

*Beetles, spiders, woodlice, butterflies and caterpillars can be found munching on the pine needles when they are in season!*

...one of the best conifers...



## aspen

**The circular leaves of the aspen flutter in the slightest breeze. This is why, it is also known as the 'whispering tree'.**

Throughout Autumn, the leaves of the aspen fall in a rain of yellows and golds, before leaves appear again in spring.

The aspen flowers are known as catkins. These form part of the trees eco-system, helping up to ninety insect species survive.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

*The Latin name for aspen means 'trembling poplar' a reference to its fluttering leaves!*

...the 'whispering tree' ...



## hawthorn

**The hawthorn is also well known as the 'fairy tree' in Ireland.**

Throughout Irish myth and legend, the hawthorn tree has been connected with the fairies and their stories.

To this very day, there are still farmers who plough a wide circle around hawthorn trees, for fear of offending the fairies that supposedly inhabit the tree.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

Hawthorns grow quickly with thorny branches forming a thick boundary which farmers have found ideal for securing grazing cattle!



...the 'fairy tree' of Ireland...



## willow

**Willow trees love Ireland's wet weather! They especially love to grow near bogs, marshes or riverbanks.**

The flower of the willow, the catkin, can be seen in Spring time and looks at first like a fluffy kitten's paw.

The flower then opens to produce the willows seeds which are so light they travel very long distances by wind or water.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

*Flexible willow stems are used to create baskets, rugs, fences and more recently garden sculptures!*

...willows love wet weather...



**oak**

**Oak is an important tree in the Irish landscape.**

Oak supports many different varieties of wildlife including plants, birds and insects, which feed or nest about the tree.

It is one of the most popular trees planted in Ireland and if all the oak woodlands were put together they would cover over 5,370 football pitches! Now imagine the number of acorns that fall every Autumn!

**DID YOU KNOW?**

*The tallest oak in Ireland is located in Co Wicklow and measures 37 metres to the top, that's an amazing 9 double-decker buses high!*

*...oak is an important tree...*



## ash

### **Ash is a fast growing tree.**

The ash tree's fast growth and its ability to re-grow after being cut down, made ash a valuable renewable tree to the early Irish.

The seeds of the ash tree grow all through the summer. These seeds are known as 'helicopters' because they have a propeller like shape. In the autumn winds, this shape helps to spin them far away from the tree.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

*Ash wood has been used throughout the history of Ireland for making hurleys!*



...spinning 'helicopter' seeds...



## holly

**Holly is an evergreen tree which means its leaves stay green all year round.**

The holly is well known by its bright green, tough and spiny leaves which protect the holly from browsing deer and animals.

In Autumn, the holly tree shows of brilliant scarlet berries which are popular with many birds and which are also used for decorations at Christmas time.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

*The Holly tree has long been associated with eternity because of the trees evergreen leaves and long lasting berries!*

...for 'evergreen' all year round...



## mountain ash

**Mountain ash is the only native tree that provides colour throughout Spring, Summer and Autumn.**

Leaves turn shades of orange, red and brown throughout the year. In Autumn, bright red berries grow and birds such as thrushes and blackbirds like to eat them.

In the wild, mountain ash can be found high up on a hill or mountain side this is because it likes a lot of sunshine.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

*Irish ancestors used the berries of the mountain ash to dye cloth!*

...colourful seasonal leaves...



## yew

**Yew is one of Ireland's oldest living native trees.**

The leaves of the yew can be recognised by their needle-like shape, displaying a strong rib down the centre of the leaf.

The yew's trunk often flakes to reveal reddish patches and in early autumn cones and berries appear.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

The oldest tree in Europe is said to be a 3,000 year-old yew!



...an old, old tree...



## hazel

**Our native hazel is known for their delicious hazelnuts!**

The hazel nuts are an important food source for mice, squirrels, pigeons, and pheasants.

It is also estimated that the hazel in Ireland provides support in the form of shelter and food for seventy-three different insect species.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

*That as early as 6000 BC hazel rods were woven to create walls and provide shelter for our ancestors.*



...delicious hazelnuts...



## alder

**Alder is a very strong tree.**

The alder has a unique ability to grow in different soils which has ensured its survival over time.

The ability of the alder to grow in any type of soil means it can be found in all parts of Ireland, from mountain sides to lake shores and river banks.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

*Alder is planted along the banks of waterways to stop erosion!*

...a unique ability...



## elder

**Elder is a small tree that can live for up to one hundred years.**

In summer it is covered with sweet-smelling flowers and in autumn with deep purple berries. These berries provide important and valuable food for many birds and animals.

Throughout Irish history, the elder tree has been used as a medicinal plant to treat everything from burns to cold's and flu's.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

*In Ireland, elder was a sacred tree, and it was forbidden to break even one twig!*

*...the Irish medicine tree!...*



## birch

**Birch is a very popular tree all over Ireland!**

The leaves of the birch tree provide a covering of light shade. This is excellent for plants in woodlands who grow happily underneath the trees protection.

A single birch tree can produce up to one million seeds in a year. These seeds are so light that they can travel for miles and miles on the autumn winds.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

*The timber of the birch tree is very popular and used for making furniture. The sap of the birch tree is also used in dental products!*

...one million seeds...



## cherry

**Bird cherry is a rare tree in Ireland and likes to grow at the edges of woods, and along stream-sides.**

The bird cherry is frequently used in traditional wildlife hedges because it is an important tree for many insects including bees, butterflies and a variety of birds that feed on the trees early Spring nectar and Summer fruit.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

*This small tree was originally recorded in 28 of Ireland's 32 counties but is now found in only 9: Cork, Meath, Roscommon, Sligo, Donegal, Armagh, Antrim, Derry and Fermanagh!*

...a rare tree in Ireland...