



Páirc Náisiúnta Shléibhte Chill Mhantáin

Wicklow Mountains National Park

# TREE TALES

A self-guided, walking trail to connect with the native trees and shrubs  
in the valley of Glendalough.

This workbook is designed as an interactive resource to help you identify some trees  
and shrubs and discover some of their stories from the distant past, along with some  
of their fascinating facts.

*By Eleanor Sutherland, Education Guide,  
WICKLOW MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK.*

# Introduction

We have created this workbook so that you can learn a little about the trees that grace our Island home. Trees have colonised Ireland since the ice cap melted about 11,000 years ago and were here before humans arrived, so they have many stories to tell.

Native Irish woodlands have become a very rare habitat but that was not always the case. After the climate settled to become Temperate, about 90% of Ireland was covered in woodlands. They would have looked a little different in those days with abundant lichens and a mix of impenetrable areas and some more open areas. The loss of Ireland's woodlands started with the beginnings of Agriculture, when small clearances were made. The word 'field' comes from the word 'felled'.

Subsequently, more than a 1,000 years later, the widespread plunder of the trees by occupying English landlords began. The timber was seen as a valuable resource and huge trees were felled and exported to England to build the cathedrals and ships there. Thereby providing an extra source of income to many of the absentee 'Gentry' who had been granted ownership of land in Ireland as a payment for favours by English royalty. Nowadays, it is these same large estates that give us some of the best woodland areas and specimen trees as they are generally, not farmed intensively and are often open to the public.

Wicklow contains hidden valleys with poor, acidic soils, which supported the survival of native woodlands up until it was discovered that the oak timber in them made the best charcoal. So these woods were largely felled and the trees made into charcoal to feed the mines in the glacial valleys of Wicklow and in Wales. The oaks were coppiced. That means that they were cut down to the ground in a twelve to fifteen year cycle. This method produced increased quantities of easily managed timber. The oak and birch woods around Glendalough are mostly recently regenerated woodlands, some of which have been planted by Wicklow Mountains National Park with the support of Coillte and some is natural regeneration.

You might see big fences around some of the wooded areas. These are to deter the hybrid Red x Sitka deer population from destroying the natural regeneration of the woods by browsing the saplings. We call these areas 'exclosures'.

We are very lucky today, to be able to enjoy the company of beautiful trees and the species that live with them due to the Irish Government's support of setting aside large areas of land, like the Wicklow Mountains National Park, which is around 22,000 square hectares in size. It will be here for future generations. A great legacy in these times.

As we cannot organise public events this year for Heritage week, we are inviting you to use this workbook to discover some interesting facts about some of our native trees and to have some light hearted fun with some of the old lore that has been handed down through the years...and as it has probably been changed a few times on the way, not to take the folklore information too seriously as it is based on the guesswork of many!

Please remember to be sensible and to take care of your own safety at all times. Do not climb up on the trees or break branches. We would also ask you to stick to the new one way system in place for your continued wellbeing and that of all our visitors. Some people you meet maybe more vulnerable than others. Give everyone plenty of room to move! Plant material should not be removed from National Parks as it creates homes for many small creatures. However, you may take just a few leaves or twigs just for these activities only. Do not take more than you need.

I would encourage you to bring a small sketch pad and pencil out with you and do some drawings and take some notes. You might like to draw a map of where you found your favourite trees or record the species you discovered. You will see far more if you stop and take some time, and leave your phone switched off.

The activities included here can be enjoyed at any time of the year and why not send us a note on our Facebook page or even a photo of how you get on with them?

*....It is not so much for its beauty that the forest makes a claim upon mens hearts  
as for that subtle something, that quality of air, that emanation from the old trees,  
that so wonderfully changes and renews a weary spirit.....*

Robert Louis Stevenson 1850 – 1894 Scottish poet.

# The Ogham Tree Alphabet

The creation of Ogham was originally attributed to the Irish mythological God, Ogma, who was the God of Eloquence.

Ogham is not a spoken language. The letters were given sounds or names. They were mainly used as a type of writing to mark stones and branches with people's names. This was to signify the boundaries of land owned by the person and sometimes, a grave marker or site of an event.

They could also convey messages and it was felt by some of the people who study the ancient Ogham, to have been a secret script, understood only by those initiated in the letters.

There were twenty letters originally in four groups of five. It is thought that this system of writing originated in the fourth century but it is not really known for sure as there is a lot of mystery surrounding it.

Five of the Ogham letters were remembered by the names of trees. These are *Beth*, *Fearn*, *Saille*, *Duir* and *Coll*. Then *Onn* was added and later *Idad* and *Ailm*. As the years passed, the other words for the letters were theorised quite wildly, to signify trees. So the **Ogham Tree Alphabet** as is found on the internet and in publications today, was developed over a long period of time and is not a static piece of ancient history.

Ogham was written vertically from the bottom to the top on the left, then across if more room was needed, and vertically downward on the right.

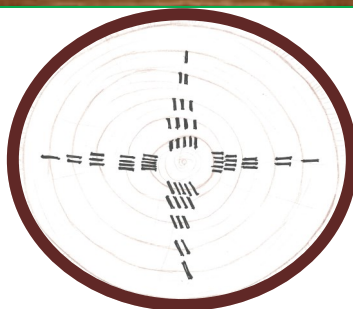
If you lived in times past, and needed to carve a name, you would find it far easier to carve straight lines and notches. Our ancestors might have only had quite rough tools to work with.

## ACTIVITIES

- ◆ A fun thing to do is to collect a twig from each of the Alphabet trees and using a permanent marker, or some paint, you can mark out the Ogham symbol for that tree on its twig.
- ◆ Then try writing your name in twigs or a tree's name
- ◆ You can tie your Ogham twigs together in a little bundle with a nice piece of wool or ribbon and use them for Christmas games.
- ◆ The marks are in groups of five. Are you able to create an Ogham sign language using your fingers? It is said that a message can be secretly sent to another person who understands Ogham by using your fingers across your nose or your leg. You may need to draw out the Ogham signs and the letters on pieces of card so as to remember them if you try this with a friend or relation.
- ◆ See what games you can make up with them?

*Please always remember not to harm trees by pulling branches off them. If you look underneath one, you will always find some twigs that have blown off in the wind that you can use.*

# OGHAM TREE ALPHABET



Design from The Book of Ballymote

Letter	Symbol	Name	Tree	Latin name	Associated attributes
B	┐	Beth	Birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>	Regeneration & Grace
L	┐┐	Luis	Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Fire & Protection
F	┐┐┐	Fearn	Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	Courage & Overcoming obstacles
S	┐┐┐┐	Saille	Willow	<i>Salix spp</i>	Flexibility & Resourcefulness
N	┐┐┐┐┐	Nuin	Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Creativity & Life Force
H	┐┐	Huath	Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus spp</i>	Sacredness & Love
D	┐┐┐	Duir	Oak	<i>Quercus petraea</i>	Strength & Sovereignty
T	┐┐┐┐	Tinne	Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Peace and Goodwill.
C	┐┐┐┐┐	Coll	Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Wisdom & Intuition
Q	┐┐┐┐┐┐	Quert	Apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>	Vision and Dreams
M	┐┐┐┐┐┐┐	Muin	Bramble	<i>Rubus villosus</i>	Fun & Abundance
G	┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐	Gort	Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>	Determination
Ng	┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐	Ngetal	Reed	<i>Phragmites australis</i>	Harmony & Connection
St	┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐	Strait	Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Protection & Hope
R	┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐	Ruis	Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Magic & Mystery
A	┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐	Giúis	Scots Pine	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	Wisdom & Longevity
O	┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐	Onn	Gorse	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>	Hope
U	┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐	Ur	Heather	<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	Freedom
E	┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐	Eadha	Aspen	<i>Populus tremula</i>	Eloquence, Community
I	┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐┐	Idad	Yew	<i>Taxus baccata</i>	Transformation & Rebirth



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## OGHAM ALPHABET ART ACTIVITY

When people wanted to mark out the boundaries of their land, they often had an Ogham stone carved with their name as a marker. Ogham was written from the bottom left to the top and down the other side. It could be carved on the edge of a standing stone or along a branch.

Can you try writing your name or your initials in Ogham on this Standing Stone (You need to remember to start at the bottom and go up!)

*Hint:* draw your name on the scroll underneath first



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# BIRCH

- Name:** Silver birch &  
Downy birch
- Latin:** *Betula pendula* &  
*Betula pubescens*
- Irish:** Beith gheal &  
Beth chlúmhach
- Family:** Betulaceae
- Ogham:** **B** Beth
- Status:** Deciduous Native



Birch trees grow very fast initially to a medium height, 20 m

It is a pioneer species and colonises open ground very quickly. Birch provides cover for slower growing trees such as oak, and so it is sometimes called a 'Nurse' tree. It is not very long lived. The dead standing trees are colonised by fungi. Silver birch prefers sandy soils and Downy birch grows well in poorer, acid soils and is more widespread in Ireland. They can hybridise. Silver birch is easily recognised by its silvery, peeling bark and slender, airy growth. Downy birch has darker, almost purple bark which can also be white. The upper branches of both are darkish brown and the leaves are triangular shaped. The flowers are green catkins which are visible during winter. They turn brown and produce large amounts of wind borne seeds. A large tree can produce up to a million seeds in a year. I wonder who counted them?

Birch trees provide a great habitat for invertebrates. They can support up to 300 species.

Birch is known as the 'Lady of the Woods' It is such a graceful tree. The light branches were used to make brooms. The twiggy boughs are also used to make screens and horse jumps. Cradles were made from Birch wood to protect the infants from harm.

The birch trees in Glendalough often have masses of twigs growing in a clump that resembles a birds nest. They are easy to spot in winter. These are called 'Witches brooms' They are caused by a fungus that interferes with the growth of the twigs.

Birch trees produce large amounts of sap in the spring which is 'tapped' to provide a tonic drink or to make wine. In some countries, the sap is boiled down to make a syrup. It is important not to take more than a litre of sap from any one tree or its growth will be affected. The bark used to be used to make a paper substitute. It is a good firewood if mixed with slower burning timbers. It works well when lighting a fire.



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# FUN WITH BIRCH

## MY BIRCH TREE SKETCH

Look around under a birch tree and gather a fat bunch of the small twigs you find on the ground.. They are best to be about a half metre long.

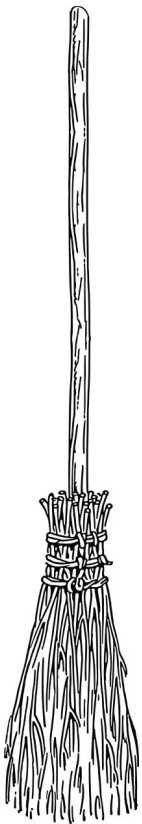
Line up all ends of the thick ends and make a bunch.

Find some nice coloured wool or twine and bind around the thick stems to make a pretty handle.

You can trim the lighter branch ends so that they are even in length.

Now you have a little hearth brush..! If you bind them around a hazel stem, you will have a witches broom!

Find a few birch leaves on the ground, try and get some different colours, press them and paste them here in a mandala design.



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## MEETING TREES

### SITTING WITH A TREE!

*As you walk around the woods, you might notice a particularly 'friendly' looking Tree. Introduce yourself to the tree by telling it your name and where you came from.*

*Find a nice place to sit beside it, with your back against the trunk, close your eyes and stay still for a while. Listen to all the sounds around you. See how many different sounds you can hear. Are they made by people, or birds and animals or are they made by the elements? Say thank you to the tree!*

*Find a different type of tree and repeat the process. See if there are different sounds or feelings when you are sitting with a different species of tree? ( Remember to check that your tree is safe to be beside! i.e. do not sit under trees in storms or high winds, or any with dead wood!)*

*This is how you find your personal 'Sitting Spot'*

**Here is my map of my favourite Sitting Spot**



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## Meeting Trees Game

***A responsible adult MUST be present when you play this game!***

Even if trees are all the same species, they are all different like we are.

For this activity, you will need a helper. One person (The Seeker) closes their eyes and the other person (The Guide) leads them very carefully to a tree that is standing nearby some others. of the same species.

The Seeker can feel the tree that is in front of them for as long as they wish until they think that they would recognise it's shape again.

The Guide then leads them back to the start point. The Guide can take a different route to make the puzzle a bit harder and may even turn the Seeker around once or twice

The Seeker will then be told to open their eyes. and they try to guess which tree they visited.

Swop over and have another go. Be careful that you are in a level area without trip hazards.

Can you identify which trees like to grow in groups? Some trees prefer to grow on their own or with different species. They are just like us in many ways!



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# ROWAN

**Name:** Rowan

**Latin:** Sorbus aucuparia

**Irish:** Caorthann

**Family:** Rosaceae

**Ogham:** L Luis

**Status:** Deciduous Native

**Class:** Commoner



Rowan or Mountain Ash grows to about 25 m. It is the only deciduous tree that can survive at the highest altitudes in Ireland. It tends to grow alone in rocky ground. The bark is smooth and silvery-white, similar to Ash, and the leaves are also similar to Ash, having compound leaves of the same shape but Rowan leaflets are smaller and they have short stalks. There are usually 15 leaflets, which are long with serrated edges.

Rowan has flowers that resemble elderflowers. They are large, flat clusters of creamy-white small flowers, but they usually flower earlier than elder. The flowers are followed by bunches of bright red berries.

Rowan is unusual in that the berries redden in August, often at the old feast day of Lughnasagh. They herald the coming of autumn. When you see the red berries of Rowan, you know that winter is not far away, even though it is still the height of summer and holiday time. There is something very poignant about the first sighting of the Rowan berries. The birds don't mind, they love to feast on Rowan berries, but when there is plenty of food around they will leave them to sweeten with the early frosts.

Rowan berries are used to make a good jelly that is eaten with cheese or game. Recently, they are being recognised as very medicinal. They contain good quantities of Vitamin C.

Rowan or Quicken tree as it was sometimes known as, is one of the most magical trees in Ireland and there are many stories and tales of wonder concerning the Rowan. One of its uses was to protect the house. A branch of Rowan over the door will protect your house from fire.

I have a piece to protect my precious library of old books! It will also protect the cattle if a piece of wood is placed in the cowshed. It protects the milk from being 'Charmed'

It is also known as a tree of the witches, being a tree of magic. The colour red is seen as protective and also magical. There is an old story about a special Rowan tree, whose berries made old people feel young again and they tasted sweet as honey and brought a bloom to withered faces. Perhaps there is some truth in that tale and there is an unknown elixir of life in Rowan berries. Grainne sent her lover Diarmuid to collect her some of the magical berries, but he was met by a one-eyed giant who was guarding the tree that he had to fight. I feel that there are hidden layers of truth in that story.



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# FUN WITH ROWAN

## MY ROWAN TREE SKETCH

Rowan trees are associated with magic.

There are lots of stories written about rowan tree's ability to protect houses from burning and other mishaps.

Look underneath a rowan tree for a nice small branch.

It might be best if you say thank you to the tree before you take it! About 6—8 inches would be best.

Bring it home and carve or paint the Eircode of your house on the stick. Hang it up over the front door on the inside.

Then it will protect the house and no one will forget the Eircode if they need it in a hurry!

## YOUR FAMILY TREE

Rowan trees look beautiful in Autumn, especially when the leaves turn golden and the berries hang in crimson bunches before the birds eat them.....

Take a large piece of paper and fold it in half. Flatten it out again and draw a silver tree trunk in the centre. Mix up some crimson paint and yellow-gold paint.

You can use a potato cut in half to make red shapes for your family members. Write in their names. You can start with the family you live with and then add in your other relations.

Draw silver branches to connect the family members.

Now use your thumb and the gold-yellow paint to put in thumb print leaves. It will be extra fun if you get as many family members as you can to put their own thumb prints by their names on your family tree.

A different way to make a family tree could be to use pressed leaves with the names written on and thumb prints of red paint for the berries. You choose which you think will look best?



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## OGHAM TREE CALENDAR

It was Robert Graves who first proposed the idea of a Tree Calendar based on the Ogham Tree Alphabet in his book 'The White Goddess' published in 1961. Interestingly, the book is described in the title as being one of 'Poetic Myth'. Here is the Tree Calendar as conceived by Robert Graves, which is based on the Lunar year of 13 'months' with one day extra.

Since his book was published, there have been many variations based on his initial proposed calendar. One of the more interesting elements would be to start the calendar at the start of the Celtic New year, November 1<sup>st</sup>. One could also choose to base the start of each tree's cycle at the full or new moon. In which case, in every year the dates would change.

First date	Last Date	Letter	Tree	Tree
Dec 24th	Jan 20th	B	Beth	Birch
Jan 21st	Feb 17th	L	Luis	Rowan
Feb 18th	March 17th	N	Nion	Ash
March 18th	April 14th	F	Fearn	Alder
April 15th	May 12TH	S	Saille	Willow
May 13th	June 9th	H	Uath	Hawthorn
June 10th	July 7th	D	Duir	Oak
July 8th	August 4th	T	Tinne	Holly
August 5th	Sept 1st	C	Coll	Hazel
Sept 2nd	Sept 29th	M	Muir	Vine/Bramble
Sept 30th	Oct 27th	G	Gort	Ivy
Oct 28th	Nov 24th	NG	Ngetal	Reed
Nov 25th	Dec 22nd	R	Ruis	Elder



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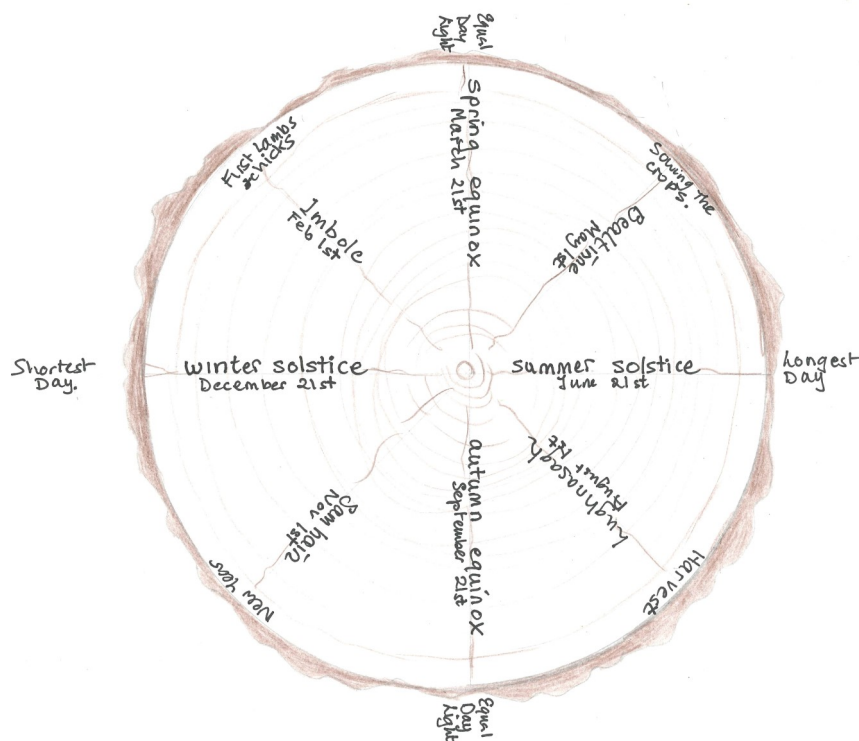
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## OGHAM TREE CALENDAR

Robert Graves also assigns a tree from the Ogham calendar to the Astronomical Quarter days of the Year. We know these dates were important to our Ancestors as many Neolithic monuments such as Newgrange, the Pipers Stones and the Gosson stones are aligned to sunrise on these days.

Quarter day	Date	letter	Tree	Tree
Spring Equinox	March 21st	O	Onn	Gorse
Summer Solstice	June 21st	U	Ura	Heather
Autumn Equinox	Sept 21st	E	Eadha	Aspen
Winter Solstice	Dec 21st	I	Idho	Yew



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# OGHAM TREE CALENDAR

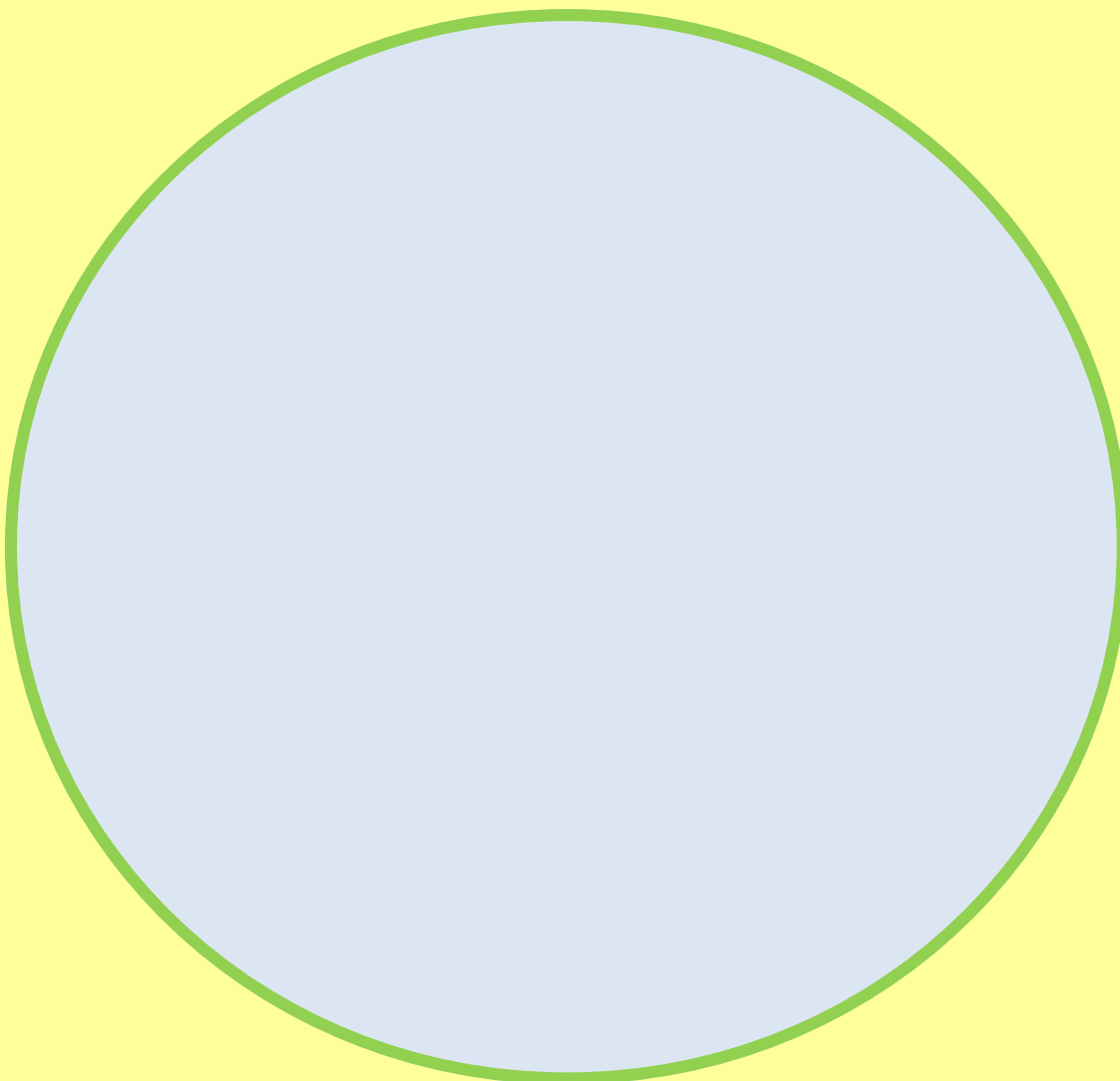
## Tree Calendar Activities

- ♦ *Create your own version of a Tree Calendar. What trees would you associate with which months of the year? You might choose Pine for December and Blackthorn for February....?*
- ♦ *What dates would you like to use? You could use the months we use like January, February and so on to keep it simple. Then you will have 12 months. If you wanted to be more adventurous, you could look up the dates of the New or Full Moons in 2021 and use 13 months.*
- ♦ *What tree would you choose to have for the 'extra' day, Dec 23<sup>rd</sup>?*
- ♦ *Instead of making a Calendar that runs in a straight line, you could make a Tree Calendar that is like a wheel and based on the Celtic Wheel of the Year. Use the next page to make your own Tree Celtic Wheel Calendar and you can add a small pressed leaf from the trees you pick for your own Calendar as a decoration for each 'season'*



# OGHAM TREE CALENDAR

## Tree Calendar Activities



*Here is my own personal Tree Calendar*



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# ALDER

**Latin:** Alnus glutinosa

**Irish:** Fearnóg

**Family:** Betulaceae

**Ogham:** F Fern

**Status:** Deciduous Native

**Class:** Commoner of the Woods



Alder grows in wet ground, such as river banks and water logged land. It is a '*coloniser*' tree and can be one of the first trees to grow in uncultivated areas. It has the ability to fix nitrogen in the soil which enables it to grow in poor soil. It is small in height growing up to 25 m

The leaves are dark green and leathery, oval shaped, with an indented end. Male flowers are reddish catkins and the female flowers resemble small green cones. The Alder is easily recognised by the presence of tiny brown cones that hang in bunches, which are usually present throughout the year.

Alder wood is water resistant. It is used for any timber that stands in water such as bridges, jet-ties and sluice gates. The wood was also used to make wooden clogs.

The wood is also traditionally used to make Shields. The tree is associated with War. The timber turns a reddish colour which is said to be protective and huge alderwood shields have been discovered.

It does not burn very well unless it is seasoned for a number of years.



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# FUN WITH ALDER

## MY ALDER TREE SKETCH

Have a look on the ground underneath an alder tree to see can you find any bunches of small, woody cones.

If you like, you can bring a few home and spray them gold or silver.

Tie some fine string onto them and use them as decorations at Christmas time.

If you collect some small, flexible branches off the ground, bend and tie them into a circle. Add your alder cones, and you will have a lovely little wreath for the door or to decorate the table.

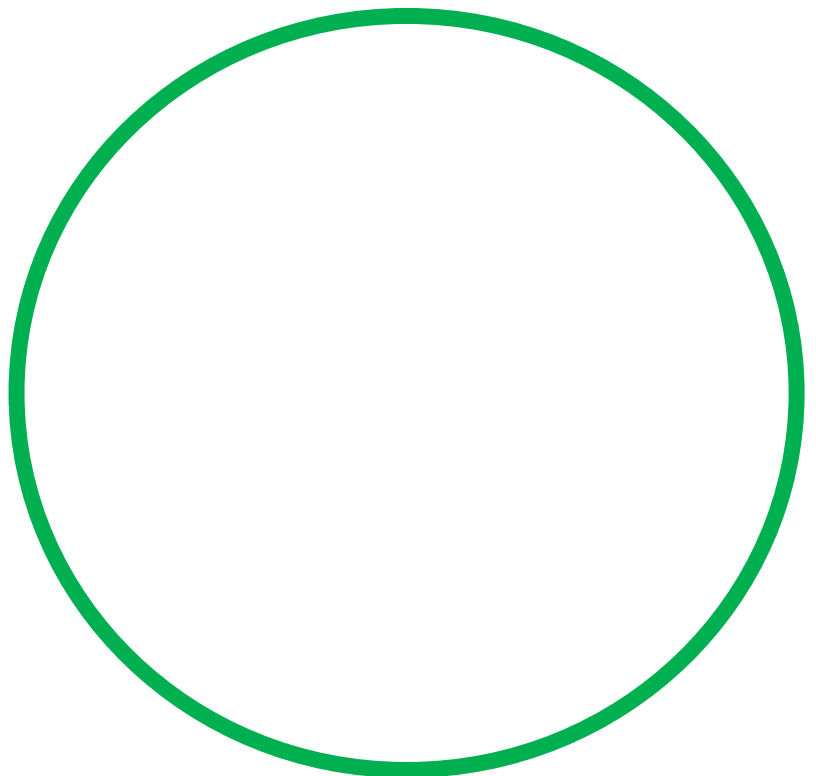
## MY SHIELD DESIGN



MY FLAG DESIGN

Imagine you had a big alderwood shield.

What design would be your personal emblem?



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## TREES AND THE BREHON LAWS

### *Trees and the Ancient Laws*

Long ago in Ireland, the country was very different to nowadays. The landscape looked different as much of the country was covered in native forests. The people lived in Clans and they had many leaders or 'Kings'. There was an overall leader called the 'High King.'

Before the days of intensive Agriculture, people depended on the woodlands to provide most of their needs, so trees were very important and were protected by law.

People gathered together at certain times of the year in each province to hold meetings or assemblies where decisions were made on aspects of the law and there was trading and a lot of fun.

There was a set of Laws called the Brehon Laws. The Brehon Laws were a set of rules that were created to maintain harmony within the community by imposing penalties to rebalance any transgressions between neighbours. The Brehon laws were still in use up until the Seventeenth century. As far as I know, they have never been repealed.

Land, animals and trees were very important to the people and they did not have bank accounts, mortgages to buy homes and money in their pockets.

Within The Brehon Laws there is a set of designations for trees that gives them a value which would have to be repaid by anyone who damaged a tree that grew on another's land. These lists give us an idea of what life used to be like in those long ago times. We need to remember that plants were included that we would not call 'Trees' nowadays, but they were plants that might be woody and had a value as they were used in various ways in those days more than they are now.



## TREES AND THE BREHON LAWS

### Airig Fedo: Noble or Chieftain Trees

Oak	Hazel	Holly	Yew	Ash	Scots Pine	Crab Apple
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### Aithig Fedo: Peasant trees or Commoners

Alder	Willow	Hawthorn	Rowan	Birch	Elm	Wild Cherry
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### Fodla Fedo: Lower Divisions or Shrub trees

Blackthorn	Elder	Spindle	Aspen	Juniper	Whitebeam	Arbutus
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### Iosa fedo: Bushes or Bramble trees

Bracken	Bog Myrtle	Gorse	Bramble	Heather	Broom	Wild Rose
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## PENALTIES

CLASS	BRANCH	FORK	FELLING	REMOVAL
Noble	Year old heifer	two year old heifer	One milk cow	Two and half milk cows
Common-er	sheep	Year old heifer	One milk cow	Two and half milk cows
Lower			Two year old heifer	One year old heifer
Bushes			Year old heifer	



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# WILLOW

**Name:** Willow

**Latin:** Salix spp

**Irish:** Saileach

**Family:** Salicaceae

**Ogham:** S Saille

**Status:** Deciduous Native

**Class:** Commoner of the Woods



There are many species of Willow in Ireland and they tend to hybridise so we won't try to identify the many types here except to say that there are quite a few types in Glendalough, The Glendalough willows are usually Goat willow, Grey willow and Rusty willow.

Willows thrive on wet ground of which we have plenty in Ireland. They grow at most altitudes.

Willows grow extremely easily, as anyone knows who has cut willow stems to use as bean poles. The poles will take root and grow faster than the beans! The bark is usually grey but there are coloured types that are used for basket making and have charming names such as one that is called 'Packing Twine'

The plant has separate male and female forms. The female willows have fluffy catkins in the early spring. The male catkins or 'pussy willows' are covered in golden pollen, and the female catkins, look silvery. They are a welcome sight and it is nice to bring a few small branches indoors for an arrangement to brighten the days before there are many flowers.

Willow can be planted in an area to help dry the soil as they take up so much moisture. They grow very quickly and can be dried and pressed into pellets and used as biomass fuel for boilers. They make a very good habitat for small birds to nest and are good providers of pollen and nectar for insects.



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## WILLOW continued

The willow types that grow in Glendalough are not suitable for basket making as they are short stemmed and twisted shapes. Basket willow is very long and slender and flexible. Willows are coppiced for basket making and for biomass. Coppicing used to be a system used to produce good straight timber. It consists of cutting down the trees to about a foot from the ground so that the tree sends up many shoots from the butt. There are many varieties of trees that were coppiced in the past and forest workers who lived in the woods and knew when there was the correct time to cut the trees depending on their species. It is an old skill that is returning with the move to renewable energy.

Most of the old stories in Ireland concern the basket willow, *Salix alba*, which was known as a Salley. The old song 'Down by the Salley Gardens' is about the area that many houses had to grow 'Sallies'



If you can think about a world that had no plastic and very little metal containers, you will realise that basket making was a very necessary skill. There were travelling people who used to make baskets for nearly every task about a house or farmstead. Panniers or creels for carrying home the turf on the back of the donkey made out of hazel and willow rods. One great use for baskets was to use a bowl shaped basket to collect potatoes for a

meal. You could then go to a stream and wash the potatoes and all the soil falls away through the gaps.

When I was young, we had an old enamel bucket that had lots of holes in the bottom and it did the same job. It is a good idea to use baskets for many jobs instead of plastic because they are biodegradable. Willow hoops are used to make brooms. They can be twisted to hold the bunch of birch twigs to the handle which is usually made of Hazel. These are also biodegradable! But it is a pity that we cannot use them for flying as they would be very handy nowadays.

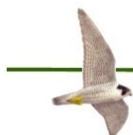
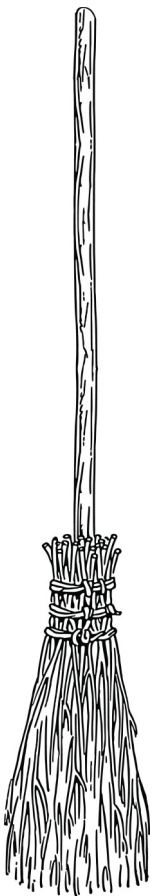


Willow wood was used to make harps. You need to be careful about what secrets you tell a willow tree. If it is made into a harp it will sing out your secret for all to hear. That was what happened to the King of Leinster, Labhraidh Loingseach. He was born with horses' ears but he wanted no one to know, in those days a king had to be free from any disfigurement.

His barber told the secret to a willow tree which was later cut down and made into a harp. The harp was brought out to be played at a great feast, and the harp sang out about the King's ears and the secret was out!

Willow bark contains the same ingredient as the commonly used pain reliever known as 'Aspirin.' It was used by the American Indians to ease the pains of rheumatism. It is the species *Salix Alba* that was used.

Willow is being used nowadays to make biodegradable coffins and as cradles are also made from willow, it accompanies us throughout our lives !



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# FUN WITH WILLOW

## MY WILLOW TREE SKETCH

Look carefully around your willow tree.

Can you see any bugs, birds, or flowers?

Willows like damp ground so you might find a frog if you are very quiet !

Write a list or draw a sketch of all the different species that like hanging out with willows

## Making a dream catcher

- ♦ Find a fallen length @ half a metre and bend it into a circle and secure.
- ♦ Wrap the hoop with coloured wool.
- ♦ Get fine thread and weave a mesh, you can add shells and beads in the net.
- ♦ Hang some bird feathers from the bottom with more beads.



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## INTERDEPENDENCE

### INTERDEPENDENCE

Whether we like it or we don't, we all depend on each other as a human community for our wellbeing. This is a rule of Nature. So in Nature it is the same and we call the study of this interdependence 'Ecology'

Every aspect of an environment, such as a forest, or a field, or a back garden are part of an interconnecting web, and, all together, the webs create The **Web of Life**.

Did you know, for instance, that a germinating oak sapling would not be able to grow in the place it fell? There would be no light or water to support it. Acorns do not blow in the wind, so how do the oak woods replenish?

If you listen, you will hear the chattering of Jays in the oakwoods. They are a beautifully coloured member of the Corvid (Crow) family.

Acorns are their favourite snack. In Autumn, they gather them up one by one and fly off and bury the acorns in little stashes far from the parent tree. The Oak tree has so many acorns that it can feed the Jays for the winter. The Jays forget where they left some of their larders over time, and then these acorns have a new place in which to grow. So in time, one oak tree will become a huge oak forest with the help of the Jays!

Other trees such as Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Elder produce a profusion of tasty berries. They are inedible until the weather gets cold and the frost softens them. The birds by then have very little food, so the berries sustain them in the winter. The berries have seeds inside with hard coats. So the bird flies away from the tree after a feast and of course, it will then need to poop.

Bird poop is brilliant fertiliser! The hard coats of the seed ensure it passes undigested through the bird and it lands somewhere else with its very own little packet of fertiliser!

There are so many more instances of Interdependence in a woodland that I would need to write a fat book to tell even a few of them to you, but instead, I would like you to find out about your own Interdependence and that of an environment near you for yourselves?



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## INTERDEPENDENCE

### *Your personal environment:*

*Think about all the people you depend in your life. Start with your family and make a list or draw stick figures. Then think about your friends and activities, such as school, football, etc. Then think about all the people who we do not know but are connected to us, like the farmers who produce food and the builders who make our homes. There are so many more? If you make stick figures for them all and connect them with arrows you will run out of paper. So we are all interconnected and depend on each other, just like a Forest! Start in the middle.....just like a parent tree !*

*These are some of the people who I am INTERDEPENDENT with!*



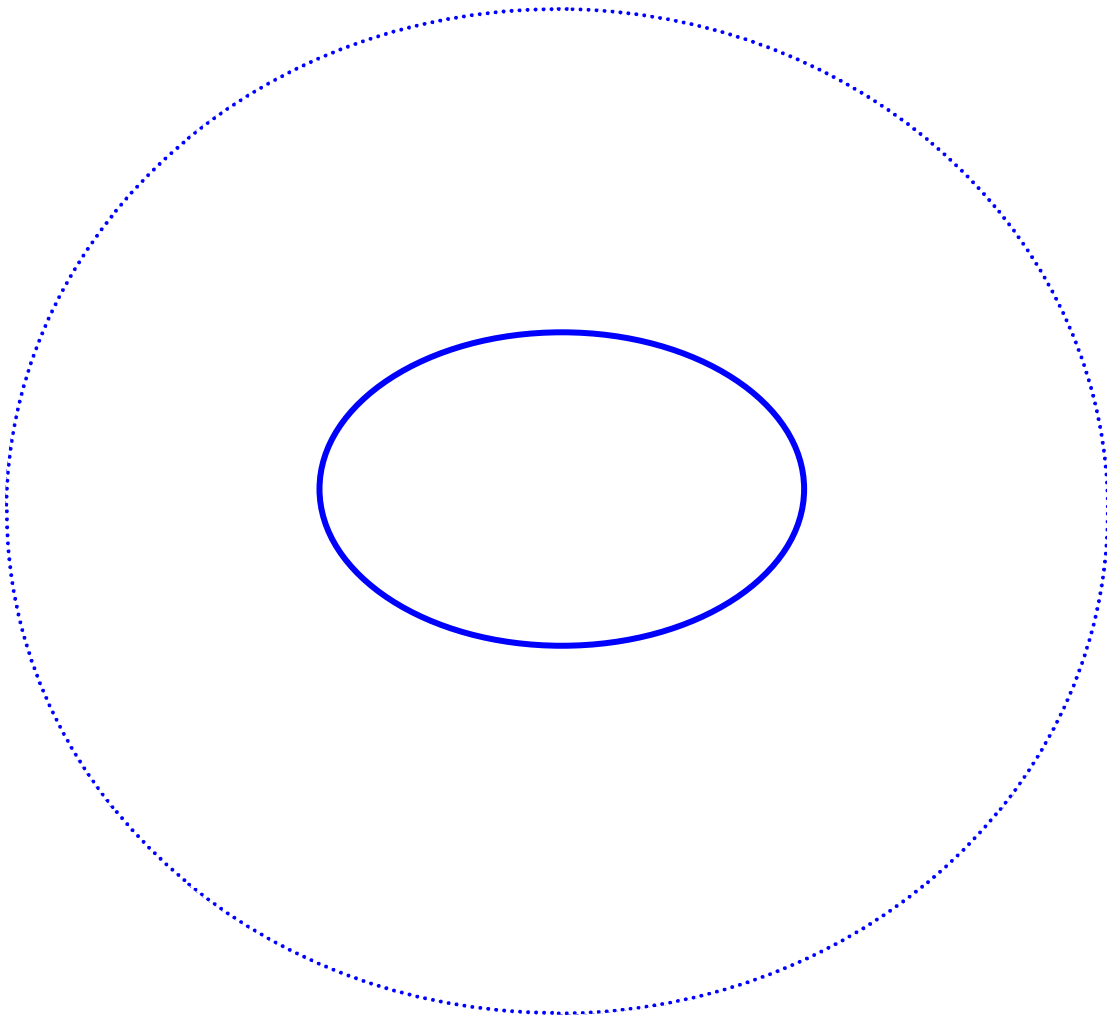
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## INTERDEPENDENCE

*Think of one animal that you like:*

*Draw a picture of the animal, it doesn't matter what it looks like! Then start drawing all the plants and animals and insects that are interconnected with that one animal in a circle around it...can you fit them all in?*



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## INTERDEPENDENCE

*What would happen if one of the interconnecting animals, plants, and insects disappeared? How does that effect the Web of Life?*

Example:

If Oak trees disappeared from our country, I think this

would happen to \_\_\_\_\_

*Here is a Jay to remind you how many unseen interactions take place in woodlands that we do not often notice!*



Draw in what you think it might be carrying in its beak!



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# ASH

Name:	Ash
Latin:	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Irish:	Fuinseóg
Family:	Oleaceae
Ogham:	N Nuin
Status:	Deciduous Native
Class:	Noble tree of the Woods



Ash is a tall slender tree that can grow to 30m. An Ash in Co Tipperary was 40m

They like to grow in rich soil and open places. They are sometimes seen growing in Ringforts or beside Holy Wells.

The bark is pale grey, with sooty black, triangular buds.

Ash has compound leaves that resemble Rowan leaves but Ash leaflets are stalkless, narrow and grow opposite along the main stalk.(Pinnate)

Ash trees usually have separate male and female trees, but they can sometimes have both sexed flowers. Ash trees produce wind dispersed seeds that have a long single wing and hang in bunches. They are known as 'Keys' If an Ash tree has keys it is usually a female tree.

Ash tree timber is highly prized for making handles for tools and hurleys as it is flexible so it can take a strain without splitting. Ash wood also makes one of the best firewoods, but as it burns hot and fast, it is best mixed with a slower burning wood such as oak.

Ash were known as a tree that attracts lightning. Ash wands used to be used in healing, and ash staffs to protect the traveller from evil while on the road.



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# FUN WITH ASH



## MY ASH TREE SKETCH

Look around under an ash tree and see if there are any leaves. How many leaflets make up one **COMPOUND** ash leaf?

Look around. What other plants can you see here with compound leaves?

*Hint:* There maybe some ferns here.

If you press fern leaflets, what kind of tree do they look like? Try a few here. Place them up-right!

Can you write the name of this tree in Ogham? Try Here !



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## OGHAM TREE TALES QUIZ

### Try answering these questions based on our Ogham Tree Trail Adventures?

- What tree is your favourite tree today?
- What trees in the ogham alphabet go with your initials or name
- If you were asked to carve a name on a branch, which alphabet would be easiest? Ogham or ABC?
- If you found a tree that was the same age as you, how many rings of growth would it have?
- What tree corresponds to the month you were born in? (This is your 'special tree')
- Do you think you might plant your 'special' tree in your garden? Why or why not?
- What animals, insects, birds and plants might depend on your 'Special tree'?
- Did you find your 'SitSpot' today?
- Which tree was it beside?
- What type of tree is your Special tree in the Brehon Laws? Can you discover what penalty would be imposed if you broke off one branch?
- What type of bird likes planting acorns?
- Which tree or trees attracts lightning?
- At the Millenium,(year 2000) there was a native tree planted somewhere in Ireland on behalf of your family if you lived in Ireland at that time. Can you find out where your family's tree is and what type of tree it is? You might need to ask for help with this....!

To be entered into a draw with 5 chances to win a small prize

Send your answers to:

Eleanor.Sutherland@chg.gov.ie

with your name and address by September 1st 2020



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