

# That's Interesting!



A worksheet for adults to practise reading, writing, spelling and numbers.

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## Native Irish Trees



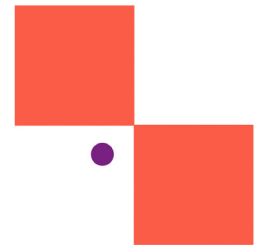
Around 12,000 years ago, Ireland was covered in snow and ice. This was known as the Ice Age. As the weather became warmer, the snow and ice melted and trees began to grow. The seeds of trees were brought here by birds and animals or were blown here by the wind.

When the ice melted and the seas started to rise, Ireland became separated from the rest of Europe and became an island. Our native trees are the trees that were here before we were separated from the rest of Europe. Our most common native trees include, Oak, Ash, Hazel, Birch, Scots pine, Rowan and Willow. Over many hundreds of years, people brought other trees here such as Beech, Sycamore, Horse chestnut, Spruce and Larch. Here we will look at some of the most common Irish native trees to be found here today.

The **Ash tree** is a common tree found in hedges and woodlands in Ireland. It is easily recognised as it has 9 small leaves on a single stem. It is the last tree to produce leaves in spring and also the last to lose its leaves in autumn.

Timber from the Ash tree has, for hundreds of years, been used to make hurleys. Ash timber is very flexible and is perfect for making hurleys. This is why people say that hurling is “the clash of the ash”.





Sadly, in the last few years many of our Ash trees here in Ireland and across Europe have been attacked by a disease which has caused them to die. This is known as “Ash Die Back” and means that very many of our old Ash trees have fallen. With the shortage of Ash timber, hurley makers are now using imported timber such as bamboo as well as plastic to make hurleys.

The **Oak tree** has a leaf that is easy to recognise with its rounded curves on either side. The wood from the Oak tree is strong and has been used in the making of furniture for many hundreds of years.



The seed of the Oak is the acorn which can be found when they fall off the tree in the autumn.

“From the tiny acorn the mighty Oak will grow”. New trees will often start growing from the fallen acorns, if the small animals have not eaten them first. People are encouraged to sow acorns if they find them. They are slow growing and will usually take 35 years to become fully mature.

The **Elder tree** is a common sight on hedges and on roadsides all over the country. From May it produces a thick fluffy white flower known as the Elder flower, followed by dark black berries. Many people pick the Elder flowers in June to make a drink.



The **Holly tree** is one of the oldest native trees found here. It has small green shiny leaves and remains green all year round. It produces red berries in the winter. It is one of the few trees to produce fruit in the winter which is why it is popular as a decoration at Christmas. It is a very slow growing tree and the timber from the Holly tree is very popular for wood carving. In some parts of Ireland, it is considered unlucky to cut down a Holly tree.



**Hawthorn** or **Whitethorn** is easily spotted in hedges and fields throughout our countryside. Its sweet smelling white flowers which appear in May are followed in autumn and winter by red berries called haws. These berries are a big favourite with birds. The white flowers also provide food for honey bees. In Irish legend, the Whitethorn has always been associated with fairies and it is considered unlucky to cut down this tree, especially one that is growing in the middle of a field.



The **Blackthorn** is found on roadsides and hedges all over the country and can spread out becoming a thick clump if left to grow wild. It produces clusters of small white flowers very early in the year when hedges are covered in white. After this, in the autumn, it produces small dark fruit that look like plums, these are called sloes. They are very sour to eat although birds like them. Sloes have been used for many years to flavour gin or poteen. The use of blackthorn wood is mainly used in the making of the Irish Blackthorn walking stick which has now become a tourist souvenir.



**Scots pine** was very common in Ireland thousands of years ago. Pine stumps have been found in bogs, standing where they grew 7,000 years ago. Changes to a warmer, wetter climate and the clearing of woodlands led to it dying out.

Most of the pines around the countryside now were imported from Scotland and planted over the last 150 years. They can be grown on land that is poor where other trees would not survive. They also grow quicker, and their timber can be used for building as well as furniture. They are easily recognised by their pine cones which they produce in spring.



The **Hazel tree** produces the Hazel nuts which were one of the main foods associated with the very earliest humans who lived in Ireland thousands of years ago. They also used Hazel as timber for huts and fences. Hazel bushes may be cut right back to a stump, and will re-grow. The Hazel tree can be found in woodlands where it enjoys the shade from the large Ash and Oak trees that tower above it.



When the Hazel nuts are fully ripe, they will fall to the ground (or the tree can be shaken) and the nuts are then collected from the ground. But you need to be quick - it is amazing how fast wildlife will clean the woodland floor of all fallen nuts.

The **Rowan tree** which is also called the Mountain Ash is so called because it can be found on hills and on high ground where it adds colour. From spring, it produces creamy white flowers which are followed by a cluster of red berries. These berries provide food for the birds especially the thrush. The berries however are poisonous for cattle and other farm animals.



Information sources: Tree council of Ireland

**Native Irish Trees [treecouncil.ie](http://treecouncil.ie)**

# Quiz

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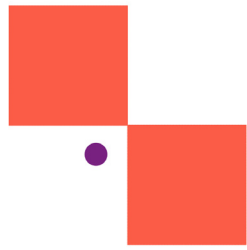


When you have read the story about native Irish trees, try to answer these questions.

1. The timber from which tree is used to make hurleys? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Which tree grows from the acorn? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Name the tree that produces a white flower that can be used to make a drink.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What tree is associated with fairies? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Name the tree that produces nuts. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Which tree's timber is used to make the old Irish walking stick?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What tree provides us with a Christmas decoration? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Which tree produces pine cones? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Give the other name for the Rowan tree. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Which tree is now being attacked by a disease? \_\_\_\_\_

# Plurals

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**Plural means more than one of something.**

**1. For most plurals, you just add s**

Examples: 1 dog / 2 dogs   1 toy / 2 toys   1 tree / 2 trees

**2. For words ending in s, ss, x, ch, sh, you add es**

Examples: bus / buses   glass / glasses   box / boxes  
lunch / lunches   brush / brushes

**3. For words ending in f or fe, you change the f or fe to ves**

Examples: calf / calves   knife / knives   life / lives

Note: There are some exceptions. For these words ending in f just add s.

chef / chefs   roof / roofs   cliff / cliffs   chief / chiefs

**4. For words ending in y**

- If there is a **vowel before the y in the word**, just add s  
(vowels are a, e, i, o, u)

Examples: toy / toys   play / plays   key / keys

- If there is a **consonant before the y**, change y to ies.

Examples pony / ponies   lorry / lorries   lolly / lollies

**5. For words ending in o**

- If there is a vowel before the o, just add s

Examples: radio / radios   video / videos

- If there is a consonant before the o add es

Examples: tomato / tomatoes   hero / heroes   echo / echoes

**6. Some words do not change at all**

Examples: fish, deer, sheep, money, cheese, rice.

**7. Some words change completely**

Examples: child / children   mouse / mice   man / men   tooth / teeth



**Write the plural of each of these words:**

(The first one is done for you)

• child children

toy \_\_\_\_\_

• brush \_\_\_\_\_

boss \_\_\_\_\_

• woman \_\_\_\_\_

mouse \_\_\_\_\_

• tax \_\_\_\_\_

berry \_\_\_\_\_

• toy \_\_\_\_\_

lady \_\_\_\_\_

• tooth \_\_\_\_\_

branch \_\_\_\_\_

• army \_\_\_\_\_

echo \_\_\_\_\_

• hero \_\_\_\_\_

thief \_\_\_\_\_

• pony \_\_\_\_\_

shelf \_\_\_\_\_

• cliff \_\_\_\_\_

roof \_\_\_\_\_

• fish \_\_\_\_\_

sheep \_\_\_\_\_

• lorry \_\_\_\_\_

family \_\_\_\_\_

• box \_\_\_\_\_

dress \_\_\_\_\_

• party \_\_\_\_\_

tomato \_\_\_\_\_

• calf \_\_\_\_\_

cherry \_\_\_\_\_

# Notes



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## Further help is available

If you need help with these worksheets, or with reading, writing, maths or digital skills, you can contact the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA).



Call us on Freephone 1 800 20 20 65

You can study online on our Learn with NALA website [www.learnwithnala.ie](http://www.learnwithnala.ie) or with a tutor over the phone or we can give details of your local Education and Training Board.



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