

Beech *Fagus sylvatica*

A large, deciduous, elegant and graceful woodland tree, known as the queen of British trees. Beech can grow to 40 metres and are most successful on free-draining soils such as the chalky soil of Magog Down. The foliage is a vivid, glossy emerald green in spring, changing to spectacular golden and orange hues in autumn.



Both male and female flowers grow on the same tree. In April and May tassel-like male catkins hang from long stalks at the end of the twigs. Female flowers grow in pairs above the catkins, surrounded by a cup. The flowers are wind pollinated.

Flowers appear after the new leaves.



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Once pollinated the flower cup becomes woody, forming a tough bristly four-lobed husk or seed case called a cupule. These split in the autumn to release the fruit or nut.

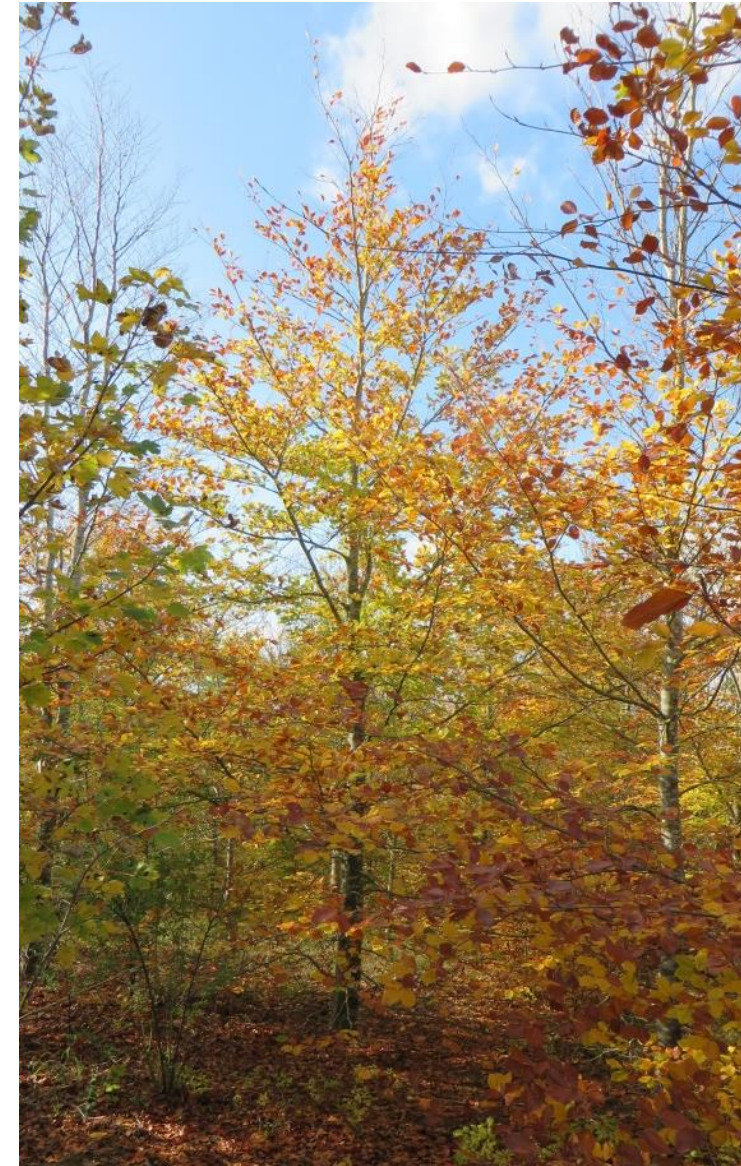


Interesting Facts:

The nuts are known as beechmast. They are unique as they are three-sided and triangular in appearance.



The oval leaves have a pointed tip and wavy edges.



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Beech trees have silver-grey bark which remains smooth with age, often with horizontal etchings. Many trunks have splodges of lichens which live on the trees but do not harm them.



Beech trees have narrow winter buds.



White Helleborine
Cephalanthera damasonium

Only specialist shade tolerant plants can survive beneath the dense beech canopy, such as the White Helleborine which flowers in May in some areas of Magog Down woodland.

