

Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*

Hawthorn is an attractive shrub or small tree which can reach a height of 15 metres. They are one of the most common British trees, and an important species for native hedgerows. Hawthorn grow quickly in a hedge, but more slowly as trees. They have short shoots which are slender and brown and covered in thorns. The tangled crown makes the tree a favourite for nesting birds as the sharp thorns offer excellent protection.



Hawthorn leaves grow alternately on the stem. They are fairly small, up to 6cm long, shiny and with five to seven deep, pointed lobes.

Hawthorn is wonderful for wildlife as it provides food and protection for many animals, including invertebrates, birds and mammals.

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In May Hawthorn bursts into life with an abundance of heavily scented white blossom, giving it the common name of May tree, maythorn or whitethorn.

Interesting Facts:

The red fruits are known as 'haws'. 'Haw' comes from the Old English haga, meaning hedge.

On May Day Hawthorn blossom and foliage are traditionally made into garlands and wreaths, with the crowning of the May Queen and celebrations welcoming in summer and warmer, sunnier days.



A Green Hairstreak butterfly feeding on nectar-rich hawthorn blossom.



Flowers are white with five petals and red stamens. Sometimes the tips of the petals are pinkish. Both male and female reproductive parts are contained within each flower. Flowers are pollinated by insects.

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Hawthorn berries or haws ripen to a bright red in autumn. The fruit is dark red. They are eaten by many birds and small animals.



The bark is greyish brown, knotted and fissured with numerous small scales.



The leaves turn yellow before falling in autumn.

The fruits remain on the tree until the following spring unless they are eaten by wildlife. The new small, red leaf buds can be seen forming in January.

