

13. Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*

Common hornbeam is a deciduous tree with pale grey bark and vertical markings, and a trunk which develops ridges with age. The leaves are similar to beech, with a neat pleated look and finely toothed edges. Mature trees can reach a height of 30m and live for more than 300 years.

Did you know?

Hornbeam has the hardest wood of any tree in Europe and the Romans used it to make their chariots

Value to wildlife.

Like beech, a hornbeam hedge will keep its leaves all year round, providing shelter, roosting, nesting and foraging opportunities for birds and small mammals.

Hornbeam is the food plant for caterpillars of a number of moth species, including the nut tree tussock. Finches and tits and small mammals eat the seeds in autumn.

Mythology and symbolism.

There are no myths and legends associated with Hornbeam in the UK.

Uses of Hornbeam.

Hornbeam is mainly used for furniture, flooring and wood turning, but traditionally the wood was made into ox yokes used to join a team of ploughing oxen together. It was also widely coppiced for poles, especially in Southern England. The wood burns well and makes good firewood and charcoal.

A tonic made from hornbeam was said to relieve tiredness and exhaustion, and its leaves were used to stop bleeding and heal wounds.

