

14 Wild Cherry *Prunus avium*

Mature trees can grow to 30m and live for up to 60 years. The shiny bark is a deep reddish-brown with cream-coloured horizontal lines called lenticels.

Did you know?

The second part of its botanical name – *avium* – refers to birds which play a role in the tree's propagation by eating the cherries and dispersing the seed.

Value to wildlife.

The spring flowers provide an early source of nectar and pollen for bees; while the cherries are eaten by birds, including the blackbird and song thrush; as well as mammals, such as the badger, wood mouse, yellow-necked mouse and dormouse. The foliage is the main food plant for caterpillars of many species of moth, including the cherry fruit and cherry bark moths, the orchard ermine, brimstone and short-cloaked moth.

Mythology and symbolism.

Although the seeds are distributed by mammals and birds, cherry trees can also propagate themselves by root suckers.

Uses of Wild Cherry.

Wild cherry has many cultivars and is a popular ornamental tree in gardens. Traditionally, cherries were planted for their fruit and also their wood which was used for making cask hoops and vine poles. The sticky resin was thought to promote a good complexion and eyesight, and help to cure coughs.

These days, cherry wood is used to make decorative veneers and furniture. The wood is hard, strong and honey-coloured, and can be polished to a good, shiny brown. The wood burns well and produces a sweetly scented smoke, similar to the scent of its flowers.

