



## Alder



Courtesy of the Department of Agriculture

**Latin:** *Alnus glutinosa*

**Irish:** *Fearnóg*

Alder trees are deciduous, meaning they lose their leaves in the autumn. They belong to the birch tree family.

The Black Alder is native to Ireland and to most of Europe. It grows very quickly in moist, marshy soil – up to half a metre a year. Usually, the Black Alder grows to between 20 to 25 metres high.

**Description:** The Black Alder's wide, round leaves appear in April. They are a deep green colour and are smooth to touch. The flowers of the Black Alder bloom in March. When the female flowers have been pollinated, they become woody. They release small red-brown coloured seeds in the autumn. These seeds are eaten by many different birds e.g. siskens and redpoles.

**Celtic link:** In Celtic times, people believed the alder had divine powers. It was used in identifying diseases.

**Extra:** Alder wood was once known as Irish Mahogany. It was used for making harps, clogs and charcoal.

**Ogham:** Ogham, the Celtic alphabet system, was based on trees. The Celts believed trees had different characteristics, emotions and magical or healing powers. The letters of this alphabet were linked to the names of trees.

The Ogham letter for the hazel tree was 'F' (fearn).