



Ash



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Latin: *Fraxinus excelsior*

Irish: *Fuinseog*

The ash is Ireland's most common, tallest native tree. It is also native to most of Europe.

This deciduous tree grows to between 20 and 35 metres tall. Its trunk can measure up to 2 metres in width.

The tallest ash in Ireland is in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary. It measures 40 metres in height.

Description: The leaves of the ash are wide, oval and have pointed ends. They grow in pairs along the stem. Dark purple coloured flowers appear on the tree during the summer months. The fruit, known as samara, hangs in bunches in the winter. These are known as the 'ash keys'. Birds, mice, squirrels and other wildlife eat the seeds of the tree. About 41 different insect species live on, and feed from, the ash tree in Ireland.

Uses: The wood of the Ash tree is strong and flexible. It is used to make furniture, walking sticks, snooker cues, oars, hockey sticks and hurleys. One and a half acres of Ash trees can make about 3,800 hurleys!

Celtic link: The Celts believed that the ash tree protected them.

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 'N' (nuin).