



## Hazel



**Latin:** *Corylus avellana*

**Irish:** *Coll*

The Common Hazel is a member of the birch family and is often found growing in a hedgerow. It is among the most common small trees which grow in Ireland. It rarely grows more than 6 metres tall.

**Leaves:** The leaves are green from April until the summer. It is a deciduous tree as the leaves shed in autumn after they have turned yellow. The leaves are rounded, with a jagged edge, and form a point at the end. They have soft hair on both sides and grow between 6cm and 12 cm.

**Flowers:** The flowers on the hazel tree open from January to April. The male flowers are pale yellow catkins (long clusters of flowers) growing between 5 and 12 cm long. The female flowers grow out of small oval-shaped buds. They are bright red and only grow from 1 to 3 mm long. Although both male and female flowers grow on the same plant, a single tree cannot pollinate on its own.

**Nuts:** When a tree is pollinated, it produces hazelnuts. Hazelnuts are green when they first appear on the tree. By autumn, they will have grown and changed to a light brown colour. Mice, pigeons and other birds love to eat hazelnuts. They are also enjoyed by humans and can be harvested from September onwards. They can be eaten raw from the shell or cooked in a hot pan.

**Celtic link:** Celts believed the Common Hazel stored all ancient knowledge within it. They believed that wisdom was found in the hazelnuts, which were well protected inside their shells.

**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 'C' (*coll*).