



Rowan



Latin: *Sorbus aucuparia*

Irish: *Rudha-an*

The rowan is sometimes called the Mountain Ash. This is because the leaves of both trees look very alike.

The rowan is a deciduous tree and grows to between 10 and 20 metres high. It can live for over one hundred years.

Description: The rowan has a grey-brown, smooth bark. Its leaves are dark green. Each one has between 7 and 13 leaflets. These leaves turn a red colour in the autumn before they are shed. This red colour gives the tree its Irish name, rudha-an ('the red one').

Creamy-coloured flowers appear from April to June. If pollinated, these flowers produce red berries in the autumn. These berries are soft and juicy. They are a great source of food for many animals and birds e.g. thrushes and blackbirds.

Uses: The berries of the Rowan have been used to dye cloth, make jellies and flavour mead.

Celtic link: In Celtic times the Rowan was thought to be a lucky tree. Its wood was believed prevent fire when hung inside the house. It was sacred to the druids and an older Irish name for the Rowan was fid na ndruad. This means the 'tree of the druids'.

Extra: The name 'rowan' comes from the Old Norse name for tree ('ruan').

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 rowan tree was 'L' (luis).