

## Overthorpe Tree Guide

### Small Trees (5-15m)



**Blackthorn** (*Prunus spinosa*) – more commonly thought of as a shrub, blackthorn will grow into a small tree if left to its own devices. They produce a mass of stunning white flowers in the spring, which turn into deep purple fruit, known as sloes, in the autumn and winter (which can be used to make sloe gin!). The fruits are popular with a range of wildlife, but this tree is particularly important for the endangered Black Hairstreak butterfly, whose caterpillars eat nothing but blackthorn!

**Crab Apple** (*Malus sylvestris*) – crab apples are stout trees, producing pinky-white flowers in late spring and small, green apples in the late summer and autumn. You can leave the fruit for blackbirds and thrushes to enjoy or have a go at making crab apple jelly!

**Goat Willow** (*Salix caprea*) – also known as the “pussy willow” because its catkins look like a cat’s paws, the goat willow is a major food source for the purple emperor butterfly. Goat willows are not the tallest of trees but can live up to 300 years if conditions are right.

**Hazel** (*Corylus avellana*) – hazels will grow as high as 12m if left unchecked but, like beech trees, respond well to being coppiced. In the autumn, these trees produce a crop of hazel nuts which are popular with squirrels and dormice.

**Holly** (*Ilex aquifolium*) – it is thought to be bad luck to cut down a holly tree, so perhaps it is good luck to plant one! Holly trees are evergreen, meaning they can provide privacy as well as shelter for wildlife throughout the year. Hedgehogs and birds are particularly fond of holly trees and shrubs, as the prickly leaves keep predators at bay.

**Rowan** (*Sorbus aucuparia*) – also known as the mountain ash, rowan trees produce swathes of bright red berries in the autumn which can attract some of the more exotic species of British birds to your garden, including waxwings and redstarts.

**Wayfaring-tree** (*Viburnum lantana*) – the wayfaring-tree is a fairly squat species, so named because it traditionally grew close to woodland trails. Clusters of white flowers in the spring, which develop into red fruits in the autumn, make wayfaring-trees a good option if you want something which adds colour to the garden for most of the year.

### Medium Trees (15-20m)



**Common Hawthorn** (*Crataegus monogyna*) – this farmland staple is a real favourite for wildlife. In spring, an eruption of creamy-white flowers provide nectar for bees and other insects, the fruits (known as haws) are the main food of many British birds including yellowhammers and the thorny branches provide safe shelter for slow worms and amphibians.

**Elder** (*Sambucus nigra*) – it was once widely believed that elder trees had magical properties and an elder near your home would keep the devil at bay! We don’t know about that but an elder will fill your garden with the smell of elderflowers in the spring and summer, before providing a banquet of dark red berries for local birds.

**Field Maple** (*Acer campestre*) – a relatively small woodland native, the field maples turns an amazing golden yellow in the autumn. It’s distinctive, winged seeds can be seen zooming by on windy autumn days.



## Large Trees (20m +)

**Alder** (*Alnus glutinosa*) – these swamp-loving trees do well in damp soils but are also happy in drier areas. They form catkins in the spring which turn into small cones as autumn rolls around. These trees are popular with many species of moths, as well as birds including goldfinches and redpolls.

**Ash** (*Fraxinus excelsior*) – ash trees are an important part of British woodlands and can grow up to 35 metres tall if conditions are right. These woodland giants are a favourite for nesting owls.

**Common Beech** (*Fagus sylvatica*) – this iconic British native can reach 40 metres in height but responds well to coppicing to keep it much smaller if you're short on space.

**English Oak** (*Quercus robur*) – perhaps our most iconic English tree, oaks are the best tree in terms of their benefits for wildlife. The oldest known oak in the UK is in Sherwood Forest and is believed to be over 800 years old.

**Silver Birch** (*Betula pendula*) – with their amazing bright white trunks, a silver birch makes a striking feature in any garden. It is not just a pretty tree, though, and provides food and habitat for more than 300 species of insect!

**Wild Cherry** (*Prunus avium*) – one of our prettiest native trees, the wild cherry produces masses of small white flowers in the early spring which provides a much-needed boost for bees and other insects at this time of year. The fruits are also eaten by an array of different wildlife, from song thrushes to badgers.

## Managing Trees

If a tree is growing too large for your garden, it is not a case of leaving the tree to it or removing it altogether! You can have an oak tree on a balcony or an ash tree in a 5mx5m garden – it's all a matter of tree management. There are a number of options for keeping trees in check which you can do yourself or hire a professional tree surgeon to do.

**Pruning** – depending on the size of your tree, this is something you can do yourself or hire a professional tree surgeon to do. Removal of some branches from a tree can have the desired effect of reducing shading or giving more space, without removing the tree altogether. For more information on reducing the size of trees, see this page on the [RHS website](#).

**Coppicing** – this is an ancient technique, which was traditionally used to produce strong young stems for fencing, fuel or building. It involves cutting multiple stems down to the ground, encouraging the plant to send up vigorous new shoots. Coppicing is not suitable for all trees, but hazel, beech and hornbeam are all examples of trees which can be coppiced repeatedly and continue to do well. For more information see this page on the [RHS Website](#).

**Pollarding** – pollarding is similar to coppicing but plants are cut back to a stump at the desired height, rather than down to the ground. Use a saw to remove all the branches from the tree at the trunk height you've chosen. New stems will then sprout from this point, and can be cut back again the following year or in a few years' time. Like coppicing, not all trees will respond well to pollarding, but it is a good option for beech, elder, ash and many others. For more information see this page on the [RHS Website](#).

**Together we can plant 21 trees in 2021.**

