



Wild About Barrow

Winter 2023

As the glories of a colourful autumn fade and the wild winter winds take, we can appreciate the beauty of deciduous trees in a different way now they are laid bare. How can we identify them with few clues remaining? Well, their location is one clue but others are revealed too in these notes.

We take a look at Barrow's presence online and think about being out in the wonderful natural world, what we can see and do there and, most importantly, how to make a difference.

Wild Celebration

This time we're looking at the shape, bud and bark of some of our trees.



Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*)





English Oak (*Quercus patrea*)



Horse chestnut (*Asceulus hippocastanum*)

It can be easy to name plants when they are in fruit, flower and leaf so when winter comes along and they are gone it's useful to recognise other clues. Trees may be deciduous but they all have distinctive shapes, bark and buds.

The Ash can be found on higher land than other trees and when growing in a mixed woodland is often the tallest tree.

Shape: Elegant, graceful and tall (reaching 40m), often with a domed canopy.
When trees are mature the lower branches sweep down towards the ground.

Bark: On young trees it is smooth grey or pale grey/brown but with maturity it becomes fissured into interwoven ridges resembling an oak.

Buds: Rounded buds growing in opposite pairs and a cone-shaped bud at the end of branches. Often the clearest clue that a tree is an Ash is the dark, sooty looking buds and the ends of branches which curve upwards, as evidenced in the bud shown above.

The English Oak along with the sessile oak are our two native oak trees. The tree shown above is an English oak. Although the two are very similar there are clues if you know what to look for. The English oak, or *Quercus patrea* to give it its botanic name, grows in valleys, and on damp land of heavier soil which is not too acidic.

Shape: Our oak, growing in the Millennium Park, will grow into a broader tree than its cousin, with a spreading, open canopy and growing to 40m.

Bark: Smooth and green/grey on young trees, later developing ridges and furrows, becoming cross fissured into rectangular and hexagonal shapes with age.

Buds: Egg-shaped with blunt, rounded tips but cone shaped at the end of branches.

The Horse Chestnut tree, best known for its conkers and sticky buds, which help prevent insect attack, also has other distinguishing features. Being an attractive tree, it was introduced into Britain in 1616 and widely planted in many parks, streets and gardens as an amenity tree. It is not common in woodlands although it will grow along roadsides and in hedges.

Shape: A large domed crown and taller than the red Horse Chestnut, reaching heights of 40m.

Bark: Pink-grey becoming darker and more scaly with age

Buds: Oval, pointed, dark red and of course, sticky.

Have you spotted any nature delights around the village? Send your photos to Wildaboutbarow@gmail.com or just let us know where you saw it and we'll take a snap.

Spotlight on: NatureSpot Did you know these 5 facts?

- NatureSpot is a charitable organisation dedicated to recording species of all kinds in Leicestershire and Rutland.
- We have 3 named Wild Places on this site and other areas in Barrow which are recorded on NatureSpot? Go to:
[https://www.naturespot.org.uk/Barrow upon Soar](https://www.naturespot.org.uk/Barrow_upon_Soar)
- Information is passed to local and national bodies to help with nature conservation.
- You can register and upload species you have found or just peruse the pages and find out about the amazing variety of species that live alongside us in our parish and other Leicestershire locations.
- Events, discussions and information are all to be found here.

What to See

1. Go out. It might be gloriously sunny or cold, wet and windy but you will feel better for being outside: being out in nature has been proven to be good for our mental well-being. Look for signs of winter such as starling murmurations and winter flowers. Buds will be swelling and bulbs sprouting, primroses, winter aconites and snowbells will be coming into flower.
2. Look at the intricate patterns and structures of deciduous trees now they are revealed. Can you identify them?
3. Robins are one of the few garden birds that remain vocal all year round. Their high pitched song steps up at gear from mid-December and they sing more powerfully. This is to defend their territory and attract a mate ready for the breeding season, which can be as early as January.

What to do

1. Take part in Veganuary. Quite simply it's better for you and better for the planet. Change is hard. Try at least one small thing that is vegan or vegetarian each week and build on that. It will significantly improve your carbon footprint and free up land for nature rather than for crops to feed livestock.
2. Adopt the 30 by 30 agreement personally and begin to plan how to implement that in your own garden. It could be a wildflower area, a log pile or planting a native tree.

Following the COP 15 meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity last December, it was agreed that countries would ensure that at least 30 per cent of land, inland water and marine areas are effectively conserved and managed by 2030. The UK government has already identified which areas will be managed in this way. You can see this on the NatureSpot website.
What will you contribute towards this?

3. Check water for birds in your garden is not frozen. They need clean liquid water even in cold weather.
4. Reserve an hour between 26 – 28th January 2024 to take part in the RSPB's Great British Garden Bird Watch. If we know what is happening to British birds we can work towards solving any problems.

Think global: act local