



Woodland and Forests

Fact Sheet for Adults



General Facts

- A woodland or forest is an area of land mainly covered by trees.
- There are woodlands and forests in many places around the world, including many parts of Europe, Asia, South Africa and North and South America.
- Forests are generally described as having 4 main layers: emergent, canopy, understory, forest floor.
- Emergent layer: This describes the top most area of growth, the tops of the tallest trees.
- Canopy layer: This describes the main layer of overlapping tree branches and leaves.
- Understory layer: This describes the smaller bushes, shrubs and plants growing in the forest.
- Forest floor: This describes the ground surface of the forest. It is usually covered in leaves, bark, branches, twigs, and moss and is home to a variety of insects.

Trees Found in UK Woodland and Forests

- In the UK, there are many forests and woodlands around the country. They can be described as temperate forests. They contain many native and non-native trees. Native trees are trees that grew naturally in their location, and non-native trees are those introduced to the land by humans. Native trees include alder, elder, oak and rowan. Non-native trees include cedar, Norway spruce, horse chestnut and sycamore trees.
- Many types of conifer, or 'cone-bearing' trees, also grow in the UK. Some examples of native conifer trees include the Scots pine, common juniper and yew trees. Non-native conifer trees include Norway spruce, Douglas fir and black pine trees. Most conifer trees are evergreen with needle-like leaves, often called needles. They are seen in parks, forests and woodland areas.
- Alder trees: Alder leaves are dark green and are teardrop-shaped with slightly serrated edges. Alder wood is quite soft and porous. It is mainly used for making timber veneers and plywood. They live for around 60 years.
- Elder trees: Elder trees grow to a height of around 15 metres. Elder leaves are described as pinnate leaves, meaning they are long and thin, resembling a feather. They have around 7 oval leaflets along thin stems. The leaves, flowers and berries are mildly poisonous so the flowers and berries should be cooked before eating. The flowers can be made into cordial or tea and the berries are used to make preserves and wine. Elder trees live for around 60 years
- Oak trees: Most types of oak trees are deciduous so they lose their leaves in winter. Oak trees grow in the northern hemisphere. Oak trees produce fruit called acorns. Oak leaves have 4 or 5 rounded lobes with smooth edges. Oak wood is very hard and strong and used in the manufacture of boats, furniture and flooring. Oak trees can live for over 200 years.



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- Rowan trees: Rowan trees are also known as mountain ash trees. This is because they grow well at high altitudes and the leaves are similar to those of ash trees. They can grow to around 15 metres in height. Rowan leaves are long, thin pinnate leaves. They have around 8 pairs of leaflets along thin stems and an additional leaflet at the end of the stem. Each leaflet is oval-shaped with serrated edges. Rowan trees live for around 200 years.
- Cedar trees: Cedar trees can grow to around 35 metres in height. They have a distinctive shape, with several trunks and horizontal layers of growth in their structure. Cedar leaves are dark green needles. Cedar trees grow long cones. Cedar wood is strong and durable.
- Norway spruce: Norway spruce trees can grow to around 40 metres in height. They have dark green, thin needle leaves. These trees have a broader base and a pointy top, giving them a triangular or cone shape. They grow cones with rounded scales. These trees are commonly used as Christmas trees! They can live for up to 1000 years.
- Horse chestnut trees: There are many different types of chestnut trees that can be found in temperate forests in the northern hemisphere. Horse chestnut trees produce seeds known more commonly as conkers. Conkers are found inside spiky green shells. Conkers are toxic and should not be confused with other edible types of chestnut. The leaves have 5 to 7 pointed segments, spreading out from a central stem. Horse chestnut wood is softer and not very strong. Horse chestnut trees can live for up to 300 years.
- Sycamore trees: They have palmate leaves, meaning that they look like an open hand, with around 5 small leaflets attached around a central point. Once the flowers have been pollinated, they develop into small, winged fruits called samaras. These are more commonly called 'helicopters' as they twirl and spin as they fall from trees. They can live for around 400 years.

Animals Found in UK Woodland and Forests

- Many animals and birds live in UK forests and woodlands including squirrels, foxes, badgers, moles, wild rabbits, red deer, hedgehogs, dormice, bats, owls, woodpeckers and snakes.
- Squirrels: Both red and grey squirrels can be found in the UK. Red squirrels are native to the UK, whereas grey squirrels were introduced from North America. Squirrels have bushy tails that help them to balance when climbing. They eat nuts, fruit and seeds.
- Foxes: Foxes have brown, reddish-orange fur with white patches on their tummies, chins and at the ends of their tails. They can live in urban or rural areas. Baby foxes are called cubs. Male foxes are called dogs and females are called vixens.
- Badgers: Badgers are nocturnal mammals with distinctive black and white striped faces. They can grow quite large - up to around 1 metre in length. They have a predominantly black or grey body. They live in a sett, which is an underground burrow. Baby badgers are called cubs. Male badgers are called boars and females are called sows.



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- **Moles:** Moles are small mammals with long snouts and dark, velvety fur. They have large front paws with strong claws. They use these for digging tunnels underground. They have very small ears and eyes. They spend most of their time underground. Molehills can sometimes be seen in parks, fields and woods - these show where moles have been digging tunnels under the soil
- **Wild rabbits:** Wild rabbits are small mammals with light brown fur. They have long ears. Rabbits also have long, powerful back legs and small, fluffy tails. They are good at jumping and digging. They live in underground burrows called warrens. Rabbits mainly eat grass but also eat leaves, buds, lettuce and root vegetables. A male rabbit is called a buck and females are called does. Baby rabbits are called kits or kittens.
- **Red deer:** Red deer are large mammals. They usually have a brownish-red fur with lighter fur around their tails. They can stand over a metre tall. They have large ears and male deer, stags, often have large antlers. They eat grass, plants and leaves.
- **Hedgehogs:** Hedgehogs are small mammals with long, dark prickles covering their upper bodies. They are sometimes called hedgepigs. They have a long snout and small ears. Young hedgehogs are called hoglets. When hedgehogs feel threatened they curl up into a ball. Hedgehogs are nocturnal but can sometimes be seen in gardens in the evening. If they are seen in the daytime, especially if they look like they're sunbathing, this is an indication that the hedgehog is very ill and in need of rescue.
- **Dormice:** Dormice are small mammals that have light-brown fur and long furry tails. They are nocturnal so are rarely seen during the day. They hibernate during the colder months of the year. They mainly eat flowers, nuts and fruit.
- **Bats:** Bats are small, dark-coloured mammals with wings. Thin skin is stretched between very long thin bones to form the bat's wings. They have furry bodies. Bats mainly eat small insects. They hibernate during the winter and hang upside down to sleep.
- **Tawny owls:** Tawny owls are mainly brown with a speckled appearance. They have a brown stripe of feathers between their eyes, running down to their beak. They have a wingspan of about 100cm. They are nocturnal and hunt between dusk and dawn. They mainly eat small mammals, rodents and insects.
- **Lesser spotted woodpeckers:** Lesser spotted woodpeckers are quite small birds that often live high up in trees. They are the smallest and rarest type of woodpecker in the UK. Males have a distinctive red stripe on their heads. They have brown/black and white striped bodies and wings. They have strong, sharp beaks for pecking into tree trunks when looking for insects to eat.
- **Common adders:** Common adders are a type of snake. They are venomous but usually shy and non-aggressive. They are also known as vipers. They vary in colour, with males usually being grey and females brown. They have a diamond or zigzag pattern along their bodies.



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Fun Facts

- Apart from the oceans, the taiga is the world's largest biome (a complex community of plants and animals found in a region / climate).
- Trees provide oxygen that humans and other animals need to survive.
- Some of the oldest trees in the world are a species called the Great Basin bristlecone pine, found in the California in the United States of America. They are believed to be around 5000 years old.
- Acorns are not produced by oak trees until the tree is at least 40 years old.
- In 1841, Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria, introduced a German custom of decorating a spruce tree with lights for the festive season. Since then, Norway spruces have often been used as Christmas trees throughout much of Europe.
- Each year, Norway gives a large Norway spruce to the UK for use as a Christmas tree. This is decorated and placed in Trafalgar Square in London. This annual gift is given as a token of gratitude for British support to Norway during the Second World War.
- By counting the growth rings of a tree trunk, it is possible to work out how old the tree is.
- Hedgehogs are covered with between 5000 to 7000 spines!
- Bats are the only mammals that can fly. Many people believe that bats are blind, but they actually have good vision. At night, they use their ears more to detect and locate objects and prey. This is a sonar system called echolocation.
- The 'twit twoo' sounds made by tawny owls are actually made by pairs of owls communicating with each other. Females make the first sound and males respond with the second part of the sound.