

Wild Cherry *Crann silíní fiáin*



Conservation Volunteers
Northern Ireland

Prunus avium



DESCRIPTION

The wild cherry is a deciduous tree, usually with a single trunk, native to most of Europe. It can exceed 20m (60ft) in height, though it is often smaller.

In May, it is covered with a mass of white blossom that attract many insects, including bees, which act as pollinators. The cherries ripen to a deep red and contain a single stone. They are swallowed by birds and the seeds scattered through the countryside.

Preferring fertile soils and good light, it grows at the edge of woodlands or as part of the understorey layer where the canopy is reasonably open. It also occurs in hedges. More than one plant is needed to produce fruits.

PROPAGATION

Gather the cherries in July as soon as they ripen. Remove the flesh and mix the stones with moist sand or compost.

Place in pots, add a label for identification and position outside, well protected from mice. Leave them for the following autumn and winter.

Check the seeds in early spring and sow as soon as there are signs of germination. Leave undisturbed until autumn. Protect from mice and birds during early stages of growth.

INTERESTING FACTS

- The wild cherry is the parent of garden cherries.
- Wounds, caused by cutting in summer, can cause excessive 'bleeding' of sap.
- A good cherry crop is said to foretell good fortune.
- Wasps strip flesh from ripe berries and leave the bare stones.
- The wood is used for furniture (usually as veneer), for making pipes and fine carving.
- Depending on the amount of sunshine, the cherries may be sweet and delicious, or bitter.

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