

Rowan

Caorthann



Conservation Volunteers
Northern Ireland

Sorbus aucuparia



DESCRIPTION

A small deciduous tree reaching 15m (45ft), often much less. It bears creamy-white flowers in large, flattened clusters, which are followed by berries, green at first, then becoming orange and finally scarlet. The flowers appear in May and June. The berries are ripe in August and September.

Rowan is a tree of light soils, avoiding clays, being found in scrub and open woodland and also on open moorland, where it grows well on acid peat. It thrives best in open positions, though it will grow in shade and is very wind-tolerant. Rowan grows at higher altitudes than any other tree, up to 600m where there is shelter.

PROPAGATION

Collect the berries towards the end of August as they soften, but before the birds get them all.

Extract the seeds carefully from the flesh (the seeds are delicate) by pulping and mix them with compost. Store in pots, outside, until the following spring. Protect from birds.

In late March, sow the seeds on seedbeds or in trays of compost and cover with a thin layer of grit (3-5mm). Firm them in and keep well watered. The seedlings should appear within 14 days.

INTERESTING FACTS

- The leaves are superficially ash-like and give the tree its other common name, mountain ash.
- Very fast growing when young, rowan also regenerates quickly when cut.
- The leaves often turn yellow and red before falling in the autumn.
- The berries are taken by many birds, particularly thrushes. They are also enjoyed by blackbirds, bullfinches, redwings, fieldfares and waxwings. Their abundance is a major factor in bird migration behaviour.

Tree Nursery

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