

Lurgan Park Tree Trail

1. Start

Hello and welcome to Lurgan Park tree trail.

The Park is home to lots of different trees, each with its own unique characteristics. You will find both native and non-native trees in the Park, including trees that were planted hundreds of years ago by the Brownlow family when the Park was part of their garden attached to their magnificent house. However, most of the trees you will come across today were planted after the opening of Lurgan Park in 1909.

The tree trail is circular and will take about an hour to complete. Along the way, you will encounter 13 different trees and a few others as you go...

We hope you enjoy the trail and have a great time discovering the Park's beautiful trees!

To find your first tree, turn left onto the path that leads towards the tennis courts and bowling pavilion. Your first tree can be found on your right hand side.

2. Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*)

Here we have the Horse Chestnut, a stunning tree with large hand-like leaves, and creamy lantern like flowers that bloom in May time.

It is a popular tree in autumn time, when it produces its shiny brown conker seeds wrapped in spiky cases. In the past conkers were used to help cure coughing horses, but many of us know them from the smashing games of conkers we played as children!

Touch the bark of the tree and feel its scaly texture. The deer that used to roam around the Brownlow's garden park would have used the tree as a scratching post...

Let's continue along the path. Make sure to keep to the left hand path. On your way, you will come across the great elephant leg like trunk of a Beech tree on your right. At the tree's foot you will find the roots reaching below the ground to suck up nutrients to help it grow...

3. Hawthorn (*Craetagus laevitica*)

If you look closely, you'll find many Hawthorn trees in hedgerows in the countryside. However, this special one has been left alone to grow into a mighty tree.

Insects and birds enjoy munching on its bright red hawberries produced during autumn. But be careful! Lone Hawthorns like this are called 'fairy trees' because its believed that magical fairies live underneath them.

It's important to respect and not harm any trees, but the fairy tree has its own special rhyme: Why not say it as you pass by!

"As Fairy's own Tree, this bright briar's known; 'tis wise, to leave it alone!"

Before you go, have a look to your right at a giant English Oak standing on top of the small mound at the edge of the tennis courts. Our arboriculturist (a posh name for a tree expert) John thinks this is the finest Oak in the park! Now follow the path round, keeping to the left, past the tennis courts and bowling pavilion until you reach our next tree.

4. Elder (*Sambucus nigra*)

The Elder, also known as the 'Boretree', may be small but it's actually really old, maybe even 150 years old!

During the spring and summer, the Elder tree grows white flowers that look and smell really beautiful. When autumn comes, these flowers turn into purple berries that birds and insects love to eat. But guess what? Humans like them too with talented cooks able to turn them into delicious jams and drinks.

If you give the Elder leaves sniff, you'll notice they have a nasty smell. In the olden days, people used to plant Elder trees by their doorways to keep the flies and evil spirits out!

Keep following the path round. On your right is a tree with a silvery bark leaning out of the way of a bullying Oak tree – this is a Silver Birch. Bark is a tree's defence from the outside world, protecting it from insects, pollution and the weather. Unlike many trees, the Silver Birch's bark peels as the tree grows

allowing the tree to clean itself (a bit like taking a shower). As you make your way along the path you'll come across the next tree on your left.

5. European Larch (*Larix decidua*)

Meet the Larch tree! It's a type of conifer tree with needles instead of leaves and cones with seeds inside. The Larch is a special tree as unlike other conifer trees in the Park like Scots Pine, the Larch loses its needles in the winter.

This tree is a long way from its home in the Alps of Central Europe. It was first brought to our shores over 300 years ago, when it became a really cool tree to plant in the fancy gardens of rich families like the Brownlows.

Larch grows tall, straight and fast, and as its wood is tough and waterproof, people started planting more and more of it for boat building!

Stand back and look up. You'll see this Larch, looks a bit sick. That's because pollution from vehicles is hurting it. It's a reminder that we need to take care of our planet and do our best to keep it clean and healthy!

Let's get going again. Walk towards the orange-bricked gate lodge and past the Fountain to discover the next tree...

6. Whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*)

Say hello to the Whitebeam tree!

It's rare to find this elegant tree in the wild, but you can see it in parks and gardens where it adds a delightful touch to the scenery. It's part of the rose family and grows lovely white blossoms in May. When autumn comes, these blossoms turn into red berries that birds love to gobble up!

Did you know that Whitebeam wood is really hard? Long ago, the wood was used to make cogs for the spinning wheels and looms on which Lurgan weavers made linen cloth to sell around the world.

If you look closely at the leaves of the Whitebeam, you'll see tiny white hairs. These hairs help the tree keep its water and protect it from insect attack, kind of like the hairs on your arms!

Now walk on past the gate lodge, which housed the Park Keeper who used to look after the Park. Follow the path down towards the Lake, where you will find the next tree on your right.

7. Oak (*Quercus cerris*)

Here we have the King of the Woodlands, the powerful Oak tree - a symbol of strength and long life, and sacred to many ancient people including the Celts and Vikings. It is easy to recognize with its notched leaves and acorn seeds.

But guess what? The Oak tree here is a bit of a pretender, for it is a Turkey Oak, which comes from...Turkey! The leaves look a wee bit like Turkey feet too! Although a beautiful tree, our insects much prefer our English and Irish Oak trees, which are home to over 300 different insect species!

We can tell how old a tree is by measuring around its trunk – the thicker the trunk, the older the tree. This Turkey Oak may be over 150 years old! While you are here, why not give the tree a BIG hug...

Keep following the path down towards the Lake...

You are half way through the trail so why not take a break and sit down on the seating surrounding the AE tree to your right on the grassy mound. The tree is named in honour of the artist and poet George 'AE' Russell, one of Lurgan's most famous people, who spent his childhood playing in the Park.

When you are ready, make your way back to the path and continue to walk along the Lake edge where you will meet the next tree at the corner of the Play Park...

8. Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*)

Standing tall and proud we have the fast growing Sycamore tree. Loads of Sycamores were planted in parks and gardens as their huge leaves provided shaded cover from the hot sun. You will also find many of them around the edge of the Park, planted to provide protection from the wind as the Sycamore's deep roots hold it firm to the ground in even the strongest of winds!

In the autumn, the tree produces winged 'helicopter' seeds, which the wind carries to new places. A single tree can produce 10,000 seeds each year; so it is

no surprise that Sycamore is one of the most common trees you will find in parks and woodlands. In fact, some people call it a 'weed tree' because there are so many of them!

While you are here, why not pay a visit to the Play Park and spin around like a helicopter seed on the roundabout...

Continue along the path around the Lakeside. Can you spot the next tree? It will be standing tall on your left. As you walk, enjoy the sounds of our beautiful Lake – and listen out for the birds who love to spend time here...

9. White Willow (*Salix alba*)

Nestled on the corner of the Lake is a White Willow, a water-loving, fast growing tree, with drooping branches and shimmering leaves that provide shelter for the birds on the Lake.

In the past, people grew stacks of willow around the shores of Lough Neagh as its bendy branches were perfect for making baskets, the carrier bag of the past!

It was also part of our ancestor's medicine cupboard, as in a world without aspirin, the willow's bark was your go to for pain relief! It was chewed to treat headaches and toothaches...but care had to be taken, for eating too much could cause diarrhoea.

The cricket bats used by the Victoria Cricket Club in the Park are made of hard, shock resistant willow wood. Next to the club's pavilion, you will find a Eucalyptus tree, all the way from Australia! It symbolizes the Ashes cricket rivalry between England and Australia...

Let's get moving again. Walk straight ahead, keeping the Lake to your left. Your next tree is not too far away.

10. Common Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*)

The Ash is one of our most wonderful trees. With its branches reaching high to the sky and long roots spreading deep underground, it is not surprising that our ancestors long ago believed it was a magical tree connecting the heavens to the earth! The leaves are amazing too as they follow the sun about to make sure they get as much light as possible to help the tree grow!

One reason people love the Ash so much, is for the light, springy, hard wood it produces, which has been used to make all sorts of things such as spear shafts, chariots, furniture, aeroplanes, tool handles and hurling sticks. In fact, the wood is so useful that the Brownlow family ordered the people living on their land to plant lots of Ash trees!

Sadly many of our Ash trees are getting sick from a disease and may not be around for much longer. So while you are here let's make a little wish for this Ash tree:

Oh Ash Tree! Oh Ash Tree! I wish you well! You'll stay fit and healthy and all will be well!

Keep following the path until you reach our next tree on the left. As you walk, see if you can find another grand old English Oak on your right near a park bench. Paul, a tree expert with the Friends of Lurgan Park, believes this tree is over 200 years old, making it one of the oldest in the Park! Ireland was once covered with forests of such Oaks, with over 1,600 place names in Ireland containing the name Derry meaning oak wood. You may have heard of some local places like Derrymacash, Derrytrasna and Derrytagh...

11. Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*)

The Alder, also called the 'swamp dweller', is a tough tree that loves to be close to water. It is a great helper for other trees as its roots have special bacteria that help provide nutrients for the soil that allow other trees to grow.

The wood of Alder is special too, as it does not rot when underwater, instead turning harder. In fact, it is so strong that the warriors of old made their shields from soaked alder wood to protect them in battle! It also explains why the city of Venice was built on alder foundations!

Check out the Alder's flowers in the spring and cones in the winter. In the past they were used to make brown and green dyes for clothes. Rumor has it that even fairies used the dye to camouflage their clothes. See if you can spot the doorway to a fairy house in the trees above...

Let's keep going, as you walk, take time to admire the spectacular Poplar tree on your right with its diamond shaped bark. When you reach the end of the

path, turn left and walk over the bridge to find our next tree on the left along the Lake edge...

12. Hazel (*Corylus avellana*)

This is the Hazel, a small tree, which will often be found growing beneath larger trees in the woods. It is one of our most helpful trees as its bendy branches and rods can be twisted, knotted and woven to make all sorts of things like baskets, boats, fencing, furniture, and houses!

Watch out in February for its hanging flowers, which look a bit like lambs tails! But you have to be quick to spot the hazelnuts produced in the autumn, which are guzzled up by the greedy birds and squirrels of the Park. We humans, too have been munching on hazelnuts since the Stone Age!

In the past Hazel was regarded as a tree of knowledge and wisdom with even magic wands made from its wood. So while you are here, let's test what you have learned so far on the trail!

First question: What was the name of the family who used the Park as their garden?

Answer: The Brownlow Family

Second question: What is the name of the tree that the fairies live beneath?

Answer: The Hawthorn!

And the final question: What tree did the warriors of old make their shields from?

Answer: The Alder!

Well done! How many questions did you get correct? Let's keep walking, when you reach the crossroads, turn right for the most enchanted part of the trail....

13. Poplar (*Populus xxx*)

Standing either side of you are rows of Poplars creating a fairy tale stretch of path. They are tall and fast growing trees whose droopy spikes of flowers are an important early food source in spring for our bees and insects.

Poplars love wet soils, and we now often plant them to clean up our environment as their monster root systems suck up all sorts of nasty chemicals from the ground, acting a bit like a Hoover!

Did you know too that the world's most famous painting, the Mona Lisa, was painted on Poplar Wood? The Poplar is a truly special tree!

You might think these trees are all the same, but the row is actually made up of Grey and White Poplar trees – just 2 of the over 30 Poplar species that exist!

Continue along the path over the bridge and turn right onto the tree lined Avenue, which was first planted 300 years ago and led all the way to the entrance of the Brownlow's house ...

14. Common Lime (*Tilia x europea*)

There are possibly only one or two survivors of the original Avenue, which you can see near the gate lodge. Sadly, all the other old trees were cut down and sold for wood.

Happily, when the Council opened the Park they replanted the Lime trees, so we can all still enjoy a lovely stroll down the Avenue today.

During the summer months, the Avenue is even more beautiful when the trees produce sweet-smelling greenish-yellow flowers that the bees find irresistible! These flowers can also help us feel calm and relaxed too, with Linden tea made from them, which is a fantastic way to treat stress and worry. In fact, if you go onto the main street of Lurgan you will find more Lime trees, which have been planted to help remove the stress from shopping!

Enjoy your walk along the Avenue back to the starting point. Why not count how many Lime trees there are in the Avenue as you walk? Just watch out for a few Chestnut trees nearby!

15. Finish

We have now come to the end of the Tree Trail! We hope you've had a great time learning about the incredible trees of Lurgan Park.

Congratulations, you have just walked 1.2 miles. Did you know walking is a great way to stay fit and healthy? A brisk walk in nature can help boost your mood, reduce stress, and improve your concentration. Try walking a little further each day. Every step counts!

Thank you for coming to Lurgan Park today, we hope you have enjoyed the experience.

Please come again soon and try one of our other audio trails.

Safe home