

Hawthorn Tree Activity

Suggested activity time

5 minutes

You will need

Leaf ID sheet

Seed ID sheet



For **Curriculum links and learning objectives** see the Autumn programme

Activity

Gather the children around the tree and ask them if they can find anything along its branches which they have not found on other trees. Hopefully they will point out that it has thorns – this should help the pupils decide what tree it is. For this reason, do not let the children hug the tree. Perhaps, if they are very careful, they may touch the thorns gently.

Ask the pupils why they think the hawthorn tree has thorns. It is to provide it with protection.

Hold a leaf up to show the pupils the shape. Ask them to describe it. It is one of the smallest leaves the children will find on their park visit. Some children may find it similar in appearance to the Oak leaf. To show them the differences, it is recommended that an Oak leaf and Hawthorn leaf be held up at the same time to show the differences.

Ask the pupils if they can see anything growing on the tree which would provide food for wildlife. They should be able to point out the red berries. The proper name for the berry is 'haw', hence the name, 'Hawthorn'.

Explain to the group that the haws are an excellent source of food for birds, especially thrushes. In a similar way to the holly, the bird will eat the berry, fly to a new part of the park and pop the seed out once it goes to the toilet.

Animals that benefit from the Hawthorn

The Hawthorn benefits lots of insect species e.g. Hawthorn shield bug, earwig, common flower bug, bumblebees, cockchafers, etc. These are then eaten by other predators, like the Devils' coach horse, violet ground beetle, harvestman, garden spider, wren, blue tit, etc. Blackbirds and other thrushes (including redwings and fieldfares), greenfinches, yellowhammers, chaffinches, starlings and many other birds love the red haws in autumn. Small mammals, birds, insects and other invertebrates nest, roost and/or hibernate here e.g. wood mouse, wren, robin, blackbird, song thrush, brimstone and peacock butterflies, lacewing, ladybird, slow worm, common toad, etc.

The **ParkLife** project helps local people get outdoors and explore nature in Belfast's wonderful parks



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