

October

Zoom in on fruits of autumn



Hazelnuts



Snowberries



Sloes



Ash keys



Herald moth on vetch pods

Background information

The part of the plant where seeds are kept is called the fruit. These seeds are protected by the fruit. The fruit also helps the seed to disperse away from the parent plant. Most fruit are formed from the plant's ovary.

Types

Two types: succulent fruit and dry fruit. Succulent fruit are often delicious to eat and are composed of fleshy layers. Succulent ones with a stone in the middle (a seed with a hard, outer case) are called drupes. Sloes and cherries are drupes. Berries are succulents which contain lots of seed. Apples are pomes-fruit with a fleshy outer layer which contains a core with seed.

Dry fruit are cases containing seeds. Nuts contain one seed. Achenes are dry fruit with wings such as ash keys or sycamore 'helicopters'. Pods or legumes contain seed which scatter when the pod splits. The dry fruit of cereals are called grains or kernels.

Common fruits of the hedgerow

| Plant | Irish name | Fruit | Remarks |
|---------------------|----------------------|------------|--|
| Wild rose | <i>Feirdhis</i> | Hip | Collected during WWII by children for vitamin C. |
| Hawthorn | <i>Sceach gheal</i> | Haw | Good for birds; jelly. |
| Guelder rose | <i>Rós Ollannach</i> | Red berry | Good for jellies, sauces. |
| Holly | <i>Cuilleann</i> | Red berry | Good for birds. |
| Elder | <i>Trom</i> | Elderberry | Good for wines, cordials, jellies. |
| Blackthorn | <i>Draighean</i> | Sloe | Good for sloe gin, liqueurs. |
| Ivy | <i>Eidhneán</i> | Blackberry | Good for birds in spring. |
| Bramble | <i>Drís</i> | Blackberry | Good to eat raw; used in jams, jellies. |

Literacy/Litearthacht

Fruit/Toradh: The part of the plant in which seeds are kept. *An chuid de phlanda ina gcoinnítear síolta.*

Drupe/Drúp: Fruit with hard stone-like seed in the middle e.g. sloe. *Toradh le síol cúa ina lár ar nós cloiche, airne, mar shampla.*

Berry/Caor: Succulent fruit with lots of seed e.g. orange. *Toradh súmhar le go leor síolta, oráiste, mar shampla.*

Achene/Aicéin: Dry fruit with wings e.g. ash keys. *Toradh tirim le sciatháin, sciatháin fhuinseoige, mar shampla.*

Kernel/Eithne: Dry fruit of cereal. *Toradh tirim arbhair.*

Sloe/Airne: Fruit of blackthorn. *Toradh draighin.*

Hip/Mogóir: Fruit of rose. *Toradh róis.*

Some folklore and sayings relating to wild fruit

- ☞ Blackberries were never eaten after Samhain because it was believed that the púca spat on them then and made them inedible.
- ☞ *An sméar mullaigh* – the cream of the crop.
- ☞ *Ní fiú sméar san fhómhar é* – it's not worth an autumn blackberry.
- ☞ *Chomh fairsing le sméara* – as widespread as blackberries
- ☞ *Béal eidhneáin, croí cuilinn* – ivy mouth, holly heart (devout but hard hearted).
- ☞ When all fruit fails, welcome haws.
- ☞ When the fruit is scarcest, the taste is sweetest.

Fruit help to scatter their seed by –

Wind: Censer Mechanism (Poppy capsules), Parachutes (Dandelion, hairy willow-herb), Wings (Achenes of elm, sycamore, ash)

Water: Fruit of water lilies

Explosion: Pods of furze, birdsfoot trefoil, peas

Animals/Humans: Hooked fruit of cleavers, lesser burdock

Rodents: Nuts of beech, oak, hazel, chestnut

Birds: Cherries, ivy berries, wild strawberries, rowan berries, hips, haws, blackberries



Guelder rose berries

Active learning indoors and outdoors**Indoors**

- ☞ Plants from pips and fruit stones. Soak the pips of apples, pears, raspberries, blackcurrants, cherries, oranges, grape-fruits and lemons in water for a couple of days. Place them in clear plastic bags half-filled with damp seed compost. Buy this or make by mixing half horticultural or play sand with half peat-free compost. Leave the labelled bags in a warm place such as a sunny window sill. When three leaves appear transfer the seedlings into small pots of peat-free compost. Leave them in a warm place.
- ☞ Make delicious treats from blackberries such as ice lollies, blackberry swirly whirly, bramble jelly, fruity berry smoothies by following the recipes on www.naturedetectives.org.uk. Here find blackberry colouring sheets, blackberry poems, blackberry cartoons and a bramble maze.
- ☞ Construct a hedgerow in a box. See www.blackrockec.ie Click on 'Paddy's School Garden' October Projects.

Outdoors

- ☞ Grow strawberries in a raised bed. See <http://bit.ly/PDr7Ki>
- ☞ Grow autumn-fruiting raspberries in a sunny strip of ground about a metre wide. Dig the ground removing all weeds and incorporate plenty of organic matter in the soil. Choose a variety such as 'Autumn Bliss' and plant c. 40cm apart. Cut the canes down to 22cm. Apply sulphate of potash around the plants and mulch with manure. They don't need staking. Enjoy eating the fruit from September to November. In February each year cut the canes down to 10cm, feed and mulch. See www.gardenersworld.com and www.telegraph.co.uk
- ☞ Plant heritage apple trees in a sunny, sheltered part of the grounds from October to December. Buy these from www.irishseedsavers.ie See www.gardenplansireland.com for planting instructions.
- ☞ Plant thornless blackberries. See www.gardenguides.com



Elderberries



Sycamore samara



Haws

Useful websites

Websites mentioned plus:

- ☞ www.countrylovers.co.uk
- ☞ www.dole.com Lesson plans on fruit

Useful books

- ☞ *Food for Free* (2004) by Richard Mabey
- ☞ *Wild Food* (1983) by Roger Phillips
- ☞ *Talking Wild* (2002) by Eanna Ní Lamhna
- ☞ *Irish Wild Plants Myths, Legends & Folklore* (2006) by Niall Mac Coitir
- ☞ *The Usborne Science Encyclopedia* (2002)
- ☞ *Complete Irish Wildlife* (2004, Collins) by Paul Sterry

Strand Units covered this month

Environmental awareness, Caring for the environment, Plant and animal life, The local natural environment, Story.



PADDY MADDEN lectures on SESE in Coláiste Mhuire, Marino Institute of Education. He is a Heritage in School specialist - see www.into.ie. His latest book, the third reprint of *Go Wild at School* is available for €15 plus €3 p&p from paddy.madden@mie.ie He is also the author of *The School Garden - What to do and when to do it* - available for €10 plus €2 p&p. Both books cost €28 (includes p&p). Thanks to Eamon O Murchú for all photos except sloes.