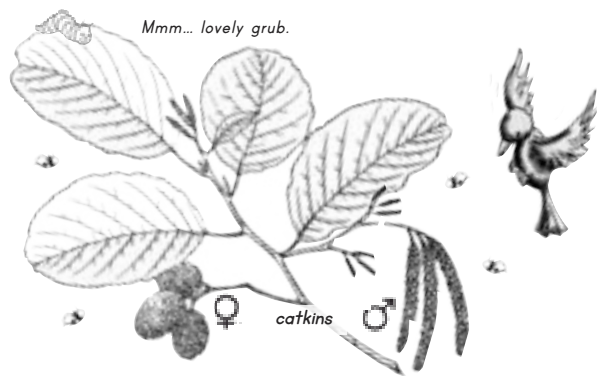


The leaves are oval and often have a little dent in the end. The tree has male flowers in droopy clusters called 'catkins' as they can look like a kitten's tail.

The alder's male catkins are red in winter but turn yellow in spring. The female catkins don't look at all like a kitten's tail as they are oval shaped and green when they come out in the spring, and then they stay on the tree for over a year, becoming woody and looking like small cones.



Great for Wildlife

Caterpillars of moths and butterflies like to eat the leaves, and bees gather nectar from the catkins. Some birds love eating the seeds, and mosses, lichens and fungi like growing on alder wood.

Alder tree roots also make the perfect nest sites for otters! (Although, there are no otters in Richmond Park.)

Mysteries

If you cut down an alder, the wood turns an orange-red colour that looks like blood. This made lots of people think that evil spirits lived in the tree and they didn't want it near their house. It's also why some people say 'touch wood' when they hope their plans won't go wrong




They also thought that the green dye from the flowers was used by the fairies to colour their clothes and perhaps was used to colour and camouflage the clothes of outlaws who lived in the forest like Robin Hood.

Tree of the Month

The water loving Alder March

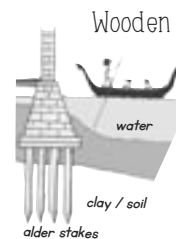
Alder trees love water and like to live in damp places particularly along riverbanks and around ponds. It is a relatively small tree and there are several different types. The alder is a member of the birch family.



 **FRIENDS of RICHMOND PARK**
 The Tree of the Month is produced by the Friends of Richmond Park
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So Many Uses for People

Over the centuries, people have used alders for lots of very different things. Because it stays very strong when wet, the wood was used to build boats and water pipes.

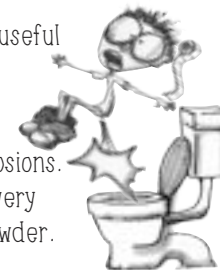


Wooden clogs were often made from alder wood.

The city of Venice was constructed on top of submerged alder trunks.

A few alder leaves placed in shoes before a long journey were said to cool the feet and prevent swelling.

But that's not all! Alder bark is very useful stuff. It can be used as a laxative to help make you poo!



Alder bark also helped to cause explosions. The charcoal from alder wood burns very hot and so it was used to make gunpowder.

Nowadays, alders are often used to improve the soil on land that has been damaged by industry so that it's more nourishing for wildlife. Alders do this by helping to increase the amount of nitrogen available in the soil.

Where to find this tree in Richmond Park

- By the corner of the causeway and Lower Pen Pond
- By Beverley Brook near Roehampton Gate Car Park.

