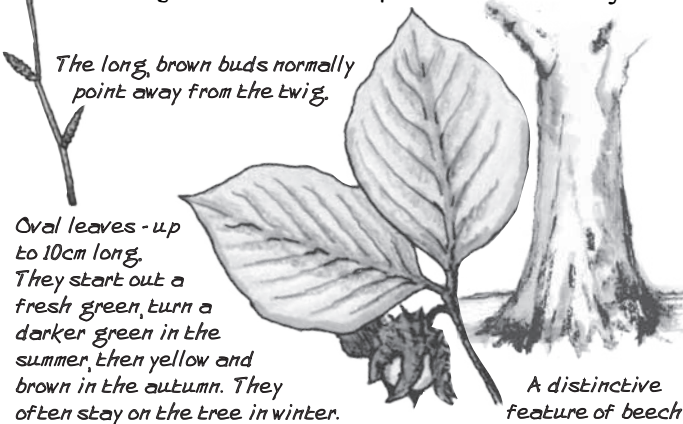


## What does It Look Like?

Reaching upto 35m in height, it has a broad trunk and a wide, spreading crown. It often has long, straight branches that spread out horizontally.

The long, brown buds normally point away from the twig.



Oval leaves - up to 10cm long. They start out a fresh green, turn a darker green in the summer, then yellow and brown in the autumn. They often stay on the tree in winter.

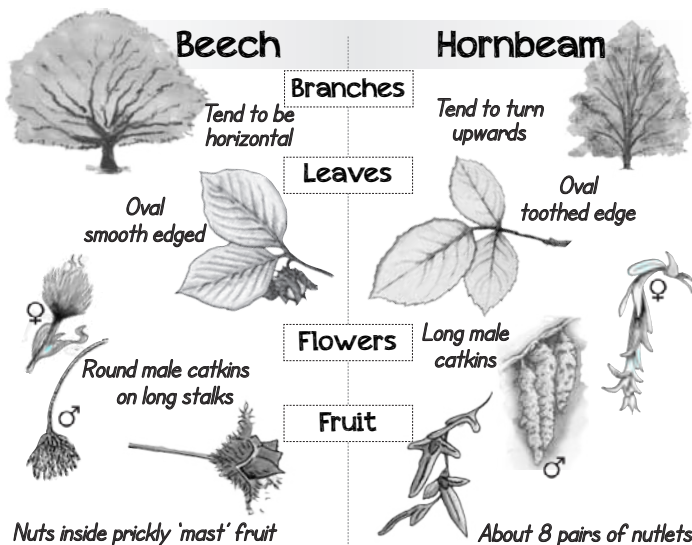
A distinctive feature of beech is the grey bark that is normally much smoother than the bark of most other trees.

The fruits are nuts that grow inside a prickly case, called beech 'mast'. They can be seen clearly in winter when they have fallen to the ground, making it easy to identify the tree.

## Spot the Difference - Beech or Hornbeam?

There is another tree very similar to beech which is also widespread throughout the Park. It is called **hornbeam**.

Lots of people get confused between them. Here are some of their differences.



# Tree of the Month

## Beech

## August

(and Hornbeam)

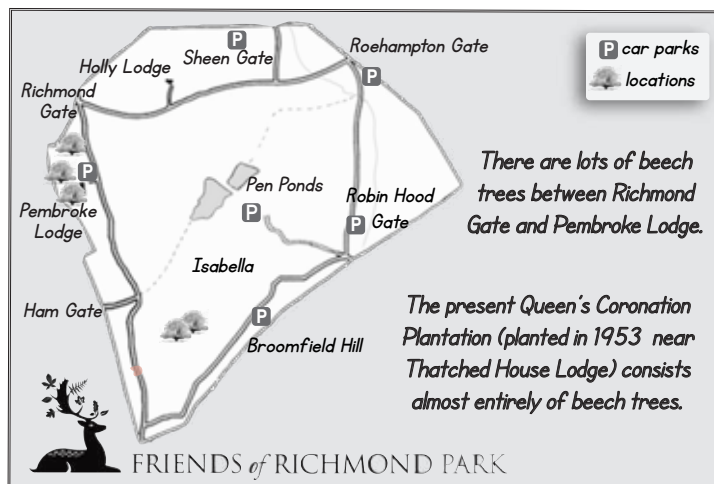


If the oak is the king of our Great British trees, then the beech tree, often linked to femininity, is the queen.

The beech is a sturdy and imposing tree which can grow for 250 years and is one of Britain's commonest trees. It is native to large parts of southern England.

## Where to Find Beech in the Park

In Richmond Park about a fifth of all the trees are beech and have been planted extensively to provide food for the deer.



## History & Use

In the past...

- Beech leaves were used in medicine to reduce swelling.
- Beech leaves were often used instead of feathers as a stuffing for pillows.
- Beech and hazel twigs were used for 'divining' - looking for hidden sources of water, usually underground.
- Beech holds on to most of its leaves throughout the winter and so is often used for hedging.
- Beech produces good quality fine-grained timber often used in chairmaking. In the Chilterns, people who made chairs were called 'bodgers', which now is a term indicating bad craftsmanship.

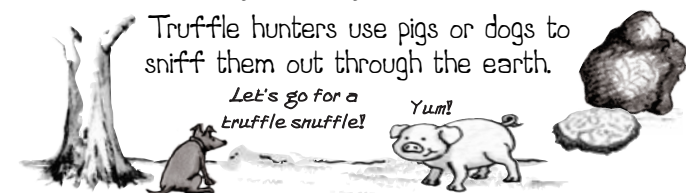


Oh. *THOSE* chairs!



## Kitchen Corner

- The wood burns well and is sometimes used for smoking fish and other foods.
- We can eat fresh beech leaves - usually in a salad.
- A lot of 'foody' people get excited by a fungus that grows on the roots of beech trees. They are called truffles, and they are very expensive.



## Value To wildlife

The leaves cast a very intense shade, under which few plants can survive unless they flower in the spring, like bluebells.

Birds like jays and brambling love the beechnuts that grow inside the mast. So do mice, voles and squirrels and, of course, the deer of Richmond Park.

The Tree of the Month is produced by the Friends of Richmond Park  
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