



Riverside Naturally



There is a surprising number of different tree species to be seen along the Forth in Riverside and Forthside. In fact there are more than two dozen species, plus the fruit trees in the orchard. As there is so much to take in, the guide is divided into three walks.

This first stage is from Cambuskenneth Footbridge to the Community Orchard. It is a linear walk that introduces you to *goat willow; weeping willow; red oak; Scots pine; lime; birch; rowan; spindle; aspen and both wild and ornamental cherries.*

There is a second linear walk from the **Community Orchard to Lovers Walk** which continues from the end of this walk. It introduces you to *sycamore; maple; hornbeam; beech; elder; cockspur thorn and oak.*

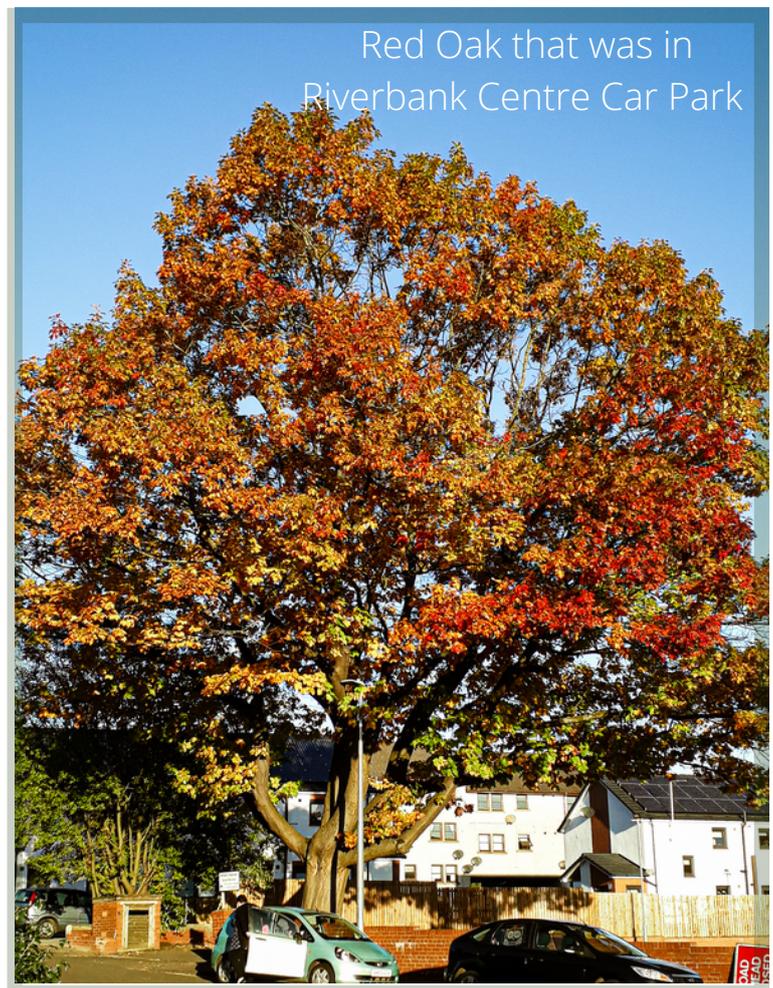
The third walk, **The Old Harbour and Forthside** is a circular walk which provides an opportunity to refamiliarise yourself with many of the trees that you have met on the first two. It is also a first chance to be introduced to *yew; horse chestnut; elm; hazel; white poplar, hawthorn and holly.*



Start the walk on the ramp of the footbridge, before it crosses the river.

To your left as you face Cambuskenneth there is a small tree in the grass between the bridge and the footpath. This sapling was planted by the Council in early 2020. There had been a beautiful mature red oak in the car park of the Riverbank Centre, opposite the school gates. It was removed in 2018 because of disease but it was decided not to replace it. Riverside Naturally asked Stirling Council to plant another red oak in Riverside.

Red oak is a North American species and is planted here for its beautiful autumn colours. Native birds, bugs etc have evolved here to take advantage of the opportunities for food and shelter offered by native trees, and are not as well adapted to the opportunities that non-natives such as the red oak offer. Oaks are generally very good homes for a wide range of wildlife and while not as hospitable as native oaks, the red oak's catkins provide pollen for bees and other insects in spring, and its acorns are eaten by birds and small mammals.



Red Oak that was in Riverbank Centre Car Park

Stay on the footbridge and look to the right as you face Cambuskenneth. There is another newly planted tree here. This tree is probably a white willow. There are several native species of willow which often hybridise, making positive identification difficult. Some willows have also been crossed with non-native weeping varieties and this may be a commercially produced 'weeping willow'. There are similar willows just across the river in Cambuskenneth. As you continue this walk you will also see a fine example of a broad leafed willow - the goat willow.



Young weeping willow



Weeping willow in Cambuskenneth

There are also many willows along the riverbank as it meanders through the fields. Most are crack willow. It too has narrow leaves. Its is brittle and easily breaks (with a crack). Twigs and bigger pieces of branch can root easily in damp soil.

Caterpillars of several moth species feed on willow leaves. Their catkins provide nectar and pollen for bees and other insects early in the year. The branches make good nesting and roosting sites for birds.

Walk down the steps to the left and start the walk along the river path. The path is lined with ornamental cherry trees and the river bank has many self seeded ash and other trees. We will say more about these species later. Across the grass the trees along the road side of the grass are mainly limes, although there are also some red sycamores.



Lime is a native tree which is now often planted in parks and open spaces. Lime leaves are very attractive to aphids, which deposit a sticky 'honeydew' on the leaves. Bees are attracted to this, and to the flowers when they are open. Lime wood is soft and light and easy to work. It is used in wood turning, carving and furniture making. The wood does not warp and is used to make piano keys. Lime bark was traditionally used to make rope



Continue towards the orchard. Just before the 'no golf' sign there is a broad leaved willow.



This is a **goat willow**. It can grow to 10 metres and live up to 300 years. Broad leaved willows like goat willow and grey willow are sometimes called **sallows**.

Goat willow foliage is eaten by moth caterpillars. Like the narrow leaved willow earlier in the walk, catkins provide an important early source of pollen and nectar for bees, and birds forage for caterpillars and insects on willows. Goat willow is also known as 'pussy willow' because of the soft male catkins that look like cat's paws.

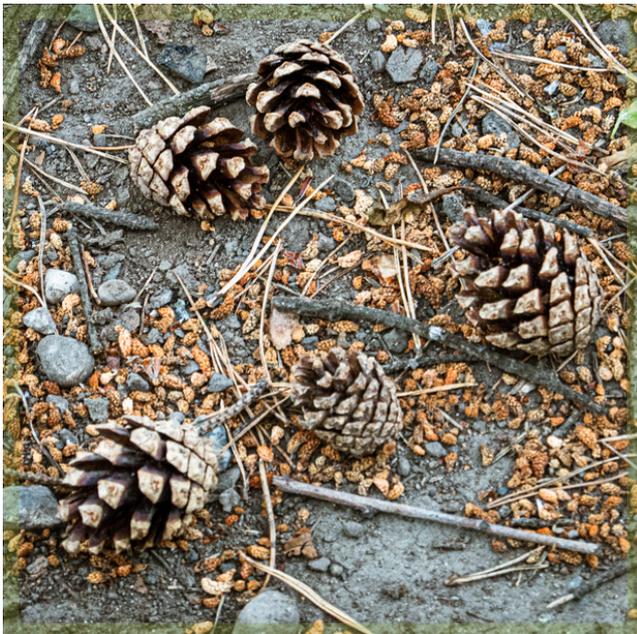
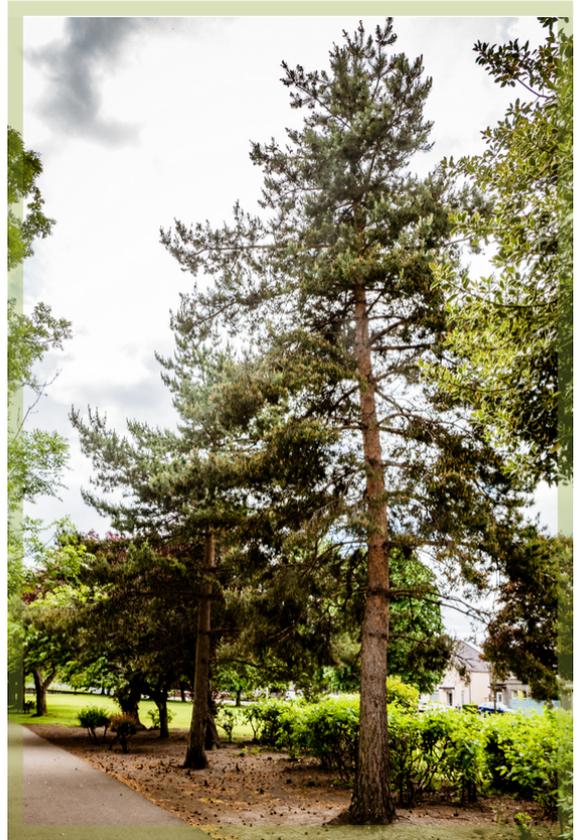


The twigs of goat willow are brittle and so not suitable for weaving, unlike the narrow leaved species of willow. The wood burns well and makes good charcoal.

Walk along the riverside path towards the orchard. In the first bed on the left of the path there are two Scots Pines.

Scots Pines grow across northern Europe and are the UK's only native pine. Mature trees grow to 35m and can live for up to 700 years, so these are just youngsters.

Really old 'granny pines' can be found in the Highlands in the remnants of the Caledonian forest. Their cones are now collected to grow new pines in various replanting and rewilding projects. If you would like support planting more Scots pines and other native trees in the Highlands take a look at the charity Trees for Life at <https://treesforlife.org.uk/>



Scots pine timber is can be used in the manufacture of telegraph poles, pit props, gate posts and fencing., but is rarely grown commercially. The tree can also be tapped for resin to make turpentine. Other traditional uses include rope made from the inner bark, tar from the roots and a dye from the cones. Dry cones can be used as kindling for fires.

Walk on towards the orchard and you will come to the second bed on your left. On the river bank beside the bed is a fine birch

This is a **downy birch**. It is similar to, and can naturally hybridise with, silver birch. You can see some fine silver birches outside the Riverbank Centre. Birch provides food and habitat for more than 300 insect species. The leaves attract aphids, providing food for ladybirds and other species further up the food chain. They are also eaten by caterpillars of many moths. Woodpeckers may nest in the trunk and the seeds are eaten by birds.



Birch wood is tough and heavy. It is used for furniture, handles and toys. It was once used to make bobbins, spools and reels for the cotton industry. The bark is used for tanning leather. Herbal medicines are made from different parts of the tree. In spring, the rising sap can be used to make refreshing drinks, and to flavour wines, ales and liqueurs.

Silver birches beside the Riverbank Centre

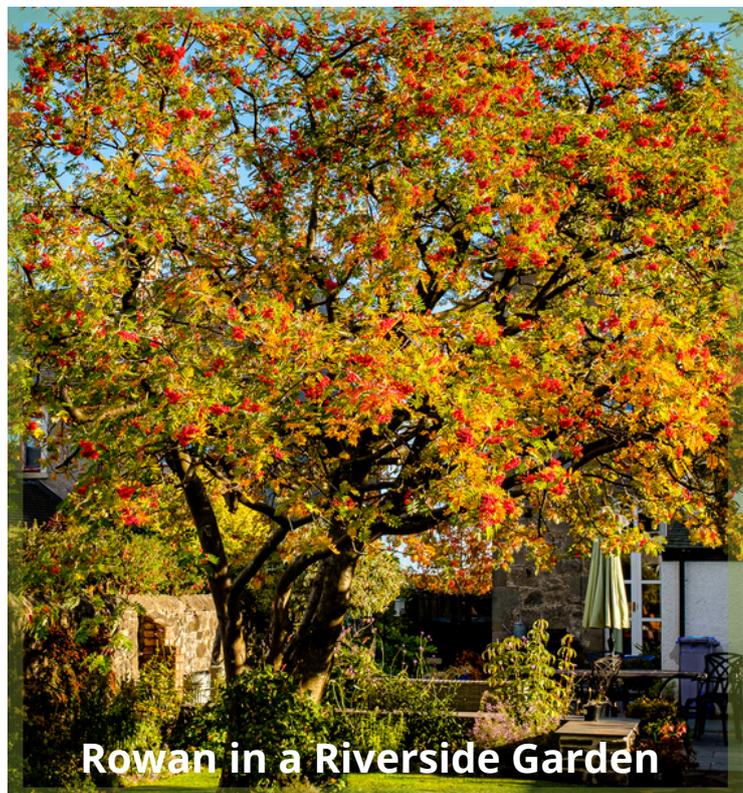


Stand with your back to the downy birch and you face an area recently adopted by Riverside Naturally to develop a woodland garden. You can find out more at: [www.https://www.riversidenaturally.org/woodland-garden](https://www.riversidenaturally.org/woodland-garden)

Several native trees which are less common in Riverside are being planted and are all labelled. **Aspen** will grow into a large tree, up to 25 metres tall and is most common in the north of Scotland. As well as having catkins which develop into fluffy seeds, they can spread by suckers. Aspen trees attract a wide variety of insects, which in turn are food for birds and ladybirds. Aspen is a favourite species for beavers, which are now back in the Forth further upstream.

Spindle is a small, bushy tree. Insects love its leaves and fruit, particularly aphids and their predators. Spindle timber is hard and dense. It was used to make spindles for spinning and holding wool, as well as skewers, toothpicks, pegs and knitting needles. It is still used to make high-quality charcoal for artists. Spindle is similar to dogwood, and cultivated forms of both are grown in gardens for autumn colour.

Rowan is at home on the hills and mountains, but equally happy in our gardens. It is a good tree for smaller gardens, growing to a maximum of 15 metres and having beautiful blossom and berries. Flowers provide pollen and nectar for bees and other pollinating insects, while the berries are good autumn food for birds, especially the blackbirds and thrushes. There is a row of rowan trees in front of the ten pin bowling in Forth Street.

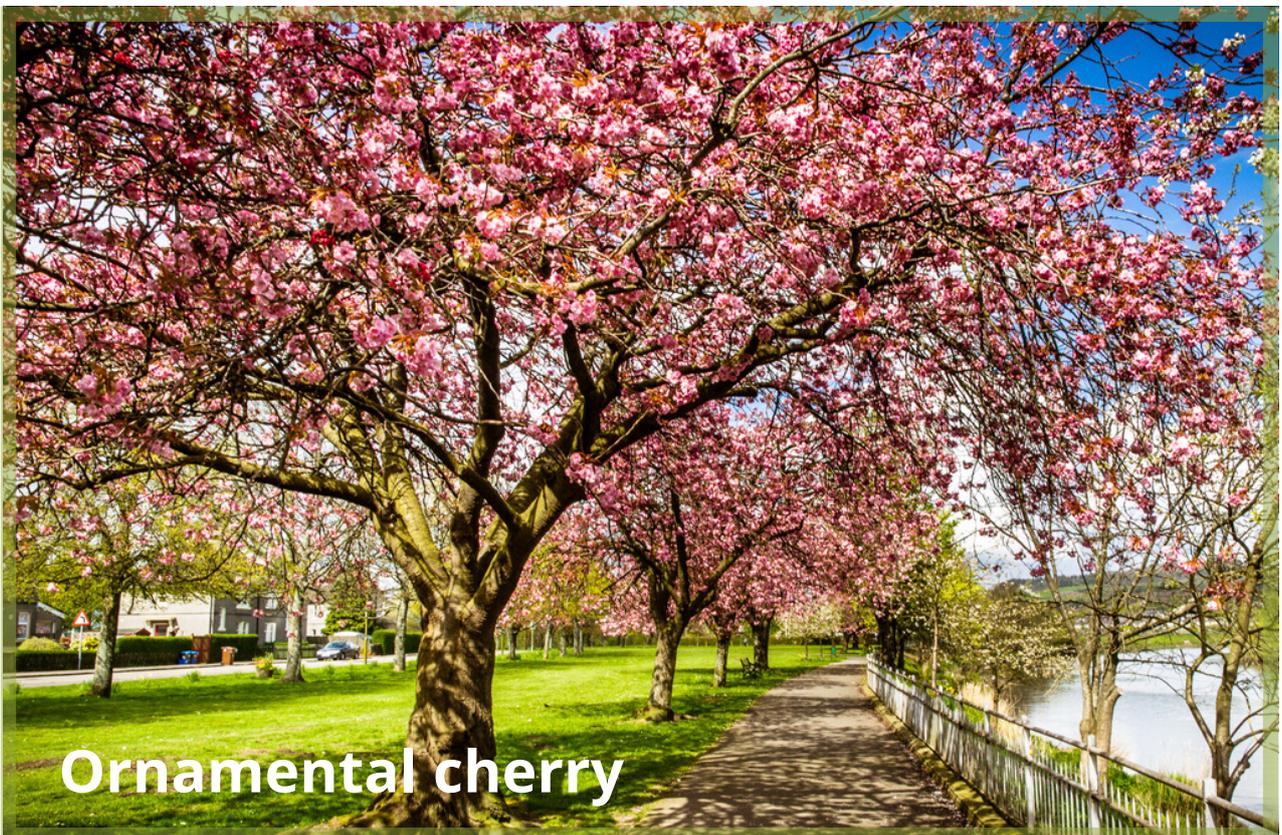


Gean or wild cherry has small white flowers which provide an early source of nectar and pollen for bees. The leaves are the main food plant for caterpillars of many species of moth and the cherries are eaten by birds and small mammals. Most of the cherry trees along this part of the river walk are cultivated forms of ornamental cherries which were brought to the UK from Japan.



Wild cherry blossom

While the flowers of these ornamental cherries are attractive to people, they are not as attractive to our native bees and other pollinators. Native insects have evolved alongside our native trees and plants and cannot access the nectar and pollen of many non-native species.



Ornamental cherry

Continue as the footpath sweeps left to the corner of Riverside Drive and Queenhaugh Drive. You might like to stop and look at the community orchard. At the right time of the year you might even be able to help yourself to some fruit. The orchard has apples, pears, plums and quince. You can find out much more on the Riverside Naturally website at:

<https://www.riversidenaturally.org/our-community-orchard>



You have now completed the Cambuskenneth footbridge to Riverside Community Orchard tree walk.

The Orchard to Lover's Walk tree walk starts here.