



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 second stage is from the Community Orchard to Lovers Walk. It is a linear walk. that introduces you to *sycamore; maple; hornbeam; beech; elder; cockspur thorn, hawthorn and oak*



The first stage of the linear walk is from the **Community Orchard to Lovers Walk**. It introduces you to *goat willow; weeping willow; red oak; Scots pine; lime; birch; rowan; spindle; aspen and both wild and ornamental cherries.*

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; ash, white poplar, and holly.*



Start the walk at the junction between Riverside Drive and Queenshaugh 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>

Looking down towards the farm the large trees on the left are mainly limes (a species we met on walk one}. Queenshaugh Drive, like Riverside Drive has a row of mainly limes beside the roadway, but the on the corner there are red sycamores.



The red sycamore is bred for its colour and not found naturally. In fact the sycamore is not a native tree, and may well have been brought to Britain by the Romans. They have spread (by their 'helicopter' seeds) and flourished and there are many self seeded sycmores in Riverside. You will see them on the river bank as you head towards the Boating Club.

Sycamore is attractive to aphids and so the trees help to support a variety of aphid predators, such as ladybirds, hover-flies and birds. The leaves are eaten by the caterpillars of a number of moths. The flowers are a good source of pollen and nectar for bees and other insects, and the seeds are eaten by birds and small mammals



Mature sycamore trees, like those along this section of the walk, have characteristic bark which often has lichens and mosses on it. Many have a pinkish colour.

Sycamores are members of the Acer family, along with maples. The only native British maple is the field maple.

There are no field maples in public spaces in Riverside, but just before the Boating Club there is a fine ornamental maple.

While not as productive as sugar maples, all maples can be tapped for their sugary syrup.



Continuing past the Boating Club and you will see the first of two copper beech trees at the junction with Millar Place.

Beech trees can grow to over forty metres and can live for centuries. Where they grow together to form beech woods they can shade out almost all other plants.

Some beeches occur naturally with red or purple leaves. These have been cultivated into the copper beech. Apart from the leaf colour, copper beeches are much like ordinary common beeches in terms of attractiveness to wildlife and uses of timber.



Beech wood is used in furniture and flooring as well as tool handles. It produces good log fuel and is also used for smoking herring.

In autumn beech produces little nuts called masts which were once a staple food for pigs. They provide food to mice and birds.

Many moths eat beech leaves.

Young beeches do not shed their leaves in autumn and retain the dead leaves until the new growth appears in spring,

When used as a hedging plant beech retains its dead leaves in the winter and provides a great home for birds and other wildlife. There is a fine beech hedge at Chandler's Court



Beyond the copper beech there is a group of large trees (and then a second copper beech). The first and last of this group are hornbeams, and there is a younger self seeded hornbeam on the river bank. The others are an ash and more sycamores.



Hornbeam has pale grey bark with vertical markings. Mature trees can grow to 30m and live 300+ years. Hornbeam leaves are easily confused with common beech, but have curled tips which help to distinguish them. Like beech, a hornbeam hedge will keep its leaves all year round, providing shelter, roosting, nesting and foraging for birds and small mammals. Hornbeam leaves are eaten by caterpillars of several moth species. Birds and small mammals eat the seeds in autumn.

Hornbeam timber is a pale, creamy white. It is the hardest wood of any tree in Europe. Nowadays it is mainly used for furniture, flooring and wood turning but traditional uses were butchers' chopping blocks, piano hammers, wood screws, coach wheels and cogs for windmills and water mills.



Walking on towards Lovers Walk you will come to a distinctive elder, which partially fell in February 2020 and has new growth near the railings. Across the river, in front of the allotments, there are a lot of willows re-growing after being felled a few years ago

Elder trees grow to a height of around 15m and can live for 60 years. Elder wood is hard and yellow-white. Mature wood is good for carving. Elder foliage was once used to keep flies away and branches were often hung around dairies. The flowers and berries are mildly poisonous, so should be cooked before eating. The leaves are also poisonous. The flowers can be used to make wine, cordial or tea, or fried to make fritters. The berries are often used to make preserves and wine, and can be baked in a pie with brambles.



Elder is also a source for coloured dyes and it was used in Harris Tweed manufacture. Blue and purple dye was made from the berries, yellow and green from the leaves, and grey and black was made from the bark. The flowers provide nectar for insects and the berries are eaten by birds and mammals. Many moth caterpillars feed on elder leaves.

Just past the elder, at the bus stop there is a Cockspur thorn on the riverbank.

Cockspur thorn is similar to hawthorn, with larger, more glossy leaves. We will be looking at a hawthorn just along the road. It produces similar flowers and berries. In autumn the leaves turn beautiful orange and red colours. It is an import from North America and is popular in gardens and municipal planting.



There is a little copse of cockspur thorn (with one elder) on the left as you leave Riverside via the railway bridge towards the town.

As you reach the start of Lovers Walk you will be able to see an oak on the river bank (next to a road sign) and another on the bank in front of River View (also next to a road sign).

Oaks are large trees growing 20–40 metres tall. Like people, oaks may get shorter as they age. This is thought to help them to lengthen their lifespan which can be hundreds of years. Oaks have distinctively shaped leaves. There are two native oaks, one with leaves on stalks (the sessile oak) and the other (common oak) with leaves growing directly from the twigs.



Confusingly, the common oak has its acorns on stalks and the sessile has acorns attached to the twigs. In some parts of Europe pigs are still turned out into forests in autumn for acorns and beech masts. Acorns have also been used to make a type of flour and roasted to produce a coffee substitute. Oak is well known for the quality of the timber. Oak bark is used to produce tannin for leather making.

Both of these species of oak support more wildlife than any other native tree. They provide a habitat for 257 species of insect which are the food source for birds and other predators. The bark also provides a home for mosses and lichens and deadwood cavities for nesting birds and roosting bats. The acorns are eaten by birds and mammals, including the jay, badger and red squirrel. The soft leaves break down in autumn to form a rich leaf mould beneath the tree supporting beetles and fungi.

If you continue along Lovers Walk and look across the road you will see another oak, a large beech and finally a hawthorn.



Hawthorn often grows as a bush but can grow as a tree to a height of 15 metres. It is one of the first trees to get its leaves in spring. Fresh leaves and young flower buds are edible. Hawthorn can support more than 300 insects, for example the leaves are eaten by the caterpillars of several moth species.



Hawthorn has beautiful 'May' blossom which provides nectar and pollen for bees and other pollinating insects.

In autumn it produces lots of red berries. These haws are eaten by birds and small mammals. The dense, thorny foliage makes good nesting shelter for many species of bird. This makes hawthorn a great hedging plant if you want to encourage wildlife into your garden. As well as feeding wildlife, haws can also be used in jellies and wines.



You have now completed the second part of the Riverside tree walk. The final part of the walk starts at Riverside Quay. You can get to Riverside Quay by going along Forth Street.

Forth Street has many interesting trees, some of which you might remember from this walk and from the Footbridge to Orchard walk. For example this fine birch.

There are many trees along the railway line, and, a row of Rowans in front of the Ten Pin Bowling.

This fine goat willow is beside the Ten Pin Bowling.

