Common Alder *Alnus glutinosa*

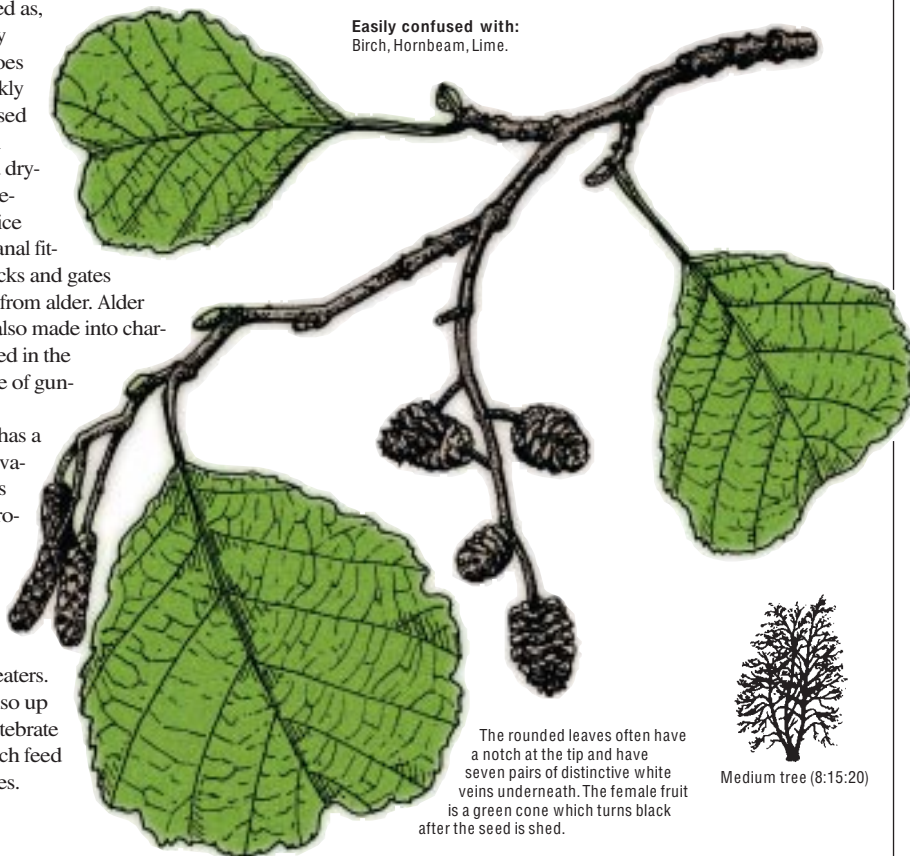
This native alder grows in wet places, particularly wet clays, on marshes and by lakes and fens. It is able to survive in these sites, which generally lack the nitrates needed for growth, as its roots have nodules which contain nitrogen-fixing bacteria that extract nitrogen from the air.

The timber of alder was highly valued as, unlike many woods, it does not rot quickly when exposed to continual wetting and drying. In consequence, sluice gates and canal fittings like locks and gates were made from alder. Alder wood was also made into charcoal and used in the manufacture of gunpowder.

The tree has a high conservation value as the seeds provide good winter food for redpoll, siskins and other seed eaters. There are also up to 141 invertebrate species which feed on alder trees.

Seed Guide: Alder cones can be collected from the lower branches of trees before they open. Place cones in a paper bag and allow to air-dry at room temperature. As the cones open they will release the small winged seeds which can be sown immediately. Cover with a thin layer of sharp sand, and leave over winter to germinate the following spring.

Easily confused with:
Birch, Hornbeam, Lime.



The rounded leaves often have a notch at the tip and have seven pairs of distinctive white veins underneath. The female fruit is a green cone which turns black after the seed is shed.

Medium tree (8:15:20)