

Irish Heritage Trees

Heritage Trees are trees of biological, cultural, ecological or historical interest because of their age, size or condition.

The Tree Register of Ireland has records for over 11,000 of these trees. The location of each tree is captured using GPS technology and the reason for its importance is carefully noted. Trees can be put on this register for a number of reasons including:

- **Height** - Ireland's tallest tree can be seen along the Powerscourt River Walk in Co. Wicklow and stands 61.5m tall - almost twice the height of St. Brigid's Round Tower in Kildare! Five of the countries top ten tall trees are in neighbouring Co. Wicklow so make sure and visit them.
- **Girth** - This is the width around a tree at its widest point. The widest broadleaf tree in Ireland is a Common Lime tree in Co. Fermanagh, 10.7 metres around its trunk! The sixth widest broadleaf tree is another Common Lime and can be seen in Naas, measuring a massive 9.2m around! The largest girth conifer trees are drawn, with two measuring a staggering 12.1 metres - one in County Down and one in County Cork.
- **Age** - Trees are among the oldest living things in our country and form a vital part of our natural and cultural landscape. The ancient Yew tree in St. Patrick's College Maynooth, known as the Silken Thomas tree, is thought to be among our oldest trees - up to 800 years old! Legend has it that Silken Thomas sat beneath this tree playing his lute the night before he surrendered to King Henry VIII.
- **Curiosity Value** - Two of the best examples of Irish Heritage Trees, famed for their curiosity value, are the 'Hungry' Tree (at King's Inns, Dublin) a London Plane tree that looks to be consuming a bench by growing around it, and the 'Autograph' Tree of Lady Gregory in Coole Park (near Gort, County Galway) a copper beech tree signed by Jack and WB Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, Sean O'Casey and other literary greats.
- **Religious Veneration** - Some of Ireland's Heritage Trees are known and preserved for their religious importance. The Muckross Friary Yew tree is one of the most famous, noted for its terrifying effect on visitors! Another tree famed for its religious value is the Rag Tree at St. Brigid's Well outside of Kildare Town. It stands guard over the well and people attach a piece of cloth while praying for sick family or friends.
- **Garden or Historical Setting** - Trees are often deliberately grown to create particular designs in important landscapes and architectural settings. The breath-taking Lime Avenue at Carton Estate in Maynooth reaches over one kilometre long, and Carton also boasts the earliest surviving Cedar of Lebanon avenue in Ireland.

- **Wow Factor** – Some trees just make you go Wow! Kildare has a number of these trees that you can visit or see from close by. The giant Ash tree of Carnalway Lodge, Kilcullen was immortalised on an Irish Stamp in 2004. The country's largest Cedar can be seen in the K Club at Straffan, reaching to 29m tall. Clongowes Wood College has a magnificent Lime tree avenue, planted over 180 years ago and well worth a visit. The Curragh Military Hospital plays host to a spectacular Tulip Tree and St. Patrick's College in Maynooth has a beautiful Tree of Heaven, a Chinese native tree, that reaches to the sky above the college.

When We look at our art, poetry, history and culture we see how trees are part of our national identity and expression of ourselves. Our trees not only feed our sense of Irishness, they have an important part to play in our biodiversity - being host to an intricate and complex web of plants, animals, insects and fungi above and below ground. It is vitally important that we preserve, protect and plant trees throughout our lifetimes.

For more information on Ireland's Heritage trees and the work involved in recording and preserving our arboreal heritage, please visit <http://www.treecouncil.ie/>

To learn more about specimen and heritage trees in your area or areas you may be visiting, please visit <https://www.treeregister.ie/>

To read about the types and locations of some of our best-loved trees, see the article on Our Irish Heritage here: <https://www.ouririshheritage.org/content/archive/topics/projects/heritage-trees-of-ireland>

For a brief article looking at Kildare's heritage trees, please read: <https://www.kildare.ie/ehistory/index.php/seeing-the-wood-for-the-trees/>

To learn where Local Authorities are actively preserving important stands of trees, visit <https://www.heritagemaps.ie/WebApps/HeritageMaps/index.html> and type 'tree' in the Search Data box

To learn more about identifying Ireland's native tree species visit <https://www.treecouncil.ie/native-irish-trees>

To download Tree Workbooks for schools visit <https://www.treecouncil.ie/tree-workbooks>