

Jos-vertelt – extra little facts for group leaders:

1/ Ash

- The ancient Greeks considered ash a good treatment for anyone bitten by an adder.
- Birds and small mammals love to eat its seeds.
- The ash is said to provide protection from evil spirits and dangerous animals. Farmers' wives used to shelter their babies under an ash tree while at work.
- In ancient rhymes and folklore the state of an ash tree is said to forecast the weather.

2/ Birch

- The birch is revered as the tree of light and spring in Scandinavian countries.
- In Germany it is used as a maypole.
- In India, holy Vedic texts are inscribed on the bark of birch trees.
- Birch wood is perfect for making drums and loudspeakers.
- Witches make good use of the tangle of twigs often seen growing in the branches of birch trees to help them fly through the air. These 'witches brooms' are created by a parasite fungus growing on the tree.

4/ Honey Locust

- The pods of the honey locust tree can be used to make a dye for textiles.
- In Africa the fresh fruits are used as a treatment for lung conditions.

3/ Alder

- The middle photo shows how alder bark changes after being submerged in water.
- Alder improves the fertility of the soil. It has a symbiotic relationship with nitrogen fixing bacteria which absorb nitrogen from the air, make it available to the tree which, in turn delivers it to the forest soil thus improving conditions for other species.
- The foliage does not change colour in autumn and the leaves fall while still green.
- The trees are often host to alder leaf beetles which nibble large holes in the leaves.
- Like the willow it is easily pollarded to produce flexible wood.
- Alder wood is used to smoke food.
- Alder bark and wood contain tannin which is used to tan leather and dye clothes (in red, yellow and black).
- The inner bark is traditionally used as an infusion to treat various disorders.
- Alder wood makes excellent firewood. It produces a fierce heat in a short period of time and is ideal for bakers' ovens.
- The dead wood and leaf litter are a paradise for frogs and toads.

5/ Pear Tree

- Pear trees are sensitive to ground frost.
- Some pears, like *Conference*, do not need pollinating to produce fruit.
- Pears first grow upright before they hang downwards.
- Pear wood is an excellent firewood.
- People smoked pear leaves before the introduction of tobacco in the 15th century.

6/ Hornbeam

- The wood is susceptible to woodworm.
- The wood is used to make paper but also toys, boot shapers, shoe trees and butchers' blocks.
- The leaves are used as animal feed

7/ Black Locust (Robinia)

- *Robinia* is resistant to pollution.
- Tea brewed from *Robinia* leaves relieves constipation.
- The oldest tree in Paris is a *Robinia* planted in 1601. A tree that sprouted from one of its roots is now the oldest tree in the Netherlands.
- *Robinias* make impenetrable hedges.
- The root nodules contain bacteria which deliver nitrogen to the soil.
- *Robinias* love sunshine.

8/ Maple

- During the Second World War, the Americans constructed a small transport vehicle based on the design of the distinctive winged fruit of the maple. It could carry 29 kgs of cargo and deposit it gently on the ground.
- The maple can grow to a height of 40 metres and can live 500 years.
- It grows quickly but only flowers when it is 20 / 25 years old.
- The maple loves light and fiercely competes for it with surrounding trees.
- Its fruit is poisonous for horses and can cause EAM (Equine atypical myopathy).
- Maple is often used to make paper.

9/ Hawthorn

- Hawthorn flowers have a very strong scent.
- Tea brewed from hawthorn flowers has a calming effect.
- But tea brewed from hawthorn leaves increases the heart beat and improves circulation.
- According to superstition, the hawthorn provides protection against vampires and witches.

10/ Pin Oak

- The pin oak (*Quercus Palustris*) is native to North America and was introduced into Europe in 1770.
- The foliage becomes deep red in autumn.
- The tree bears both male and female flowers.
- Indian tribes brewed a remedy for stomach ache from the bark.
- St Boniface was slaughtered by the Friesians at Dokkum because he had burned down their holy oak tree.
- The best wine vats are made of oak wood.
- Roman Emperors' crowns were woven from oak leaves.

11/ Holly

- Holly is the only native evergreen, deciduous tree in Europe.
- It is often found in beech and oak forests as it thrives in shade and acid soil.
- Tea brewed from the young leaves is a diuretic and can help reduce fever.
- Holly is rich in symbolism as is seen as a metaphor for immortality.
- In Christianity it is associated with baby Jesus as Mary and Joseph are said to have hidden from King Herod under a holly bush.
- It grows very slowly and can reach a height of 20 metres.
- The bark produces a glue which was once used to catch birds.

12/ Japanese Cherry

- Japanese cherry is strong and robust. It can withstand extremely low temperatures.
- Its blossom announces the arrival of the rice planting season.
- In Japan there is a festival to celebrate the glorious colours of the autumn foliage of the Japanese cherry tree, the Japanese maple, the ginkgo and many more trees.