



# Easy Peasy Playground Spotters Guide

We've had lots of comments from teachers concerned about being able to identify plants in their school grounds, so we created this very basic guide to some of the most common plants likely to be found in a standard school ground environment. More in depth guides are available online or in the form of apps (links can be found in the online resources section of the EIGS website), and the Field Studies Council (FSC) do some really good ID charts, some of which are especially for use in education.

## **HINTS:**

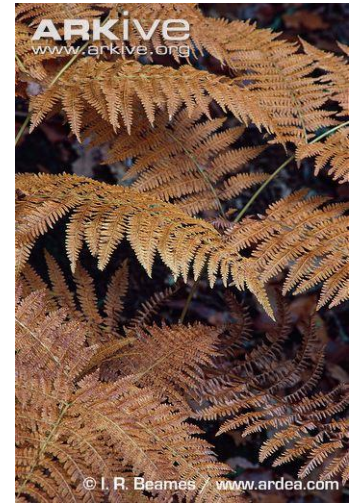
- Start off looking for any obvious identifiers, such as conkers, and then look more closely at features such as the shapes of leaves and the colour or texture of bark.
- Encouraging children to come up with descriptive terms for plants (e.g. the wavy-leaved tree with nuts) can be a good stepping stone for recognising separate species, before introducing the actual terms.
- If there are species you just can't identify, don't worry, the main thing is that the children get to experience the outdoors!

## Bracken >

Britain's most common fern.

Identifiers:

- Tends to form low, dense clumps
- Has branched fronds, highly divided big leaves
- Browns in autumn



## < Heather

We've often seen heather growing in school planters, and it's also common in heathland areas in Hampshire such as the New Forest, or places with acidic soil.

Identifiers:

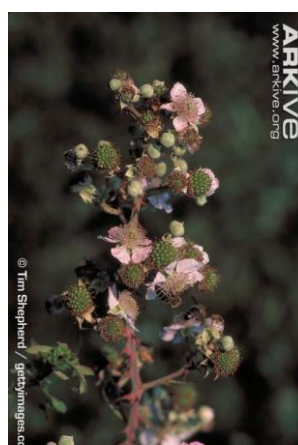
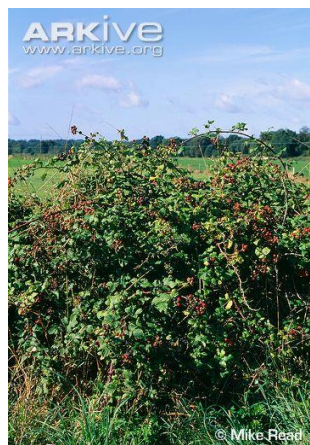
- Woody, coarse stems
- Pink-purple, bell-shaped flowers in summer and autumn
- Small, narrow leaves in rows
- Usually form clumps low to the ground

## Lichen >

Technically not a plant, but a relationship between algae/bacteria and fungi. Have been asked in the past if it is a tree going 'mouldy' or diseased, but it is often just a sign of clean air.

Identifiers:

- Can be green, yellow, white, grey or orange in colour
- Appears crusty, 'leafy', or in fronds
- Often found on trees, rocks, and walls



## < Brambles

(This name encompasses many different species)

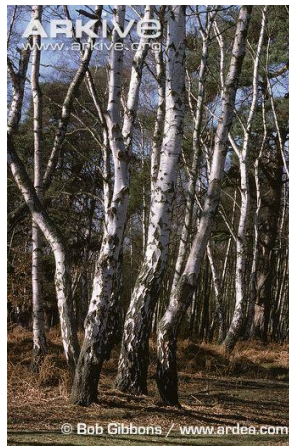
Identifiers:

- Rough, tangled, and thorny branches
- White/pink flowers
- Berries in autumn

## Silver Birch >

### Identifiers:

- White-silver bark which peels, dark diamond-shaped fissures appear as the tree matures
- Triangular shaped, tooth-edged deciduous leaves
- Catkins present in April-May



## < Oak

### Identifiers:

- Acorns
- Lobed deciduous leaves
- Fissured bark (more pronounced with age)

## Horse Chestnut >

### Identifiers:

- Conkers
- Deciduous leaves divided into 5-7 sections
- Flowers in May



## < Beech

### Identifiers:

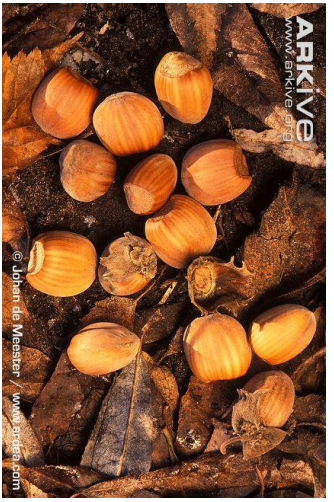
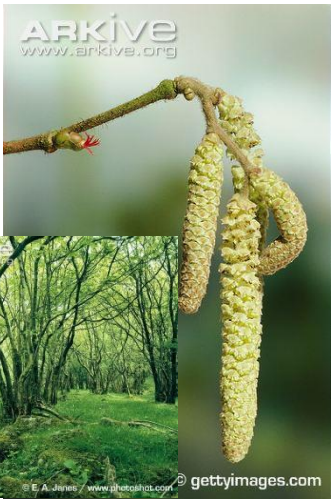
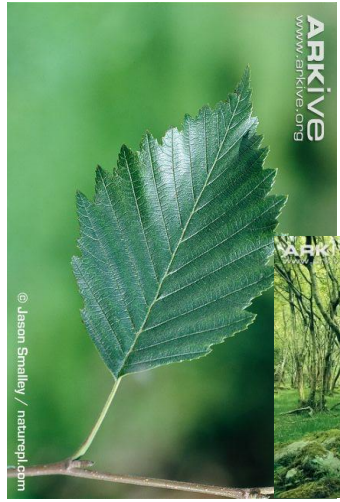
- Hairy 'Beech nuts', start off green and become hard and brown
- Deciduous wavy leaves with fluffy edges

## Ash >

### Identifiers:

- Smooth pale brown to grey bark
- Deciduous leaves, one leaf is in fact made up of roughly 6 opposite 'leaflets' with another at the end
- Black buds





**< Hazel**

Identifiers:

- Hazel nuts (start off green)
- Hairy, toothed deciduous are round or oval
- Catkins from February before leaves appear
- Often coppiced, so have the appearance of many smaller trunks rising up together

**Hawthorn >**

Identifiers:

- White (occasionally pinkish) flowers which appear at the beginning of spring
- Red berries ('Haws') in autumn
- Brown-grey twigs covered in thorns
- A relatively small tree (up to 15m)



**< Sycamore**

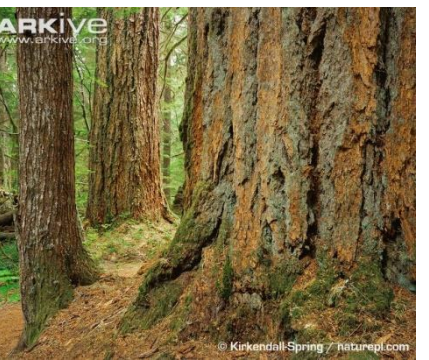
Identifiers:

- Brown (green when young) winged 'Helicopter' seeds, which twirl as they fall from the tree
- Deciduous leaves slightly sectioned into 5

**Douglas Fir >**

Identifiers:

- Evergreen with needle-like leaves
- Each scale on a cone has 3, lighter coloured pointed tips coming off them



**< Holly**

Identifiers:

- Dark, shiny evergreen leaves, which are usually prickly
- Bright red berries