

A short walk in and around Braunston, featuring 20+ species of tree.

**Distance:** 1.5 miles

**Time:** 1.0 - 1.5 hours (depending on pace)

The walk starts in the grounds of **Braunston Church**, and then follows a route that includes a section of the **Grand Union Canal**, **Jetty Field** and part of the **High Street**.

\* the position of each tree is indicated on the map inside by both a **number** and a **'What3Words'** code

\* please note that certain tree features are present only at particular times of the year

The tree trail provides a few basic details of each of the trees listed. This pamphlet (and photos of the trees at different stages of the year) may be found on the Braunston Climate Action Network (B-CAN) section of the Braunston Village website:

[www.braunston.org.uk](http://www.braunston.org.uk).

Other useful resources include:

[www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk)

[www.ancienttreeforum.org.uk](http://www.ancienttreeforum.org.uk)

Key to abbreviations:

**N - native** (present in Britain prior to 8000 years ago)

**N-N - non-native** (introduced during last 8000 years)

**D - deciduous** (tree that sheds leaves annually)

**E - evergreen** (tree that retains leaves throughout year)

The trail has been compiled by Helen & Alan Morgan (Braunston). The accuracy of the information provided in the guide is not guaranteed; any suggestions to improve any aspect of the guide would be very welcome.

Contact: [alhelmorgan@hotmail.com](mailto:alhelmorgan@hotmail.com)

# Braunston Tree Trail



## Key:

-  All Saint's Church
-  tree/number
-  road
-  footpath/towpath
-  Grand Union Canal
-  Community orchard





**1. Beech (*Fagus sylvatica 'purpurea'*) (W3W: tidal.baths.straw) N-N, D**

The thick, highly-branched trunk gives rise to lots of spindly horizontal branches – in this case spanning 25m! This 'copper' variety is not native to Britain.

**Look out for:**



- smooth, grey bark - with areas that look like elephant skin!
- alternatively arranged, brown torpedo-shaped buds in winter and spring
- a dense canopy of smooth-edged, purple leaves in summer

(continue east along the back of the church towards the large pine tree with the outline of the windmill behind it)

**2. Austrian Pine (*Pinus nigra*) (W3W: expansion.shadows.porridge) N-N, E**

This solitary dark-looking evergreen pine has leaves (needles) that are shed continually throughout the year.

**Look out for:**



- flaking, deeply-fissured bark (beneath the ivy)
- long, dark-green needles (10-15cm) that are stiff, sharp and in pairs
- male flowers that appear as orange clusters behind the large terminal buds

(continue to the north-east corner of the church)

**3. Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) (W3W: eradicate.crusaders.pits) N, D**

The hornbeam often has steeply rising branches (though not here!) - and in the past was coppiced (cut at base) or pollarded (cut higher) to provide sticks for charcoal.

**Look out for:**



- olive green bark with silvery vertical stripes
- small lime-green and brown scaly buds (in winter)
- leaves with parallel veins (10-15 pairs) - giving them a 'pleated' appearance

(continue a few metres to the left to the main churchyard entrance)

**4. Yew (*Taxus baccata*) (W3W: port.swordfish.plodded) N, E**

The yew is famous for its pagan origins in churchyards and for its use in the traditional longbow. The yews by the entrance are 'Irish' yews, which have curved needles arranged around the shoot (compared with the flatter, opposite arrangement of needles in the clipped avenue of yews leading towards the church).

**Look out for:**



- dark orange-brown, flaky bark
- bright red berries with poisonous seeds!

(turn left out of churchyard (CARE!) into Church Road - continue for a few paces)

**5. Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) (W3W: attending.prude.revisits) N, D**

This huge ash, standing on the north side of the road, arches across the road towards the churchyard. So far, it seems to be resisting 'chalara' (dieback) disease.

**Look out for:** (cross road first!)

- ridged, latticed grey bark with branches that turn upwards at their ends
- dark, sooty triangular buds along the shoots in winter
- compound leaves with 9-13 toothed leaflets in summer
- single, winged seeds ('keys') in autumn



(continue west along Church Road until the road bends to the left by field gate)

**6. Field Elm (*Ulmus minor/carpinifolia*) (W3W: wardrobe.sobbed.corporate) N, D**

This hedgerow elm (next to the bright green power unit!) is a survivor of Dutch elm disease - caused by a fungus carried by a wood-boring beetle - that has decimated most mature trees. NB Identification of elm species can be tricky due to variability in leaf form and extensive hybridisation!

**Look out for:**

- 'crocodile-back' pattern of bark on some of the smaller branches
- leaves with the characteristic asymmetrical shape at their base – where the blade of the leaf meets the leaf stalk



(cross the road and continue south towards the junction with the High Street)

7. **Horse Chestnut** (*Aesculus hippocastenum*) (W3W:ordeals.copper.delusions) N-N,D

These two magnificent specimens – thought to be around 400 years old – can be viewed from the High Street (please do not enter the grounds). The massive, twisted trunks support huge canopies.

**Look out for:**

- long, white ‘candles’ of flowers in spring
- large ‘fingered’ leaves – consisting of 5-7 leaflets
- spiny fruits containing shiny brown nuts in autumn - conkers!



(continue east along High Street for about 35m)

8. **Holm Oak** (*Quercus ilex*) (W3W: guides.darts.forest) N-N, E

Another magnificent tree – the holm oak or ‘holly oak’ – to be viewed from the High Street. Its multi-stemmed dark trunk gives rise to a canopy spanning 25 metres!

**Look out for:**

- dense, green foliage throughout the year
- small, oval leaves that are dark on the upper surface but lighter underneath



(walk east along High Street for about 300m, then turn right into Nibbits Lane - continue past the houses until you reach the bench next to the oak tree)

9. **English Oak** (*Quercus robur*) (W3W: spearing.aimless.widely) N, D

This ‘pedunculate’ oak supports a huge variety of invertebrate life. It has been used extensively in the past for timber in the construction of ships and buildings.

**Look out for:**

- leaves that have 4 or 5 ‘lobes’ on each side – but are stalkless
- acorns attached to the plant on long stalks (peduncles) in autumn



(continue down the path, cross Butcher’s Bridge, and turn left/east along the towpath for about 100m)

10. **Balsam Poplar** (*Populus trichocarpa*) (W3W: duos.curries.fuss) N-N, D

A trio of these slender poplars - with their delicately-latticed, green-grey bark - grow evenly spaced and close to the fencing that separates the towpath from the marina.

**Look out for:**

- highly fragrant (like honey!) sticky buds and young leaves in spring
- large elongated female catkins that can litter the towpath in spring after strong winds (the shorter male catkins are found on separate trees)



(continue east along the towpath – past a couple more poplars – for about 30m)

11. **Alder** (*Alnus glutinosa*) (W3W: regal.sheds.behalf) N, D

Alder is typically found in wet or damp environments. The wood has the interesting property of turning orange-red when cut and is unusual in that although it is deciduous it produces ‘cones’!

**Look out for:**

- small, dull-purple buds in winter - and drooping male catkins in spring
- small, oval female cones that can remain attached all year round
- rounded leaves that often have a slight ‘notch’ (instead of a point)



(cross over the bridge and then continue east for about 20m)

12. **Silver Birch** (*Betula pendula*) (W3W: revision.testing.clays) N, D

The unmistakable silvery-white trunk of this hardy, tall and slender tree becomes darker and increasingly fissured with age.

**Look out for:**

- purple-brown male catkins in spring
- well-spaced, small, triangular leaves that have a straight base and rather ragged leaf margins



(continue along the towpath for about 100m)



13. **Whitebeam** (*Sorbus aria*) (W3W: prospers.icebergs.copes) N, D

The domed shape and attractive foliage have made the whitebeam a good choice as an ornamental, planted tree.

**Look out for:**

- multiple branches arising from trunk about 2m above ground
- medium-sized, oval leaves that are pale green on the upper surface and even paler underneath – due to a dense covering of white hairs
- white flowers in spring giving way to bright red berries later in the year



(continue to the bridge at Bottom Lock, cross and walk north to the cattle grid!)

14. **Bird Cherry** (*Prunus padus*) (W3W: hands.enchanted.goats) N, D

Often planted as an ornamental tree in large gardens, its fruits (cherries) are edible only to birds!

**Look out for:**

- extensively branched form – with deep-red new shoots in spring
- fragrant and impressive white flower spikes in spring
- elongated, leathery leaves with very fine teeth along leaf margins



(continue a few paces towards the gates to Jetty Field – the multi-trunked hawthorn is next to the wall on your left)

15. **Hawthorn** (*Crataegus monoqyna*) (W3W: shoelaces.bounty.coherent) N, D

This sturdy, spiky tree/bush (also known as ‘may’ or ‘quickthorn’) has been used for centuries in hedgerows for land enclosure.

**Look out for:**

- groups of sweet-smelling white flowers (blossom) in spring
- small, deeply-divided, lobed leaves (‘Midland’ hawthorn is less divided)
- deep-red berries (haws) in autumn – winter food for birds



(continue to the **elder** – it forms part of the hedge to the right of the gate ahead)

16. **Elder** (*Sambucus nigra*) (W3W: fuses.oddly.lizards) N, D

Usually found as shrubby growth in hedgerows (as here), the bright green shoots grow vigorously each year – from opposite sides of the old branches.

**Look out for:**

- light-coloured and heavily-ridged bark
- flat heads of scented, creamy-white flowers in spring
- toothed leaves consisting of 5-7 leaflets
- red-black bunches of small berries in autumn



(continue through gate and walk to the left towards the young planted orchard)

17. **Jetty Field Orchard** (W3W: cheek.organisms.meanest)

In 2020/21, members of Braunston Climate Action Network, together with Jetty Fields volunteers, planted 21 assorted fruit trees. Many of the varieties planted have links to Northamptonshire and Warwickshire; one variety – the Braunston Pippin – is believed to be unique to the village of Braunston.

As well as providing fruit for villagers, the trees will absorb CO2 from the atmosphere as they grow, and will add to the biodiversity of Jetty Field, supporting a wide range of insects and birds. (*information provided by Anthony Renshaw*)

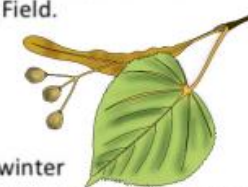
(continue diagonally across field, bearing right towards the tree seat surrounding the lime tree – in summer, it may be necessary to follow the mown path)

18. **Common Lime** (*Tilia europaea*) (W3W: confirms.region.unearthly) N, D

A familiar sight in parks, and often grown in ‘avenues’ in churchyards and stately homes, this lime is one of many fine specimens in Jetty Field.

**Look out for:**

- large, shiny red ‘boxing glove’-shaped buds in winter
- small, yellow flowers hanging from long ‘bracts’ in spring/early summer
- pointed, fresh green leaves with hairy tufts in vein junctions underneath



(continue north, bearing left towards the old tree with dark holes in the trunk)

19. **Field Maple** (*Acer campestre*) (W3W: reserves.command.ironic) N, D

Famous for its use in making musical instruments and furniture, the field maple is most often found as a hedgerow tree – unlike this ancient, hollow specimen.

**Look out for:**

- small clusters of indistinct green flowers in spring
- pairs of winged seeds in summer and autumn
- spectacular colours in autumn as leaves turn to yellow, orange and brown



(continue diagonally to the far top right corner of the field)

22. **Crab apple** (*Malus sylvestris*) (W3W: figure.booklets.opera) N, D

The ancestor of all cultivated apple varieties, the crab apple produces small, hard and bitter fruits – but is commonly used to make jelly! It is often spread as a result of the ‘pips’ dropped by birds.

**Look out for:**

- clusters of 5-petalled white flowers (blossom) in spring - (cultivated varieties often have pinker flowers)
- oval, yellow-green ‘apples’ - usually tinged with red in autumn



(cross the road and continue north along Harrow Lane)

20. **Weeping Willow** (*Salix babylonica*) (W3W: searches.powder.something) N-N, D

The familiar cascade of thin, hanging branches gives the weeping willow its characteristic form.

**Look out for:**

- heavily ridged and gnarled bark
- very few (but substantial) main branches
- long, thin, pointed leaves – alternatively arranged and hanging downwards



(continue north (not through ‘kissing gate’) to the High Street – then west for 100m)

21. **Holly** (*Ilex aquifolium*) (W3W: openly.hobby.confetti) N, E

The highly symbolic holly is often found in hedgerows, but sometimes – like these attractively-clipped examples at the front of the property – as specimen trees.

**Look out for:**

- characteristic spiny, evergreen leaves – glossy on top but paler underneath
- evidence of ‘leaf miners’ eating away inside the leaf (discoloured patches)
- red berries (develop from female flowers) - male flowers on separate trees



(continue west along the High Street until opposite the junction with Harrow Lane)

23. **Norway spruce** (*Picea abies*) (W3W: back.scrolled.storms) N-N, E

This majestic evergreen spruce, with its upwards curving branches, is situated behind the wall on the east side of the lane. It is the species that is more commonly seen in the form of a young-cut Christmas tree!

**Look out for:**

- light green, short (and prickly!) needles extending all around the shoots
- elongated, downward-hanging cones (often on the ground below)



**Congratulations - you have completed the trail!**

**You can return to the starting point (churchyard) either by returning towards the High Street and turning right, or by continuing a short distance to Church Road and turning left.**