

Alder - *alnus*



The best time to spot Alder is in winter or spring when the old woody female cones can be seen on the bare branches and found on the ground around the base of the trees. In spring look for the dangly male catkins on the high branches.

There is a cluster of young Alders in Selsdon Wood in the southern corner of David's Crook (below 25/3/12). There is also an older tree close to the southerly end of West Gorse. In both sites there are many suckers around the base of the trees, which is very typical of Alder.

Alders have male and female catkins on the same tree and the stubby, female catkins are unusual in that they are woody and open to release the seeds in the same way as the cones of conifers, which they resemble (bottom right 25/3/12). Many of the woody catkins remain on the trees over winter and others may be found on the ground around the base of the trees. The male catkins are long and dangling and can sometime be spotted in the high branches in spring before the leaves open (right 30/3/12).



In spite of the apparent 'cones' Alders are deciduous - not evergreens or conifers - shedding their leaves each autumn and producing new leaves in May. The leaves are roundish with a wedged shaped base and have a wavy, toothed margin and short stalks (centre right 10/5/12).



Take a spring or winter walk around the red trail, diverting to the southernmost corner of David's Crook. Collect woody catkins from beneath the Alders and (in spring) look for the long male catkins in the upper branches. Can you find the stump shown in the photographs above? The annual rings show how old this tree was when it was cut down. Can you count them?

