



Blackthorn - *prunus spinosa*

 The best time to spot Blackthorn is in spring when the hedgerows are filled with white blossom

Blackthorn is widespread along field edges throughout Selsdon Wood with a particularly striking run along the eastern edge of David's Crook (below right 23/4/10). The blossom appears before the leaves on the black twigs.



Though most commonly forming a hedgerow, there are a few stand alone Blackthorns such as the one in the dog-leg corner of the Great Field (above left). The hedge below right (2/4/12) is in the short leg of the same field.



Close up, the flowers are five petalled stars, tightly clustered on the black twigs. They are insect pollinated. The leaves are small and oval with serrated edges. The branches and twigs turn in every direction and bear vicious thorns.

In autumn the bushes are laden with small black fruits called sloes. These are related to the plum or damson and have a single stone. Sloes are edible, although rather tart, and can be used for making jam, wine or liqueurs such as sloe gin.



(The bushes along Vale Border, originally identified as Blackthorn, have now been shown to be Bullace - see the Bullace Tree Spotter's Guide for details.)

Take a spring walk around the fields and spot the white blossom. One side of most fields has less blossom. Which way does it face? Return in the autumn to see the sloes.

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Blackthorn is widespread in all the field boundaries.
The map shows some of the most striking examples.

