



Wild Plum - *prunus domestica*



The best time to spot the Plum is in spring when in blossom or in summer when in fruit.

There are a number of possible Plums in Selsdon Wood although it is closely related to the Cherry - *prunus avium* and difficult to distinguish from it until the fruit appears.

One is to be found in the hedgerow on the northern edge of David's Crook (blossom right below 25/3/12). It was identified in 2010 by close inspection of the fruit as a Mirabelle - *subspecies syriaca*. This is a cultivated plant not indigenous to Britain and was probably introduced accidentally after a picnic. Another striking Plum is in the Centenary Plantation (blossom centre below 25/3/12) and there may be others dotted throughout the wood (see map for possibilities) including one at the eastern end of Broad Walk (see fruit below right 26/8/12) and one with red leaves and purple fruit toward the western end of the Great Field beside Steven's Walk (see below).



Like the Cherry, the Plum has white blossom with each flower having five petals. However while Cherry flowers are pure white that of the Plum has a pink centre. The Plum in the Centenary is quite showy with a mass of white foliage appearing before the leaves (right 25/3/12) but the one in David's Crook has small insignificant flowers that open at the same time as the leaves. However, it can be picked out in the middle of the hedgerow, as it is the first to show any spring green.

In the summer the Plum has an undistinguished appearance with toothed, oval leaves on red stems (above left 20/5/12). The leaves are 2-3cm in length - only about half as big as the leaves of the Cherry. Some Plums - such as the one in the Centenary - have long thorns. The bark is less glossy than that of the Cherry and lacks the clear horizontal lines or lenticels that run around the trunk.

However, the main feature that distinguishes the Plum is the fruit (below left 10/6/12). It is larger than that of the Cherry and typically plum shaped as opposed to the rounded or heart shaped cherry. The colour is usually yellow-green but this one in the Great Field by Steven's Walk (below centre 3/6/12) was a striking purple colour.



The ripe plum on the right (26/8/12) had fallen from the tree in Broad Walk. It was sweet and tasty☺ There were a few others high in the branches out of reach. Most of the other plums had gone by August - presumably eaten before they were ripe.

Take a spring walk and spot the pretty blossom or a summer walk looking for fruits.

