The Granny Downs Tree Trail

The initial research for the Granny Downs Tree Trail was carried out by the late Richard Bland. He was a wonderful naturalist who observed and recorded the wildlife of the Downs for decades. He shared his knowledge by leading hundreds of guided walks and writing articles for various magazines. He was also Vice Chair of the Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge (FOD+AG). The trail has been completed in his memory by the Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project Education Team and Robin Haward from FOD+AG, with funding from the GVO Foundation and FOD+AG. Thank you to Phil Burton and Tony Titchen for confirming the tree identification.

Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project

If you would like a copy of our Discover the wildlife of the Avon Gorge & Downs leaflet, copies of our nature trail leaflets, details of our school and play scheme sessions, or our events programme, please contact:
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The Project is a partnership of:

We are also working in partnership with the National Trust and Forestry England on the North Somerset side of the Gorge.

The Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge (FOD+AG)

The project is a multi-interest group of volunteers working to protect and enhance the Downs and Gorge for the benefit of all users. We do this through a range of activities such as regular winter litter picking, summer monitoring of butterflies and monitoring of the goats in the Gully. We also try to improve our knowledge of the area and pass on this understanding and appreciation through a series of articles, talks and our quarterly newsletter.

www.friendsofthedowns.org.uk www.facebook.com/fodagbristol

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The Granny Downs Tree Trail

This is a hybrid between the horse chestnut (native to the Balkans) and the red buckeye (an American tree).

Leaves are smaller and darker than the horse chestnut. Lovely pinky-red flowers. The cooker can’t have flour or no prickle.

Follow the path back up to Clay Pit Road. After crossing the road carefully, turn right to the first of two young trees.

The species name ‘avium’ refers to birds who love to eat the small, bitter cherries. Blackbirds and song thrushes are particularly partial to them.

Papery white flowers appear April to May, before, or as the leaves emerge. Cherries in June. Leaves turn red in autumn.

Turn around. On the far side of the path you’ll see the red chestnut; it has big, knobbly bumps (known as ‘cankers’) on its trunk and branches.

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Native to North America, this tree is a hybrid between the horse chestnut (native to the Balkans) and the red buckeye (an American tree).

As they grow tall and straight they’re apparently the best trees to build a canoe from.

These trees were planted in 2017 as replacements for horse chestnuts that had died.

Strong leaves that look as if the tops have been bitten off. When mature they produce unusual greenish-yellow tulip-shaped flowers.

We hope you enjoyed your walk! Visit again through the year to see how the trees change with the seasons.
Walk back to the path and turn right. Cross over Clay Pit Road. Immediately after crossing, tree 3 is set back 15m from the path, on your left.

**Purple Norway maple**

*Acer platanoides*

Norway maples were first introduced into Britain in 1683. Hardy and tolerant of pollution, this purple-leaved variant seems to be growing well beside the roundabout.

Clusters of pale yellow flowers appear in early spring before the leaves. Winged seeds or ‘helicopters’ in the autumn.

Directly opposite this tree, on the other side of the roundabout, is the famous ‘White Tree’. The original tree was an ash planted in the mid 1800s. Its trunk was painted white to act as a marker indicating where visitors to Cote House should turn off Westbury Road. When the roundabout was built in 1956, it was replaced with an elm. This died of Dutch elm disease in 1973 and the current tree, a lime, was planted in its place in 1974.

Turn right and follow the path, keeping the wooden shelter on your left. Taking care to avoid the traffic coming from your right, cross Westbury Park and turn right.

**Horse chestnut**

*Aesculus hippocastanum*

Why ‘horse chestnut’? When the leaves fall, they leave behind a horseshoe-shaped scar on the twig. They were also fed to horses to relieve coughs and to make their coats shine.

Conkers contain saponins, chemicals which can be used to make a form of soap. Sticky buds open in spring producing large five to seven-fingered leaves in a stiff green stem. From April to mid-September look out for the upright white flower spikes known as ‘candles’. In September look for the chestnuts or ‘conkers’.

To visit tree 15.