

## *Sorbus aucuparia*

*Rowan / Mountain Ash*



*Sorbus aucuparia Edulis 25-30cm girth*

*Sorbus aucuparia*, more commonly known as Mountain Ash or Rowan is a native plant, widespread throughout the British Isles and most of Europe. It is a small - medium sized deciduous tree which provides interest across three seasons.

The name Mountain Ash is misleading as it is not actually related to our common Ash, it is only that the leaves are similar in appearance. The 'Mountain' part come from its ability to withstand cold, harsh conditions and altitude. It has been known to grow at 1,000m in Britain and 2,000m in France though at the highest altitudes it is little more than a sapling or small bush.

The leaves are made up of several small leaflets - serrated along the edges with a pointed tip - in opposite pairs along a stem with a single leaflet at the tip. After the leaves have emerged the flowers appear, usually in May or early June. Single, creamy-white flowers are grouped together to form dense clusters or corymbs which on mature specimens can be up to 250 individual flowers. Pollinating insects are attracted by their sweet scent.

The flowers, once pollinated, grow into berries and ripen in autumn to red, orange, yellow, pink depending on the variety. They are a favourite food for birds, making it a great tree for wildlife. The foliage also turns into fiery reds and oranges and combined with the berries makes a beautiful autumn show of colour.

### Plant Profile

**Name:** *Sorbus aucuparia*

**Common Name:** Rowan or Mountain Ash

**Family:** Rosaceae

**Height:** approx. 10 - 15 metres

**Demands:** Ideal in a light, acid soil but tolerant of a range of conditions.

**Flowers:** Individual, white flowers form a larger cluster

**Foliage:** Serrated leaflets in pairs along a stem with a single leaflet at the tip. Brilliant colours in Autumn

**Fruit:** Small green berries ripening in Autumn

Several varieties are available from Deepdale as a standard or multistem.



*Sorbus aucuparia Sheerwater Seedling 20-25cm girth*

### Deepdale

In Norse mythology, it is believed that when Thor was being swept away by a rapid river, a Rowan bent over allowing him to grab hold and climb to safety.

#### SORBUS AUCUPARIA USES

**Wood** - has been used to make tool handles, cart wheels, walking sticks and spindles.

**Berries** - Still used to make Rowan jelly, an accompaniment to game dishes. In the Highlands, they are used to make a spirit and in Ireland were used to flavour mead. Also used to prevent scurvy as high in Vitamin C.

**Bark** - Used to tan leather or together with the berries to dye cloth.

**Leaves** - A winter feed for cattle (though also rumoured to have been eaten during the Irish famine)



Berries late summer / autumn



Sorbus auc. Joseph Rock in autumn

#### MAGICAL POWERS

The Rowan has long been associated with mythology and witchcraft. The earliest myth is of The Greek goddess of youth, Hebe, who had a magical chalice used to feed nectar and ambrosia to the gods. When she lost this chalice to the demons, the gods sent an eagle to retrieve it. In the fight which followed, the eagle lost some feathers and droplets of blood. When these reached the earth, they turned into Rowan trees. The leaves are representative of the feathers and the red berries of the blood.

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In Britain, red is considered to be the best colour for protection against enchantment. The berries and the red leaves in Autumn enhance the protective capabilities of Sorbus aucuparia. Historically, it has been hung in houses to prevent fire, planted in churchyards to keep the dead in their graves and leaves tied around a cows neck or over barn doors to prevent harm.

## Sorbus aucuparia

Rowan / Mountain Ash

**Deepdale**  
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*Sorbus aucuparia* leaf



*Sorbus aucuparia* Vilmorinii



*Sorbus aucuparia* Edulis



Smooth bark



*Sorbus aucuparia* 12-14-16cm girth



*Sorbus aucuparia* multistems



*Sorbus aucuparia* 18-20-25cm girth