

Ley's whitebeam *Sorbus leyana*, Wales



(credit: Col Ford and Natasha de Vere via [Flickr creative commons](#))

Seed type and characteristics:

- Largest fruits 7.5-10 x 8.5-10 mm, subglobose or wider than long, slightly wider below the middle, with a few small scattered lenticels, blood red at maturity¹
- The trees tend to occur on rocky cliffs and slopes and many are inaccessible. When surveying populations be careful of young seedlings which are easily trampled under-foot.²
- The creamy-white flowers, densely massed in flat-topped corymbs, appear in late May and early June, and its red fruits follow in September, but are produced rather sparsely, as is usually the case in triploid *Sorbus apomicts*.³
- Doesn't produce many berries and, in some years, none. Gathering them on dangerously steep slopes precisely when they are mature is fraught with difficulty.⁴

Seed germination conditions & sapling growing requirements:

- Germination of apparently well-set seeds is poor, with complete failure in some years, although saplings are fairly vigorous when established in cultivation from seeds produced in a 'good' year such as 1976.⁵
- Seeds will usually germinate in 120-180 days, even under good conditions germination may be erratic. Normally will only germinate with light so surface sow. Sow seeds on the surface of a well-drained seed sowing mix at about 20°C. The seeds need to be "overwintered" before they will germinate.⁶

CCI partners, with lead partner:

1

http://naturalhistory.museumwales.ac.uk/corespecies/CMS/Resources/pdfs/Sorbus_leyana/Sorbus_leyana.pdf (also gives useful guidance on how to distinguish Ley's whitebeam from other related species)

2

http://naturalhistory.museumwales.ac.uk/corespecies/CMS/Resources/pdfs/Sorbus_leyana/Sorbus_leyana.pdf

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³ Online Atlas of the British and Irish Flora: <http://www.brc.ac.uk/plantatlas/index.php?q=node/2305>

⁴ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/3308598/Hope-for-the-whitebeam.html>

⁵ Online Atlas of the British and Irish Flora: <http://www.brc.ac.uk/plantatlas/index.php?q=node/2305>

⁶ <http://b-and-t-world-seeds.com/cartall.asp?species=Sorbus%20leyana&sref=81350>

- There are specimens at the Cambridge University Botanic Garden⁷, the National Botanic Garden of Wales⁸ and seeds at Kew's Millennium Seed Bank project⁹ - all of which are members of [Botanic Gardens Conservation International](#)
- Specimen and letters at the Manchester Herbarium¹⁰

⁷ <http://www.botanic.cam.ac.uk/Botanic/TrailPlace.aspx?p=27&ix=566&pid=2&prcid=27&ppid=2693>

⁸ <http://www.gardenofwales.org.uk/garden-map-features/garden-features/12-wales-rarest-tree/>

⁹ http://web.archive.org/web/20080828172828/http://www.kew.org/press/wp_cliff_hanger.html

¹⁰ <http://herbologymanchester.wordpress.com/2010/01/07/specimen-of-the-day-7110-leys-whitebeam/leys-whitebeam/>