

Country Notes for November 2016

One of the glories of living in Britain is the changing of the seasons; something which we take so much for granted. In many countries, especially those nearer the equator, the seasons vary far less and the landscape stays much the same throughout the year. Here in Britain however, as October moves slowly into the darker days of November, we find ourselves amongst a changed and very different landscape.

As more and more leaves fall from the trees, we are able to enjoy the architecture of the trees together their branches and stems. An oak tree, free from its leaves, presents a shape of great beauty and elegance. The Silver Birch at this time of the year suddenly becomes even more silver and grey, as each leaf tumbles to the ground.

The hedgerows also now begin to reveal secrets which have been partially hidden from view over the last couple of months. Old Man's Beard, a form of clematis, is now visible in its full splendour, looking like tufts of cotton wool and justifying its other nickname of Travellers Joy, a name first given to it by John Gerard in his Herbal of 1597. Elderberries now hang from bare branches, tempting the adventurous to pick them and turn them into delicious elderberry wine. They are joined by sloes, which are the final result of the blackthorn blossoms we so enjoyed back in March. As the first hints of spring began to show in the countryside. Maybe some of these will be used to make tasty sloe gin, perhaps for presents at Christmas.

In late spring we enjoyed the wonderful flowers of the Dog Rose. Now its shiny red hips are revealed as its leaves flutter to the ground. One of the earliest hedgerow shrubs to burst into leaf in the spring was the Hawthorn. Now as its leaves diminish one by one, its beautiful red haws may be seen in all their glory.

As November progresses towards the darkest days of the year, if you wrap up warm and venture into the countryside, there are many glories to behold and delight in.

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