




IMMA

A Guide to the Gardens and Meadows

Tree Walk in the grounds of the Irish Museum of Modern Art for visitors of all ages.

Please note:

Do not pick or taste any plant or flower if you are not sure what it is or what are its properties or where chemicals or pollution may have affected it.

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1. Oak Tree (Irish name: Duir)

This Oak tree was planted in remembrance of Joseph Beuys by Caroline Tisdall in 1984, marking a continuation of Beuys' 7000 Oaks project. The Oak tree can live up to 700 years. It is described as the protector and is an emblem of hospitality and strength.

Uses:

Used in the building of ships, houses, coffins, bridges, liqueur storage caskets and hammers. The bark can be used for tanning leather and it also makes dyes. Bark and copper create a purple dye; with alum a brown dye; and with salt of tin a yellow dye. The leaves can be used to make wine. The acorns are food for pigs, deer, squirrels and door mice. When roasted the acorns can be eaten by people. The Galls of the oak make a black dye that has been used in the manufacture of ink.

Magic:

The oak tree is linked to St. Bridget, the Irish solar goddess who carried three fiery arrows to defend the land from invasion. In Greek mythology it is linked to the thunder and lightning gods; its electric resistance is low so it is struck by lightning more than most trees. Acorn is a symbol of fertility. The oak tree is very deep-rooted and an oak foot bath can help feet find the right pathway through life. Two twigs of oak tied together act as a talisman offering strength.

2. Beech Tree (Irish name: Feá)

The Beech tree is known as 'Mother of the woods' because it is protective and nurturing, giving shade and food. Thin slices of beech wood formed the first book, and this was one of the first surfaces on which words were written. The Anglo Saxon name for beech was 'boc' which became book and the tree is linked to all written wisdom.

Uses:

The Beech tree is used for making hedging. The wood of the Beech tree is used for parquet flooring and for chairs and also ship building. Beech tar has been used as a medicinal antiseptic for eczema and chronic skin disease. The leaves are cooling and binding so they can be used as a poultice. The leaves are also used in a syrup for bronchitis.

Magic:

Beech helps us to get rid of fixed ideas and opinions which are limiting to our progression through life.

3. Apple Tree (Irish name: Abhail)

The apple tree is the oldest cultivated tree in Europe. The apple was the symbol for the Greek goddess of love Aphrodite. When cut in half you can find Aphrodite's five-pointed star in the shape of its pips. The apple blossom in early spring talks of love and fertility and in autumn the tree connects us to the harvest. 'Paradise' a Persian word, literally means 'orchard' or 'stand of trees.'

Uses:

Apple blossoms are a favourite of bees who survive on the nectar. The apple tree is also used for fruit, apple juice, apple pie and cider. The apple is used in a game during Halloween for bobbing apples and the wood of the apple tree can easily be carved for small objects. Apple cider vinegar is used as a detox, a skin cleanser and, taken regularly, helps cultivate the body's natural stomach bacteria.

Magic:

The apple is a symbol of beauty and fruitfulness. Applewood has been carved into talismans or amulets to attract love and longevity.

4. Walnut Tree (Irish name: Crann Gallchnó)

Walnut trees produce a growth inhibitor juglone that can be detrimental to some plants growing nearby (negative allelopathy). Experimental studies have shown that juglone can inhibit plant respiration, depriving sensitive plants of needed energy and reducing the plants ability to uptake water and nutrients.

Uses: The walnut tree is used for its timber. Its nuts are edible and can be eaten raw, salted or pickled. Oil can be pressed from the raw nuts, and the sap of the tree is also edible. Leaves can be used to make wine. The green husks can be boiled to produce a dark yellow dye; the leaves contain a brown dye used on wool and to stain skin. The oil has been used in soaps and for making varnishes, polishing wood and as a lamp oil. The leaves have insect repellent properties; in former times horses were rested underneath walnut trees to relieve them from insect irritation.

Medicinal:

The leaves and bark have alterative, laxative, astringent and detergent properties, and are used for the treatment of skin diseases. In addition the bark is a purgative. The juice of the green husks, boiled with honey, is a good gargle for sore throats. The oil from nuts can be used for colic and skin diseases.

5. Yew Tree (Irish name: Iúr)

The Yew tree is an evergreen which lives for over a 1000 years. Its leaves and fresh seeds contain a poison called Taxin. The yew is one of the first trees to flower in the spring. Irish yews are cone shaped and upward growing unlike the British yew whose branches grow horizontally. Yew trees are often found in graveyards.

Uses:

The wood of the Yew tree was used to make long-bows and arrows. It is also used to make furniture, fence posts, ship masts and wine barrels. Yew is very poisonous and will cause death. Arrows were often tipped with yew poison. Taxol derived from the Yew is used by chemical companies today as an anti-cancer drug.

Magic:

The Yew tree was believed to protect the spirits of the dead. A symbol of immortality and resurrection and sprigs were often buried with the dead to symbolise the afterlife. Yew sticks were used by the Celts for divination.

6. Holly Tree (Irish name: Cuileann)

The Holly tree is an evergreen small tree with poisonous berries.

Uses: The wood is used to make charcoal, which burns very hot and was used by smiths and weapon makers. The wood of the Holly tree was used to make ancient chariot wheels and then cart and coach wheels. It is used to make walking sticks and also to make prickly hedges. Holly bark is a food for rabbits.

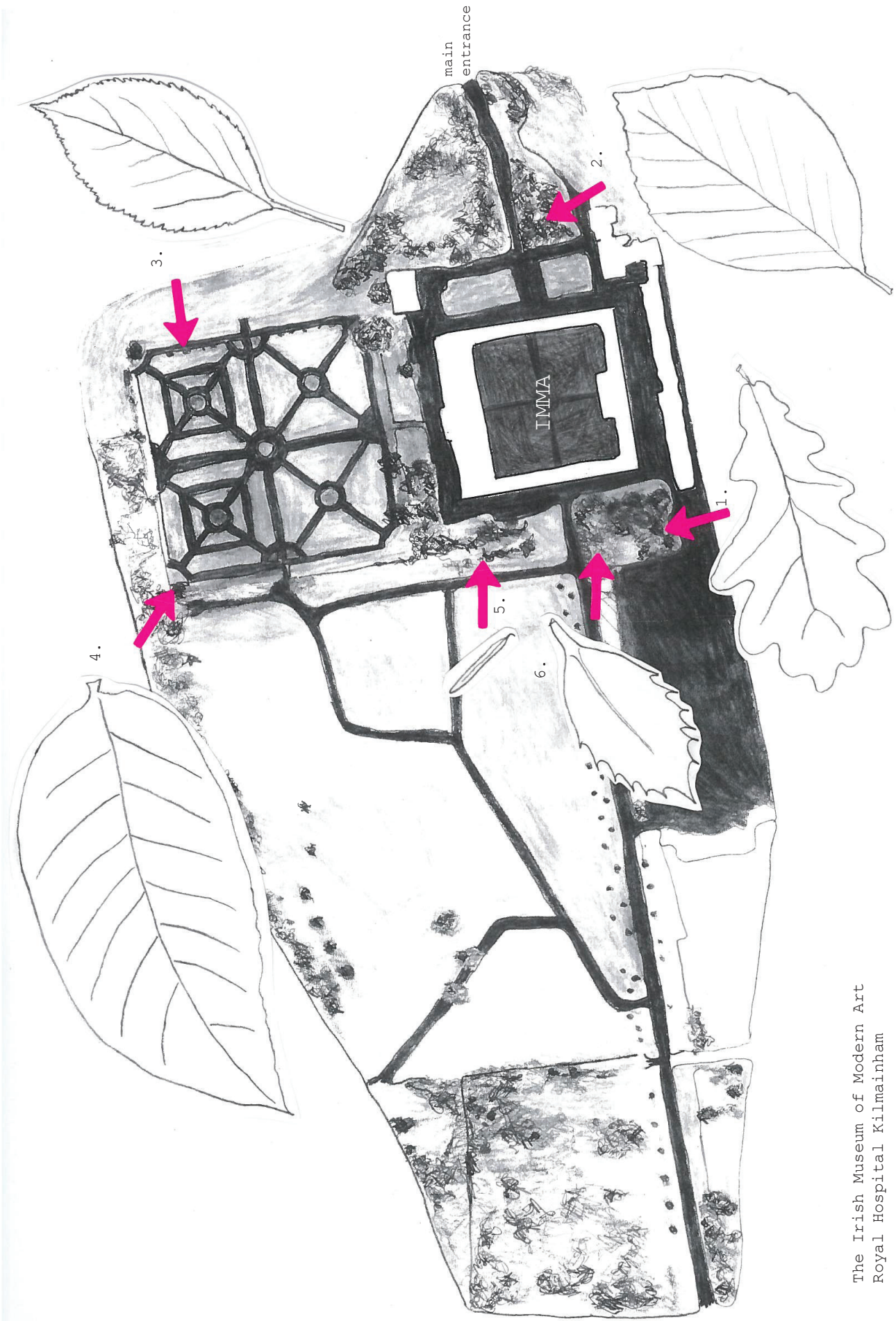
Magic:

Holly in the home during winter helps alleviate depression as it represents the tenacity of life even in coldest darkest winter with its bright red berries and deep green leaves. The Holly tree was a sacred tree for the druids, its evergreen leaves representing immortality. In Christianity it was referred to as Christ's thorn, symbolising his suffering. Holly is also a herb of protection, guarding against short tempered or angry elements.

Production: Lisa Moran, IMMA

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