

Sorry, I wasn't clear. I meant when was Muin connected to the grapevine. "Vine" could be blackberry or hops as both are connected with fermented beverages.

Although I believe the introduction of beer (ale + hops) happened a couple of centuries after the Aúraicepts. Is the word in the 'Aúraicept' well understood to be grape? Was the word "mead" used interchangeably with "wine"?

Ngetal  Reed/Fern

(no Native Texas or U.S. species)

The Vine

In the Celtic Tree Ogham, **blackberry** and **grape** share the letter **Muin**. Although the tree sign Vine is usually associated with the **grape**, grapes are not native to the British Isles and many experts think that the Druids often substituted the hardier native **blackberry**. The **grape**, *Vitis vinifera*, belongs to the *Vitaceae* family of woody vines called *lianas* that root in the ground and climb by means of tendrils. **Blackberry**, *Rubus fruticosus*, is a member of the *Rosaceae*, or rose, family of scrambler vines. It is a rapidly growing, thorny bramble with prickly stems and edible fruits.

101

Muin

Name: Muin

Pronunciation: (MUHN)

Sound: M

Tree: Grapevine (*Vitis vinifera*)

Few: one stroke diagonally across the stemline

The Muin ogham few is often related to the grapevine. However, the grapevine is not indigenous to Britain or Ireland. It

was brought to the area during the Bronze Age. The Book of Ballymote Ogham list refers to the ogham Muin by stating “mead from it”. This would more likely refer to the bramble (blackberry) or mulberry, from which mead is distilled. Either way, grape or berry, this few is related to an intoxicating drink. Fermented beverages are a traditional drink at harvest festivals. Intoxication is an altered state and can symbolically represent spiritual journeys. The Celtic calendar names the tenth month (August) for this ogham few.

Meaning:

Harvest, completion, festivity, celebration, spiritual journey

Reversed:

Excess, overindulgence, allowing things to ‘rot on the vine’.

(Substituting another species of Native U.S.)



PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

HISTORICAL FACTS

English Name: Reed/Fern

Irish Name: Ngetal, nGétal, nGéadal, Ngedal, Ngiatal, Ngiadal

(Pronounced: NYEH-tl, NYEH-dl)

Welsh Name: Eithin, Rhedynen, Cawnen, Corsen

Classification Under Brehon Law: 'bushes of the wood' (Bramble/Herb tree)

Word Ogham: A physician's strength

ESOTERIC ASSOCIATIONS

Ogham Meaning Reed: Direct action, Unity

Ogham Meaning Fern: Preservation of truth

Ogham Alphabet: Letter 'NG', 13th Ogham

Time of Year: 12th Month, October

Color: Grass Green

Element: Air, Water

Deities: Manannan Mac Lir, Morrigan, Poseidon, Pwyll, Rhiannon

Animals: Dog, Rat, Stag

Bird: Goose

Planet: Mars, Pluto

Gender: Male

Blackberry Flowers. The Blackberry is a substitute for Grape in England, where Grapevines are less than common.

Muin  **Vine**

(3 Native Texas species)

Mustang Grape

Vitis mustangensis



PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS HISTORICAL FACTS

English Name: Vine

Irish Name Vine: Muin, Muinn, Fíniúin

(Pronounced: MUHN, like "foot")

Irish Name Blackberry: Sméar

Welsh Name: Gwinwydden

Classification Under Brehon Law: 'bushes of the wood' (Bramble tree)

Word Ogham: Strongest of effort

ESOTERIC ASSOCIATIONS

Ogham Meaning Blackberry: Harvest

Ogham Meaning Grapevine: Prophecy

Ogham Alphabet: Letter 'M', 11th Ogham

Time of Year: 10th Month, August, Lughnasadh

Color: Variegated

Element: Water





















Deities: Bacchus, Brigit, Ceridwen, Danu, Dionysus, Lugh

Animal: Lizard

Bird: Titmouse

Planet: Venus

Gender: Female

	n <i>nin</i> "ash"		q <i>ceirt</i> "apple tree"		r <i>ruis</i> "elder"		i <i>idad</i> "yew"
	s <i>sail</i> "willow"		c <i>coll</i> "hazel"		z <i>straif</i> "blackthorn"		e <i>edad</i> "aspen"
	f <i>fer</i> "fern"		t <i>tinne</i> "holly, elder"		ng <i>getal</i> "broom"		u <i>ur</i> "heath"
	l <i>luis</i> "rowan"		d <i>duir</i> "oak"		g <i>gort</i> "ivy"		o <i>onn</i> "furze"
	b <i>beithe</i> "birch"		h <i>huath</i> "whitethorn"		m <i>muinn</i> "vine"		a <i>ailm</i> "pine tree"

- **Beith**, Old Irish **Beithe** means "[birch](#)-tree", cognate to Latin *betula*.
- **Luis**, Old Irish **Luis** is either related to *luise* "blaze" or *lus* "herb". The arboreal tradition has *caertheand* "[rowan](#)".
- **Fearn**, Old Irish **Fern** means "[alder](#)-tree", Primitive Irish **wernā*, so that the original value of the letter was [w].
- **Sail**, Old Irish **Sail** means "[willow](#)-tree", cognate to Latin *salix*.
- **Nion**, Old Irish **Nin** means either "fork" or "loft". The arboreal tradition has *uinnius* "[ash-tree](#)".
- **Uath**, Old Irish **Úath** means *úath* "horror, fear", the arboreal tradition has "[white-thorn](#)". The original etymology of the name, and the letter's value, are however unclear. McManus (1986) suggested a value [y]. Peter Schrijver (see McManus 1991:37) suggested that if *úath* "fear" is cognate with Latin *pavere*, a trace of PIE **p* might have survived into Primitive Irish, but there is no independent evidence for this.
- **Dair**, Old Irish **Dair** means "[oak](#)" (PIE **doru-*).
- **Tinne**, Old Irish **Tinne** from the evidence of the [kennings](#) means "bar of metal, ingot". The arboreal tradition has *cuileand* "[holly](#)".
- **Coll**, Old Irish **Coll** meant "[hazel](#)-tree", cognate with Welsh *collen*, correctly glossed as *cainfidh* "fair-wood" ("hazel") by the arboreal interpretation. The Latin *corylus* is a possible cognate.
- **Ceirt**, Old Irish **Cert** is cognate with Welsh *pert* "bush", Latin *quercus* "oak" (PIE **perkwo-*). It was confused with Old Irish *ceirt* "rag", reflected in the kennings. The Auraicept glosses *aball* "[apple](#)".
- **Muin**, Old Irish **Muin**: the kennings connect this name to three different words, *muin* "neck, upper part of the back", *muin* "wile, ruse", and *muin* "love, esteem". The arboreal tradition has *finemhain* "[vine](#)".
- **Gort**, Old Irish **Gort** means "field" (cognate to *garden*). The arboreal tradition has *edind* "[ivy](#)".
- **nGéadal**, Old Irish **Géatal** from the kennings has a meaning of "killing", maybe cognate to *gonid* "slays", from PIE *gwen-*. The value of the letter in Primitive Irish, then, was a voiced labiovelar, [g^w]. The arboreal tradition glosses *cilcach*, "[broom](#)" or "[fern](#)".
- **Straif**, Old Irish **Straiph** means "sulphur". The Primitive Irish letter value is uncertain, it may have been a sibilant different from *s*, which is taken by *sail*, maybe a reflex of /st/ or /sw/. The arboreal tradition glosses *draighin* "[blackthorn](#)".
- **Ruis**, Old Irish **Ruis** means "red" or "redness", glossed as *trom* "[elder](#)".
- **Ailm**, Old Irish **Ailm** is of uncertain meaning, possibly "pine-tree". The Auraicept has *crand giuis .i. ochtach*, "[fir](#)-tree" or "[pinetree](#)".
- **Onn**, Old Irish **Onn** means "[ash-tree](#)", although the Auraicept glosses *aiten* "[furze](#)".
- **Úr**, Old Irish **Úr**, based on the kennings, means "earth, clay, soil". The Auraicept glosses *fraech* "[heath](#)".
- **Eadhadh**, Old Irish **Edadh** of unknown meaning. The Auraicept glosses *crand fir no crithach* "test-tree or [aspen](#)".
- **Iodhadh**, Old Irish **Idad** is of uncertain meaning, but is probably a form of *ibhar* "[yew](#)", which is the meaning given to it in the arboreal tradition.

of the *forfeda*, four are glossed by the Auraicept:

- **Eabhadh**, Old Irish **Ebhadh** with *crithach* "aspen";
- **Ór**, "gold" (from Latin *aurum*); the arboreal tradition has *feorus no edind*, "spindle tree or ivy"
- **Uilleann**, Old Irish **Uilleand** "elbow"; the arboreal tradition has *edleand* "[honeysuckle](#)"
- **Pín**, later **Ifín**, Old Irish **Iphin** with *spinan no ispin* "[gooseberry](#) or thorn".

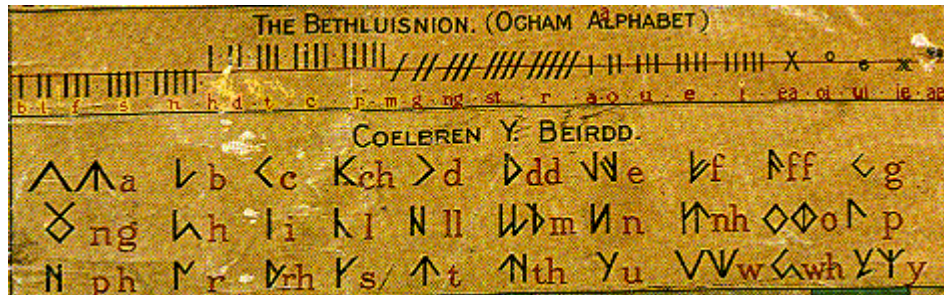
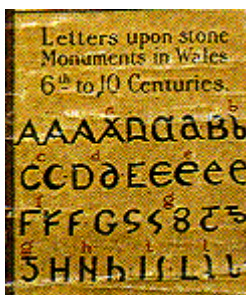
The fifth letter is **Emancholl** which means 'twin of hazel'

"Y Wyddor"; wall chart devised by T.C. Evans and drawn by Christopher Evans. [Wales, 19th cent.]



In the Celtic revival of the nineteenth century, the real and often unacknowledged work was done by thousands of patient educators like the two Welsh teachers, father and son, who designed this wall chart for Sunday-school children.

The bottom of the chart shows scripts used in Wales prior to the contemporary Roman, including ogham and runes. (see enlargement below).



note: I have modified the image slightly to improve readability of letters

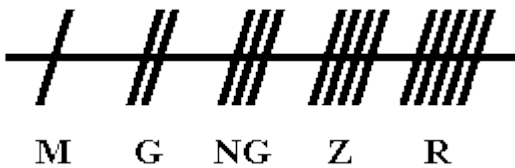
the original wall-chart is housed in the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff
a copy of this wall-chart can be found in the book "Celtic Mysteries" by John Sharkey.



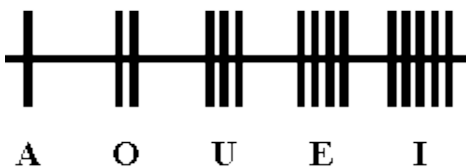
Brave Lad Fear Surely Not



Hidden Death Time Conquers Questions



Money Gains Knowledge Justice Reigns



Apollo Our Ultimate Eloquent Illusion

--the Irish ogham alphabet with a letter-order mnemonic.

Thought to have been invented c.1700 BCE, in or near Sinai, the acrophonic alphabet became codified (or ordered) at some point before its adaptation as a cuneiform script at Ugarit, 1400 through 1200 BCE. [25] The letter-order remained little changed as the alphabet was later used by the post-Ugarit Canaanite Phoenicians, followed by the Hebrews, Greeks, Etruscans, Romans, Arabs, and on out across the world. Though the alphabet diffused to far-away places, in many cases some semblance of the original letter-order may still be found, and it's not difficult to trace the development of individual letter-forms (e.g., from South Semitic and Aramaic to Bramhi and Kharoshti, to Malay scripts and their influence on the problematic Philippine alphabet). The letter-order of the alphabet has had amazing staying power, with the notable exceptions of two early European writing systems: Norse runes and the Irish oghams. Runeforms follow a different letter-order, but their physical shapes show a clear relationship to Etruscan, which tempts a date of invention c.300-200 BCE. The oghamic scripts, however, consist of straight lines usually carved into wood or stone, defies a ready relationship with other alphabets, and continues to provoke investigators. How like the Irish!

Ogham (*var.* ogam) is thought to mean "skilled use of words," was originally "a peculiar form of cryptic speech, in which, for instance, the names of letters replaced in certain syllables the letters themselves," and a term for the entire spoken composition. [26] At some later point, perhaps even

immediately afterwards, ogham was also used to describe an engraved inscription in oghamic script (as one pens a letter, so one would notch or cut an ogham). Both uses involve explicit occult cryptology and an implicit sense of cleverness.

Throughout the first half of the last century, R. A. S. Macalister promoted the hypothesis of a Western Greek (Chalcidian) influence on the oghamic script (via Etruscan or a related alphabet), an influence which may also have given rise to the Germanic runic futhork. Macalister further conjectured that ogham progressed from a spoken, to a finger-language, merged with a tally-stick tradition as a monumental script, before becoming a manuscript pedantry and nearly forgotten. [27] No firm date of invention was ever advanced by Macalister, though with Caesar's mention that the Druids were forbidden to use writing, his hypothesis allowed for invention before the first century BCE, perhaps a few to several centuries before. Contrary to Macalister, many scholars didn't need such an early and direct Greek influence to explain the oghamic scripts and were satisfied with a Latin derivation in late Roman times.

Fueled in part by the literary and artistic 19th century "Celtic Revival," the study of oghams was again taken up. The 1917 publication of the *Auraicept na n-Éces: The Scholars' Primer*, edited and translated by George Calder, was met with critical acclaim and remains a classic for modern oghamists. [28] The *Auraicept* is a magical comedy originally written c. 650 CE (with additions over the next few centuries), and is thinly disguised as an ancient learned treatise describing a hoary and fantastic antiquity for oghams. Calder's publication of the work, with important photographs of four folio-pages from *The Book of Ballymote* showing 93 varieties of oghamic scripts, enabled later investigators to have a great deal of fun. But, here we split for the moment, between those amateurs and professionals who believe in a great antiquity for the oghamic scripts and those who support an invention shortly before the composition of the *Auraicept*. It is this extreme which still makes the casual study of oghams difficult for most.

Macalister's argument for a Western Greek influence on the development of oghamic scripts notwithstanding (though oghamic scripts did acquire additional characters, the forfeda, to represent diphthongs, based on Greek letters sometime between the sixth and eighth centuries CE), scholars continued to propose a derivation from the Latin (Roman) alphabet for the origin of the oghamic scripts. Such a derivation has steadily gained in acceptance, but the when is still hotly debated.

The *Táin Bó Cúaingne* ("The Cattle-Raid of Cooley") is an Irish epic commonly believed to describe Iron Age Ireland, much like Homer's *The Iliad* described Achaean-era Troy. [29] The *Táin* has been dated to the early first century CE, around the time of Jesus, but many now disagree, with some claiming The *Táin* depicts Irish life much earlier, while others maintain the Iron Age in Ireland lasted to c.500 CE and The *Táin* was probably composed shortly thereafter. [30] There is no mention of writing in the works of Homer, a fact many have pointed out tends to impart a certain verisimilitude to Homer's "history," while The *Táin* does include a mention of the making of an ogham. Some believe this reference was inserted into The *Táin*, perhaps as late as the 12th century, and is therefore unreliable in attempting to date the origin of the oghamic scripts.

A requisite for the study of any ancient language or script is the compilation of a corpus ("main body") of extant examples. This was done by Macalister in his monumental *Corpus Inscriptionum Insularum Celticarum*, and showed that the vast bulk of extant oghams occur in Ireland, with far lesser numbers in Scotland, Wales, England, and some of the islands. [31] No examples of ogham were recorded as being from the continent, though many amateurs and professionals had allowed for some form of Romano-Gaulish origin. With this apparently solid information, many scholars then projected a native invention of the oghamic scripts and even went so far as to declare the script was created in the southeastern corner of Ireland.

Ebb and flow, decadence and puritanism, liberal thinking and conservative judgments, such are the extremes we endure until a lasting consensus is reached. The inescapable allure of the Druids, the Celtic myths and legends, the later fabulized manuscript claims regarding the age of the oghamic scripts, were all too much for academia to resist, and they've struck back in a most surprising manner. Many scholars today now understand the oghamic scripts as a reaction to the introduction of Christianity. Those extant examples referred to above? All appear datable to after the 5-6th centuries CE. Could the oghamic scripts have arisen as a joke in the face of Christianity? Some think so.

The Christian Druids: On the filid or philosopher-poets of Ireland by John Minahane [32] and ***Ogam Stones and the Earliest Irish Christians*** by Catherine Swift [33], are two examples of contemporary works which tack away from antiquity and support a late invention of the oghamic scripts, though one does so with a smile and the other without.

The current trend to regard the oghamic scripts as a druidic farce is, I believe, a response to previous claims, and merely describes late changes and nuances, but lacks the spine to understand the necessary requirements for a script, as opposed to some rarely used secret cipher. I don't doubt that ogham changed many times and eventually survived in a Christian context. However, I have three points of challenge to such a late, Christian-era origin for the oghamic scripts:

1) One of the so-called "Ballinderry Dice," from the second century CE, has the numeral 5 represented as three straight lines or the oghamic character "bilabial," which stands for the letter f or v, and another die has V, as in the Latin numerical convention for 5. Three lines to show the number five? The "Ballinderry Dice" would seem to suggest the oghamic script (and an Irish familiarity with Latin) was well established before the 4th century introduction of Christianity. [34]

2) Previous claims of no ogham on the continent, though based on earnest and seemingly thorough investigations, continue to be challenged. Oghamic flourishes on Celtic engraved stones in Brittany are too late to assist with the location problem for the invention of the oghamic script. Fell's claims of Swedish oghams and various Gaulish coins said to contain oghamic script in their decorations also offer little help. Yet, as recovery techniques and the discipline of archaeology improves, perhaps a future discovery of continental ogham awaits.

Most agree that the structural basis of the oghamic script developed from an earlier system involving the cutting of notches on wood (for tallies, divination, etc.). As wood seldom survives in the archaeological record, except under preservative conditions, it's not surprising we don't possess any examples of these early notations and possible transitions to the alphabetic oghamic scripts. The paucity of early runes is thus comparable to early oghams. [35]

3) I'm uncomfortable with the recent trend of some scholars to accept those sections of Josephus' *Antiquities* which mention Jesus, James, and Baptist John and reject the long standing understanding that those sections were likely early medieval interpolations. But, I'm satisfied that everyone agrees that extant versions of Caesar's *De bello Gallico* are essentially the same as when various scribes and secretaries composed the classic military account (under Caesar's personal direction, of course). As Rome had despised the Celtic tribes to the north for centuries, it stands to reason that Caesar's explaining of the lack of a Celtic ethnic script (due to a profound regard for learning) was accurate, as it easily could have been bitterly dismissed by Caesar as profane and ignoble. Like the bit about the human sacrifices in wicker cages. Caesar's reporting on druidic traditions, c. 58-51 BCE, readily allows twenty years to learn how to voice a spoken ogham, how to signal a finger-language ogham, and perhaps how to cut an ogham inscription. [36]

While examples of ancient and medieval ciphers and occult alphabets exist, none (that I know of) achieved the enduring (widespread?) usage of the runic and oghamic scripts. Usually the invention or introduction of an alphabetic script is an almost nationalistic affair, with slight adaptations to individual cultures and specific requirements to accommodate the needs of the language being expressed. Also, there is the matter of the teaching of the alphabet, a collection of letters (an **abecedarium**), and a mnemonic attached to the letter-order to facilitate learning. All such mnemonics are lost, unfortunately, and various reconstructions are simply tantamount to wiley guesswork. However, it would not be unreasonable to assume that both the runic and oghamic scripts express far different mnemonic narratives than other alphabets. [37]

As we await further work and possible future discoveries, we're left with the choices of the oghamic scripts as likely being either a late creation inspired by such Latin grammarians as Aelius Donatus (fl. 354 CE), or a first century invention using the divisions of the Latin alphabet as expressed by the rhetorician, Quintilian, in his *Institutio de Oratoria*. [38] An origin coeval with with runes, c. 300-200 BCE, is an unsupported hunch I favor, in that such an early date makes it easier to accommodate known developments and changes in oghamic letters, sound values, and letter-order, but a first century BCE invention wouldn't surprise me.

Natural History of the Trees of the Celtic Ogham

This list, taken from Clark ([1995](#)), identifies one, or sometimes several, species that corresponds to each letter of the ogham. I have compiled tidbits of the natural history that seem to relate to the mythic and divinatory meanings of the plants as set forth in Graves ([1966](#)) and Glass-Koentop ([1991](#)). I have noted which of these plants are cultivated in North America, although in my experience, few are readily available in nurseries. I have also pointed out those that have close relatives in North America. Many of the related species have similar appearance and similar natural history. Where no relatives are available, information about the natural history, especially habitat, growth form, and whether the plant is evergreen, should be useful in selecting correspondences among other native trees.

The trees are presented in ogham order, following the standard sequence of the Ogham alphabet. Each entry consists of the name of the ogham (in Irish or *Gaeilge*, following the standardized names, but see [alternate names](#)), and attempt to render the pronunciation for English speakers, the English name of the ogham, and a discussion of the actual tree species and their natural history. Scientific names follow Tutin et al. ([1964](#)), and for the most part represent the names currently used by most European botanists. Many of these plants will be found under other scientific names in the horticultural literature, and I hope to eventually include a synonymy.

Beith

(BEH), birch - The silver birch (*Betula pendula* Roth) is the most common tree birch in much of Europe. It grows up to 30 m (100 feet) high, but is more often found in spreading clumps on sandy soils. It is one of the first trees to colonize an area after a mature forest is cut; this is probably a large part of its symbolic connection with new beginnings. It is cultivated in North America, often under the name of weeping birch. The three trees in my front yard form root sprouts that would take over the bed where they are planted if I didn't cut them back. The common birch (*B. pubescens* Ehrh.) is almost as widespread as the silver birch, but grows primarily on acid or peaty soils. It can reach 20 m (65 feet) in height. Birches are members of the Birch family (Betulaceae).

Luis

(LWEESH), rowan - The rowan, or mountain ash (*Sorbus aucuparia* L.) is related to serviceberries. The red berries were historically used to lure birds into traps, and the specific epithet *aucuparia* comes from words meaning "to catch a bird". Birds are also responsible for dispersing the seeds. Rowans thrive in poor soils and colonize disturbed areas. In some parts of Europe they are most common around ancient settlements, either

because of their weedy nature or because they were planted. Rowans flower in May. They grow to 15 m (50 feet) and are members of the Rose family (Rosaceae). They are cultivated in North America, especially in the northeast.

Fern

(FAIR-n), alder - The common alder (*Alnus glutinosa* (L.) Gaertner) is common along lowland rivers, where it grows with aspens, poplars, and willows. Like willows, alders sprout from stumps. This allows them to regenerate after heavy flooding. In protect sites they may grow to 20 m (65 feet) tall. Their leaves are more blunt-tipped than most North American alders, which look more like the grey alder (*A. incana* (L.) Moench). This species is more common in the mountains of Europe, and is not restricted to moist soils. Like ashes, European alders are not widely cultivated in North American (they are often sold as black alders), but several native species are. Alder wood is said to resist rotting when it is wet, and was the wood of choice for pilings in many regions. Alders are members of the Birch family (Betulaceae).

Sail

(SAHL), willow - Like North America, Europe is home to a large number of willow species (Tutin et al. list 63 different native European willows, from low shrubs to tall trees). Two common tree willows are the white willow (*Salix alba* L.) and the crack willow (*Salix fragilis* L.). The white willow is named for the whitish undersides of its leaves, and the crack willow for the propensity of its branches to "crack" off (probably another adaptation to flooding). Both species grow along with poplars and alders along lowland rivers. They can reach 25 m (80 feet) in height, and they both vigorously sprout from stumps. Other willow species are shrubs, including osiers (*Salix purpurea* L. and *Salix viminalis* L.) that grow along streams and eared willows (*S. aurita* L.) of acidic, boggy soils. The white willow and purple osier are sometimes grown in cultivation in North America. Willows are members of the Willow family (Salicaceae).

Nion

(NEE-uhn), ash - the common ash (*Fraxinus excelsior* L.) is a major tree of lowland forests in much of Europe, along with oaks and beeches. It grows to 40 m (130 feet) in open sites, with a broad crown reminiscent of American elm trees. Ash was and still is an important timber tree, and is a traditional material for the handle of a besom. The common ash is occasionally cultivated in North America, and similar native ash species are widely grown as street trees. Ashes are members of the Olive family (Oleaceae).

Uath

(OO-ah), hawthorn - Like willows, hawthorns have many species in Europe, and they are not always easy to tell apart. All are thorny shrubs in the Rose family (Rosaceae), and most have whitish or pinkish flowers. The common hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna* Jacq.) and midland hawthorn (*Crataegus laevigata* (Poiret) DC.) are both widespread. They are common in abandoned fields and along the edges of forests. Both are cultivated in North America, as are several native and Asiatic hawthorns.

Dair

(DAH-r), oak - The oak of myth and legend is the common oak (*Quercus robur* L.). It is sometimes called the great oak, which is a translation of its Latin name (*robur* is the root of the English word "robust"). It grows with ash and beech in the lowland forests, and can reach a height of 45 m (150 feet) and age of 800 years. Along with ashes, oaks were heavily logged throughout recent millennia, so that the remaining giant oaks in many parts of Europe are but a remnant of forests past. Like most other central and northern European trees, common oaks are deciduous, losing their leaves before Samhain and growing new leaves in the spring so that the trees are fully clothed by Bealltaine. Common oaks are occasionally cultivated in North America, as are the similar native white oak, valley oak, and Oregon oak. Oaks are members of the Beech family (Fagaceae).

Tinne

(CHIN-yuh), holly - The holly (*Ilex aquifolium* L.) is a shrub growing to 10 m (35 feet) in open woodlands and along clearings in forests. Hollies are evergreen, and stand out in winter among the bare branches of the deciduous forest trees that surround them. Hollies form red berries before Samhain which last until the birds finish eating them, often after Imbolc. The typical "holly leaf" is found on smaller plants, but toward the tops of taller plants the leaves have fewer spiny teeth. Hollies are members of the Holly family (Aquifoliaceae). The common holly is often cultivated in North America, as are hybrids between it and Asiatic holly species.

Graves (1966) and others are of the opinion that the original *tinne* was not the holly, but rather the holm oak, or holly oak (*Quercus ilex* L.). This is an evergreen oak of southern Europe that grows as a shrub, or as a tree to 25 m (80 feet). Like the holly, the holm oak has spiny-edged leaves on young growth. It does not have red berries, but it does have red leaf "galls" caused by the kermes scale insect; these are the source of natural scarlet dye. Holm oaks are occasionally cultivated in North America.

Coll

(CULL), hazel - The hazel (*Corylus avellana* L) is the source of hazelnuts. It forms a shrub up to 6 m (20 feet) tall, inhabiting open woodlands and scrubs, hedgerows, and the edges of forests. The filbert nut in North American groceries is *Corylus maxima*, a related species. The European hazelnut is cultivated in North America, primarily as an ornamental. Hazelnuts are in the Birch family (Betulaceae).

Ceirt

(KAIRT), apple - When most of us think of apples, we think of the domestic apple, but the ogham tree was most likely the European crabapple (*Malus sylvestris* Miller). This tree grows to 10 m (33 feet) in moist fertile soils in oak woodlands, and has been extensively cultivated. The fruits are small versions of the domestic apple, and also show the pentacle when cut across. Cultivated crabapples in North America are usually Asian species, but this species is a common rootstock for apple trees. Apples are in the Rose family (Rosaceae).

Muin

(MUHN, like "foot"), vine - The grape (*Vitis vinifera* L.) is a vine growing as long as 35 m (115 feet), in open woodlands and along the edges of forests, but most commonly seen today in cultivation, as the source of wine, grape juice, and the grape juice concentrate that is so widely used as a sweetener. European grapes are extensively cultivated in North America, especially in the southwest, and an industry and an agricultural discipline are devoted to their care and the production of wine. Grapes are in the Grape family (Vitaceae).

Gort

(GORT), ivy - Ivy (*Hedera helix* L.) is also a vine, growing to 30 m (100 feet) long in beech woods and around human habitations, where it is widely planted as a ground cover. Ivy produces greenish flowers before Samhain on short, vertical shrubby branches. The leaves of these flowering branches lack the characteristic lobes of the leaves of the rest of the plant. Like holly, ivy is evergreen, its dark green leaves striking in the bare forests of midwinter. Ivy is widely cultivated in North America. It is a member of the Ginseng family (Araliaceae).

nGéadal

(NYEH-dl), reed - The term "reed" is used with great imprecision in North America, but it is clear that the reed of the ogham is the common reed (*Phragmites australis* (Cav.) Trin. ex Steudel). This is a giant grass, with stems as high as 4 m (13 feet). It grows in marshy areas, where it often forms dense stands. Like most other grasses, the vertical stems live only a single year, dying in the autumn and being replaced with new green shoots in the spring. The dead stems rattle and whisper in late autumn winds. Common reed has spread as a weed throughout the world; in North America it is widespread in cooler climates. Common reed is in the Grass family (Poaceae, or Gramineae).

Straif

(STRAHF), blackthorn - The blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa* L.) is a relative of cherries and plums, and is the source of the sloe fruit. It is a thorny shrub growing to 4 m (13 feet), often forming thickets on south-facing slopes. The blue-black fruits are edible, but bitter until after the first frost. Blackthorns are seldom cultivated in North America. They are members of the Rose family (Rosaceae).

Ruis

(RWEESH), elder - The common elder (*Sambucus nigra* L.) is a shrub growing to 10 m (33 feet) in damp clearings, along the edge of woods, and especially near habitations. Elders are grown for their blackish berries, which are used for preserves and wine. The leaf scars have the shape of a crescent moon. Elder branches have a broad spongy pith in their centers, much like the marrow of long bones, and an elder branch stripped of its bark is very bone-like. The red elder (*S. racemosa* L.) is a similar plant at higher elevations; it grows to 5 m (15 feet). Red elder extends its native range to northern North America, and it is cultivated along with other native species, but common elders are seldom seen in cultivation. Elders are in the Honeysuckle family (Caprifoliaceae).

Ailm

(AHL-m), silver fir - The silver fir (*Abies alba* Miller) is one of the tallest trees native to Europe, sometimes exceeding 50 m (165 feet) tall. It is named for its silver gray bark. In its appearance (and in its current, and undoubtedly ancient, use) it is the quintessential Yule tree. It is not a tree of northern regions, however; it is commonest in central Europe and is replaced by other conifers in the north. Like most conifers, it is evergreen, and like other firs it produces cones that fall apart while they are still on the tree. Silver firs are seldom cultivated in North America, but several similar native species are. They are members of the Pine family (Pinaceae).

Onn

(UHN), furze - Furze, or gorse (*Ulex europaeus* L.), is a thorny shrub growing to 2 m (6 feet) tall. It grows in heaths, moors, pastures, and open woodlands. It produces bright yellow flowers around the time of the spring equinox. It is not often cultivated in North America, but is a serious weed in central California and some other areas. Furze is a member of the Pea family (Fabaceae, or Leguminosae).

Úr

(OOR), heather - Heather (*Calluna vulgaris* (L.) Hull) is a shrub growing to 2 m (6 feet). It is a major component of the vegetation type called "heath", the source of the term "heathen". It is evergreen, and produces bell-shaped pinkish flowers in the late summer. There are a number of other plants called "heath" or "heather" in the genera *Erica*, *Phyllodoce*, and *Cassiope*. These are relatives of *Calluna*, and are similar in appearance. *Calluna* is cultivated in North America, along with some of the other heaths and several *Erica* species from other parts of the world. Heather is a member of the Heath family (Ericaceae).

Eadhadh












(EH-wah), poplar - The aspen (*Populus tremula* L.) grows to 20 m (65 feet) along rivers and as a pioneer species after fire or logging. It sprouts from the base and may form clumps or thickets. The black poplar (*Populus nigra* L.) reaches 30 m (100 feet) in sandy and gravelly soil along rivers. The white poplar (*Populus alba* L.) is of similar size and habitat, but is more common in southern Europe. The white and black poplars are cultivated in North America (the "Lombardy poplar" is a form of black poplar), and several native poplars are similar in habitat and appearance. The North American aspen (*P. tremuloides*) is very similar to the European aspen. Poplars are members of the Willow family (Salicaceae).

Iodhadh

(EE-wah), yew - The yew (*Taxus baccata* L.) is a slow-growing conifer, living as long as 1000 years and reaching 20 m (65 feet). It is much less common in recent times because of overharvesting (its hard, springy wood was the source of English longbows). The evergreen needles are very broad, and the seeds are produced in red, berry-like cones. Yews are toxic; one of the toxic compounds, taxol, is an effective treatment for some cancers. Yew is in the Yew family (Taxaceae).

Graves (1966) makes a case for an additional "blank" ogham, "the unhewn dolmen arch", which he assigns to the mistletoe, a plant for which there is abundant evidence of its ritual importance to the Celts. There are two common mistletoes in Europe, both of which live as parasites on trees. The common mistletoe (*Viscum album* L.) parasitizes many tree species, including oaks in the western part of its range. It forms white berries between Samhain and Yule. The yellow-berried mistletoe (*Loranthus europaeus* L.) does not extend to western Europe. It is found primarily on oaks. It is most likely the "golden bough", being more common in the eastern Mediterranean than the common mistletoe. The common mistletoe has been cultivated in North American for the Yule trade, and there are several native mistletoes in the genus *Phoradendron*. Mistletoes are in the Mistletoe family (Viscaceae).

Group	Ogham Symbol	Sound/ Letter	Name (Liter Ogham...)	Associated Tree	Alternate Names	Presentation
First Aicme · Δι̅ ċ ĵ		b	Beith pronounced (BETH)	Birch	Beath Bethi Beth bedw [w] Bethe bedwen[w] Beithe Beithi	
		l	Luis pronounced (LWEEESH)	Rowan	Learn caorthann [w] cerdinen [w] criafol [w]	
		f	Fearn pronounced (FAIR-n)	Alder	Fern Fernd Fernn gwernen [w]	
		s	Sail pronounced (SHAI Luh)	Willow	Saille Suil helygen[w]	
		n	Nion (NEE-uhn)	Ash	Nin Nuin Nionn Nün Nendait onnen [w]	
Second Aicme · Δι̅ ċ ĵ		h	hUath (OO-ah)	Hawthorn	Huath Huathe Uath draenen[w]	
		d	Dair (DOO-r)	Oak	Daur Duir Dur derwen/dár [w] darach [ScG]	

		τ	Tinne (CHIN-yuh)	Holly	Teine derwen ? [W]		
		Ϸ	Coll (CULL)	Hazel	Call caltuinn [ScG] collen [W] celynnen ?[W]		
		ᚠ	Quert (KWAIRT)	Apple	Cert Ceirt Queirt Quiert collen[W]		
Third Aicme AIC III		ᚢ	Muin (MUHN)	vine	afal [W]		
		ᚦ	Gort (GORT)	Ivy	Gart gwinwydden [W]		
		ᚨ	nGéatal (NYEH-dl)	Reed (Broom)	Getal (n)Gétal nGeadal nGedal nGiatal Pethboc eiddeu [W]		
		ᚫ (ST) represented as ᚫ	Straif (STRAHF)	Blackthorn	Straiff Straiph Straith eithen [W]		
		ᚷ	Ruis (RWEEESH)	Elder	draenen[W]		
	Fourth Aicme AIC A		ᚨ	Ailm (AHL-m)	Silver Fir (White Fir)	Ailim Falm ddu [W]	
			ᚱ	Onn (UHN)	Furze, or Gorse	Oir ysgawen [W]	
		ᚹ	Úr (OO-r)	Heather	Ura úr ffynidwydden [W]		

		e	Eadha (EH-yah)	Poplar	Eabhadh éadha Edhadh [M] Edad	Eadad Eadhadh eithen	
		i	Iodhadh (EE-yoh)	Yew	ida Ido Íodha iubhar	Idad Idho logha iogh	
Added (Fifth) Aicme		ea, (ch / k)	Éabhadh (EHV-uh)		Ébad Ebad Eubh		
		oi (th)	Ór		Oir		
		ui (io, ph)	Uilleann		Uilen		
		ia (p / pe)	Ifín		Iphín		
		ae (x / xi)	Eamhancholl*		Emancholl Phagos		

* Eamhancholl shows much variation; written from a 3 x 3 grid to 5 x 4.

Examples:

The Book of Ballymote uses primarily a 4 x 4 grid.



Reading the Book of Ballymote Ogam Scales

ᚠ = S ᚡ = D
ᚢ = R ᚣ = G
ᚤ = CR ᚥ = ST

Example:

ᚠᚢᚣᚤ ᚡᚢᚠᚢᚢᚣᚤ ᚢᚣᚤᚢᚢ
GEA THAR DRUIMNECH CRUTENI