

Introduction

Mistletoe is best known for its association with Christmas and the custom of kissing under a sprig of it. The grubbing up of traditional apple and pear orchards has destroyed one of its most important habitats. You can help conserve this attractive evergreen plant by encouraging its growth in your garden.



Did you know...?

- Apple trees are the commonest host tree for mistletoe in Norfolk, followed by poplar and lime.
- The mistle thrush is so named because of its fondness to feeding on mistletoe berries.
- One of the best places to see mistletoe growing in Norfolk is in The Walks, a park in King's Lynn.



This leaflet will...

- Give details of a tried and tested technique for growing mistletoe.
- Provide the results of the Norfolk Wildlife Trust mistletoe survey.

Don't miss the kiss – grow mistletoe in your garden...

Putting Norfolk's mistletoe on the map

In 2007 Norfolk Wildlife Trust ran a mistletoe survey to map the distribution of this plant in the county.

The survey shows a large proportion of records in the south-east of the county, and mistletoe appeared to be largely absent from the Brecks area of Norfolk, and limited in the Fens and the Broads.



NWT Survey 2007/08

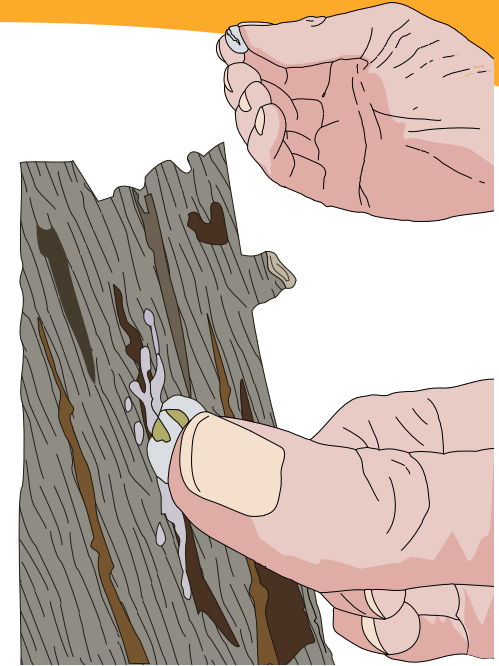


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Plant a kiss

- Choose your host tree: in Norfolk, mistletoe's most frequent host trees are apple, lime and poplar. It has also been found growing on field maple, hawthorn, and even honeysuckle and cotoneaster.
- Decide where to put your berries. This should be at least 1.5m up the tree, and on the side or underside of a branch that is over 20mm in diameter.
- Pick your berries - white, plump ones are best. If you picked them earlier and stored them in a dry place you need to rehydrate them in a bowl of water for a couple of hours.
- Rub the berries onto a branch, squeezing out the seed along with some of the sticky viscin (this acts like a glue securing the seed in place).
- Mark where you have rubbed your seed.

To cut, or not to cut? Some people believe that cutting the bark of the host tree and placing the seed in the gap increases the germination rate, however, this may expose the tree to disease.



Top Tips:

- Mistletoe may be linked to Christmas, but wait until March or April to harvest and sow your seed.
- Mistletoe can take many years to establish, be patient and 'if at first you don't succeed, try, try again!'
- Use lots of berries, not just one or two, this will increase your success rate and will also increase the chance of growing both male and female plants.

Frequently asked questions

Why hasn't my mistletoe got any berries on it?

A mistletoe plant is either male or female. A female plant will not produce berries until it is over four years old and only if it has been fertilised by a male plant. If you know your plant is over four years old you may have a male plant that will not produce berries, or an unfertilised female plant.

How can I find out about mistletoe in Norfolk?

You can download a copy of NWT's mistletoe survey report at: www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/naturalconnections/surveys or telephone Norfolk Wildline on 01603 598333.

Does mistletoe kill trees?

The mistletoe found growing in Norfolk, *Viscum album*, is a hemiparasite. This means that it makes its own food by photosynthesis, but also taps into a tree's nutrients. This may cause deformity in the tree, but it rarely kills its host. Be aware that growing mistletoe on a fruit tree may affect the trees growth and its fruit yield.

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To find out more about Norfolk's wildlife visit www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/naturalconnections

Alternatively call Norfolk's free wildlife information service on **01603 598333**

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