

### Common Yew

This example can be found next to Cell Barnes pond.

**Latin/Botanical Name:** *Taxus baccata*

**Range and age:** a very widespread native tree which can reach 400 to 600 years of age. It is believed that ten yew trees in Britain predate the 10th century.

**Height:** up to 25m

**Uses:** Yew timber is very durable, traditional uses include making long bows and tool handles. It is used as a hedging plant. The poisonous taxane alkaloids have been developed as anti-cancer treatments. All parts of the tree are poisonous except for the bright red fruits (arils).

**Description:** An evergreen tree with a broad crown, overall shape often spherical, branches are widely spreading. The bark is reddish-brown and flakes off revealing red patches. Leaves are linear, flattened 2-4cm long and pointed, twisted to form two rows. Male and female flowers are found on separate trees. Male flowers form clusters of yellowish anthers in leaf axils. Female flowers are tiny. The fruit is ovoid with a hole at the tip and scarlet when ripe in the autumn.

**Interesting Fact:** One of the world's oldest surviving wooden artifacts estimated to be about 450,000 years old is a yew spear head, found at Clacton-on-sea in 1911.



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