

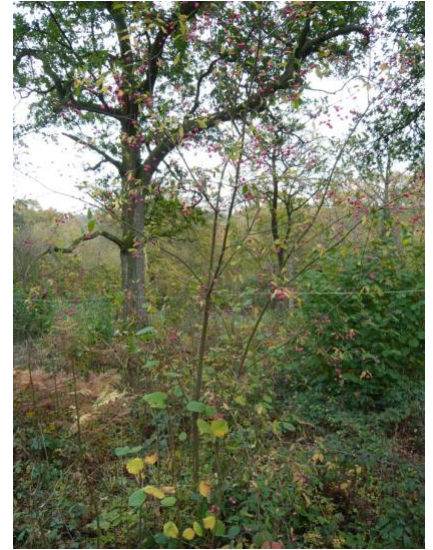
Spindle - *euonymus europaeus*



The best time to spot Spindle is in autumn when it bears striking and unusual pink fruits.

Spindle is found sporadically throughout Selsdon Wood with the largest concentration of bushes in Greenhill Way. There are also a few along The Wend (right 10/11/11) and one striking specimen near the top of Great Hill (centre right 17/11/11). Although the Spindle can grow into a small tree those in Selsdon Wood are mainly bush-like, rarely exceeding ten feet in height.

The most striking feature of the Spindle is the fruit, which is quaintly shaped, and a unique pink colour. These pink fruits are clearly visible from a distance and make the Spindles in The Wend and Great Hill easy to spot in October. On ripening, the lobed fruit splits to reveal bright orange seeds attractive to birds that disseminate them in their droppings. The seeds are mildly poisonous to most mammals, including humans.



The Spindle leaves open in late spring and are dark green and oval with a shiny surface and nearly smooth edges (below left 10/5/12). They are arranged in pairs. The flowers are small and greenish white, borne from the leaf axils in loose clusters known as cymes in May and June (below centre 16/5/12). They are rich in nectar and attractive to a variety of pollinating insects.



A feature that distinguishes the Spindle at any time of year is the shape of some of the twigs and branches. These have corky ridges along their length that make them appear to be square in cross section (right). The twigs grow in pairs from opposite sides of the branch. The bark of the trunk may also be striped with corky ridges (above right and far right). Spindle wood is hard and tough and was formerly used for making spindles, knitting needles and skewers.



Take an autumn walk that takes in Greenhill Way, The Wend and Great Hill.
Look for the striking pink fruits in the hedgerows and inspect them closely.
Look too for the corky ridges on the twigs and trunk.

