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Sorbus aria

[Synonyms : *Aria nivea*, *Crataegus aria*, *Mespilus aria*, *Pyrus aria*, *Sorbus leptophylla*]

COMMON WHITEBEAM is a deciduous tree (rarely a shrub). Native to Europe it has small scented, white flowers and leaves that turn gold and russet in Autumn.

It is also known as *Alisier* (French), Chess apple, *Criafolen Wen* (Welsh), Cumberland hawthorn, Henapple, Hoar withy, Iron pear, *Mehlbeerbaum* (German), *Mehlbeere* (German), *Mostajo* (Spanish), *Mostellar* (Spanish), Mulberry, *Peral silvestre* (Spanish), *Saksanpihlaja* (Finnish), Service berry, *Sorbo montano* (Italian), *Vitoxel* (Swedish), Whipcrop, Whitebeam, White rice, Whitten, Widbin pear tree, Wild pear tree, Wild service tree, and Winterbeam.

Common whitebeam is considered to be threatened in the wild in Britain.

Aria is derived from Latin *aries* (battering ram, prop, beam) and is an old Latin name for the common whitebeam.

In Old English *beam* means ‘tree’ and in parts of the Lake District in England the fruit are called Chess-apples.

The small glossy scarlet berries have not only been baked in bread but have also been used to make brandy and vinegar. Even now the fruit (after the first frost) can still be used for making spirits and liqueurs.

Until superseded by cast iron its very hard wood was always used throughout Europe for making teeth (cogs) for machinery and it has also been employed for centuries for making axles and shafts. The wood was much admired by the English diarist and author, John Evelyn (1620-1706) and was used to panel one of his rooms. It was popular with wood engravers and was used for making gunstocks. Today like that of mountain ash (*Sorbus aucuparia*) this tree’s wood is used for turning and for making scaffolding poles and hoops for barrels.

Birds are partial to the fruit.

Medicinally, in country areas the dried fruit have been used for cough and catarrh remedies.