

## Corylus - Growing Guide

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#### Hazel

*Corylus avellana*, the common hazel or cobnut, is obviously a native tree in our woodland and hedgerows. Traditionally, this multi stemmed small tree, was coppiced for firewood and grown also for its edible nuts which today have more appeal to squirrels than in a human diet. Hazels provide a key source of straight basal new growth shoots which can be used in stick making and the pendant yellow catkins are a pleasant sight from winter into spring.

There are, however, improved varieties of hazel with different leaf forms and growth habits which can readily make some *Corylus* into attractive freestanding ornamental garden plants. Others have larger cobnuts and are grown as fruiting hazels. All are just as easy to grow as a common hazel.

Growing on the drive, just across from the garden entrance at Burncoose, are two of these improved forms:

*Corylus avellana* 'Contorta', the corkscrew hazel, has strongly twisted shoots and produces a wonderfully contorted tree to be admired in winter. These plants are often grafted onto ordinary hazels so initially you need to be careful to remove any fresh young (common) hazel growth from below the graft itself. The contorted newer growth and branches look superb as part of a winter flower arrangement especially with some catkins.

*Corylus maxima* 'Purpurea' has dark purple foliage and purple tinged catkins. We grow these in a row as a backdrop to rhododendrons and hydrangeas and below a towering *Embothrium*. If they get too tall you simply give them a severe pruning and they soon recover their height.

*Corylus avellana* 'Kentish Cob' is a popular seller in the nursery for those who have the squirrels under control in their gardens. The cobs are at least twice the size of an ordinary hazel seed and in large clusters of five to seven cobs in maturity. They fruit at a young age too.

*Corylus avellana* 'Red Majestic' is a relatively new introduction. Again it has a wonderfully contorted growth habit and stunning bright red leaves. With us it has grown slowly in the garden and is still only 6ft or so after 20 years. Beside a path it attracts much comment in summer and autumn alike.

*Corylus avellana* 'Aurea' is the golden leafed hazel with bright yellow new foliage fading to yellow green when mature. A different backdrop to 'Purpurea' but it has the same uses in the garden as a pleasant backdrop perhaps to darker foliage plants in front of it.

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