

TJØRNEN I OKTOBER

THE HAWTHORN IN OCTOBER

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I oktober, når bladene begynder at få efterårets farver, hænger tjørnens røde frugter så tæt, at grenene bøjer sig under dem. Bladene skifter gradvist fra grønt til gult og rødbrunt, efterhånden som bladgrønnet nedbrydes. Mellem bladene hænger klaser af de fineste røde bær.

Bærrene ser faktisk ret indbydende ud – selv om vi mennesker og ræven ved at de er sure. Tjørnens bær er en invitation til efterårets fugle. Fuglene får føde i en tid, hvor insekterne er ved at forsvinde, og frosten nærmer sig.

Til gengæld gør fuglene også tjørnen en tjeneste. Bærrene er pakket om en hård kerne, og fuglen sluger det hele. Kernen passerer gennem fuglen og lander et andet sted, ofte i en gødningsklat under en hegnspæl eller en trægren, hvor en ny tjørn kan spire. Sådan har tjørnen spredt sig gennem landskabet, og mange af de gamle hegn og krat, vi går forbi,

er i virkeligheden fuglenes gamle måltider, der voksede op.

Tjørnen har også haft en anden betydning for det danske landskab. Tjørnen blev benyttet til at danne naturlige hegn om bondens marker. Det buskformede træ er tæt, tornet og uigennemtrængelig for kreaturer.

I 1700- og 1800-tallet plantede bønderne tjørn oven på nedgravede, syge kreaturer. I folkemunde blev disse tjørn kaldet pesttjørne. Under de voldsomme epidemier som kvægpest og miltbrand blev kadaverne gravet ned i massegrave langt borte fra landsbyen, og ovenpå disse grave plantede man tjørn. Det var både en advarsel og en forebyggelse af smittespredning. Det var i øvrigt også en metode, der blev anvendt ved menneskegrave under de store kolera- og pest-epidemier.

Tjørnens dybe og tætte rodstruktur mindskede muligheden for at vilde

dyr som grævling og ræv gravede gange ned de til måske fortsat smittebærende kadavere. Og kvæget kunne heller ikke græsse lige oven på gravene.

Det var en særdeles fornuftig foranstaltning for f.eks. miltbranden har sporer, der kan overleve i jorden i op til flere årtier.

I dag har jeg tjørnen lige uden for mit vindue. Den store busk fungerer som et lille økosystem, og jeg kan se årstiderne komme og gå. Jeg har stillet fuglebrættet lige under busken, så tjørnen er hele året fyldt med sæsonens fugle. Her i oktober er det f.eks. solsorten, de forskellige mejsearter, spætmejse, dompap, gransanger og grønirisk.

Ugens fotografier er fra min have i oktober 2026.

The Hawthorn in October

In October, when the leaves begin to take on the colours of autumn, the hawthorn's red fruits hang so thickly that the branches bend beneath their weight. The leaves gradually change from green to yellow and reddish-brown as the chlorophyll breaks down. Among the leaves hang clusters of the finest red berries.

The berries look rather inviting – even though we humans and the fox know that they are sour. The hawthorn's berries are an invitation to the birds of autumn. The birds find food at a time when insects are beginning to disappear and frost is approaching.

In return, the birds do the hawthorn a favour. The berries contain a hard seed, and the bird swallows the whole thing. The seed passes through the bird and lands somewhere else, often in a dropping beneath a fence post or a tree branch, where a new hawthorn can take root. This is how the hawthorn

has spread across the landscape, and many of the old hedgerows and thickets we pass by are, in reality, the birds' former meals that grew into plants.

The hawthorn has also had another significance for the Danish landscape. Hawthorn was used to create natural hedges around farmers' fields. The tree, which grows in a bush-like form, is dense, thorny and impenetrable to livestock.

In the 1700s and 1800s, farmers planted hawthorn on top of the buried remains of diseased livestock. In popular parlance, these hawthorns became known as "plague hawthorns". During severe epidemics such as cattle plague and anthrax, carcasses were buried in mass graves far away from the village, and hawthorn was planted on top of the graves. This served both as a warning and as a means of preventing the spread of infection. Incidentally, the same method was also used at human burial sites during the great

cholera and plague epidemics.

The hawthorn's deep and dense root system reduced the possibility of wild animals such as badgers and foxes digging down to the carcasses, which might still have been carrying infection. Nor could cattle graze directly on top of the graves.

It was an eminently sensible precaution, as anthrax, for example, produces spores that can survive in the soil for several decades.

Today, I have a hawthorn just outside my window. The large bush functions as a small ecosystem, and I can watch the seasons come and go. I have placed the bird feeder directly beneath the bush, so that the hawthorn is filled with the birds of the season throughout the year. Here in October, for example, there are blackbirds, various species of tits, nuthatch, bullfinch, chaffinch and greenfinches.

This week's photographs are from my garden in October 2026.



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KOLOFON

Ugens foto: Tjørnen i oktober
Af Keld Jensen

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COLOPHON

Photo of the week: The Hawthorn in October
By Keld Jensen

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