



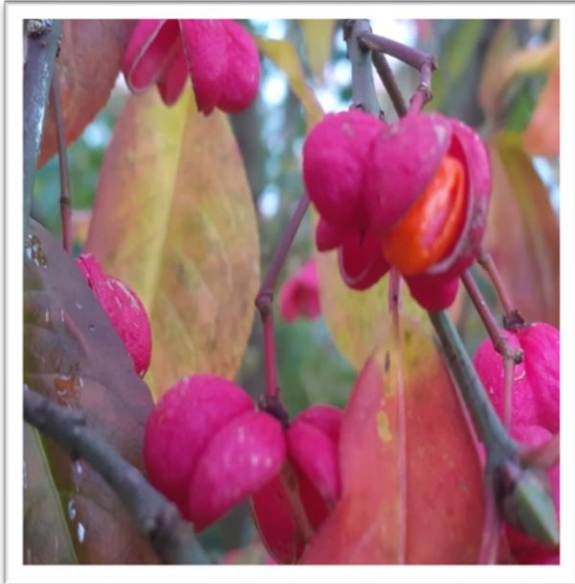
I was feeling as glum as the wet weather and wondering just how much rain a cloud can hold, whilst doing the usual rounds of emptying the bin. Thank goodness, I have the envious position of working outdoors at Riverside Park. Here, there is always something to raise the spirits. With that a mallard flew low through the drizzle over the raging weir, touching down smartly, and made an abrupt turn like an expert canoeist to ride the surging river. He was swept back towards the waterfall edge and flung off like a log flume shooting the rapids splashing down and bobbing up like a cork to the surface. I swear it was done out of sheer fun.



A receding memory now but did you enjoy the blaze of colour this autumn? All those beautiful hues have perished with the onset of winter. However, amongst the autumnal leaves were some eye-catching berries. Most berries are either red or black. This makes it easier for birds to find them. Plants are of course enticing birds and other animals to distribute their seeds. The seed is surrounded by juicy fleshy pith, rewarding the birds that eat them with vitamins and energy. According to the RSPB, ivy berries contain nearly as many calories as Mars Bars.

One of the most unusual and attractive seeds is produced by the spindle tree. But don't be tempted to eat this colourful concoction of bright pink and orange, masquerading as a pick and mix sweet. It is poisonous! Leave them to our

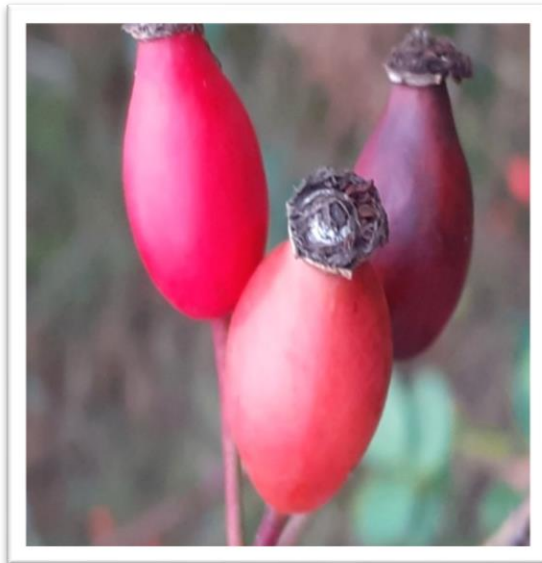
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feathered friends like the blackbirds to help them through the winter months ahead.

These energy capsules will help keep our birds alive. As the huge quantities of autumn berries diminish through the winter, our birds play an increasingly desperate game of hide and seek to stay alive as they search out the remaining berries.

Those of you with sharp eyes may spot the pictured berries below in amongst our hedges and scrub.



What berries are these?

*Kerry*

Countryside Ranger