

Cotoneaster

Scan for more
information



Species Description

Scientific name: *Cotoneaster species*

Native to: Majority of species originate from east Asia

Habitat: Rough ground

A large group of small trees and prostrate shrubs that can be either evergreen or deciduous. They are becoming increasingly naturalised due to birds which eat the small red berries and spread the seed. This ID sheet includes those introduced species which are relatively common. Where they become established they can become dominant to the exclusion of native species.

- Himalayan cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster simonsii*) is an erect deciduous shrub 3-4m high with 1.5-2.5 cm long leaves.
- Small-leaved cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster microphyllou*) is an evergreen low-growing shrub with very small leaves (0.5-0.8cm long).
- Tree cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster frigidus*) is a deciduous or semi-evergreen shrub or small tree with leaves between 6-15 cm long and flow-ers in dense clusters.

All these species have leaves which are shiny and hairless on the upper surface and slightly hairy on the lower surface. Cotoneaster species do not have thorns. Wall cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster horizontalis*) is the most widely recorded species and is distinctive in having stems that spread horizontally in flattened herring-bone like branches and bears single flowers. Unlike the other cotoneasters mentioned, the underside of leaves of this species are relatively hair-less. Cotoneasters have been in cultivation in GB since 1824 and there are over 100 species now widely cultivated in the UK. Other species could also become naturalised.

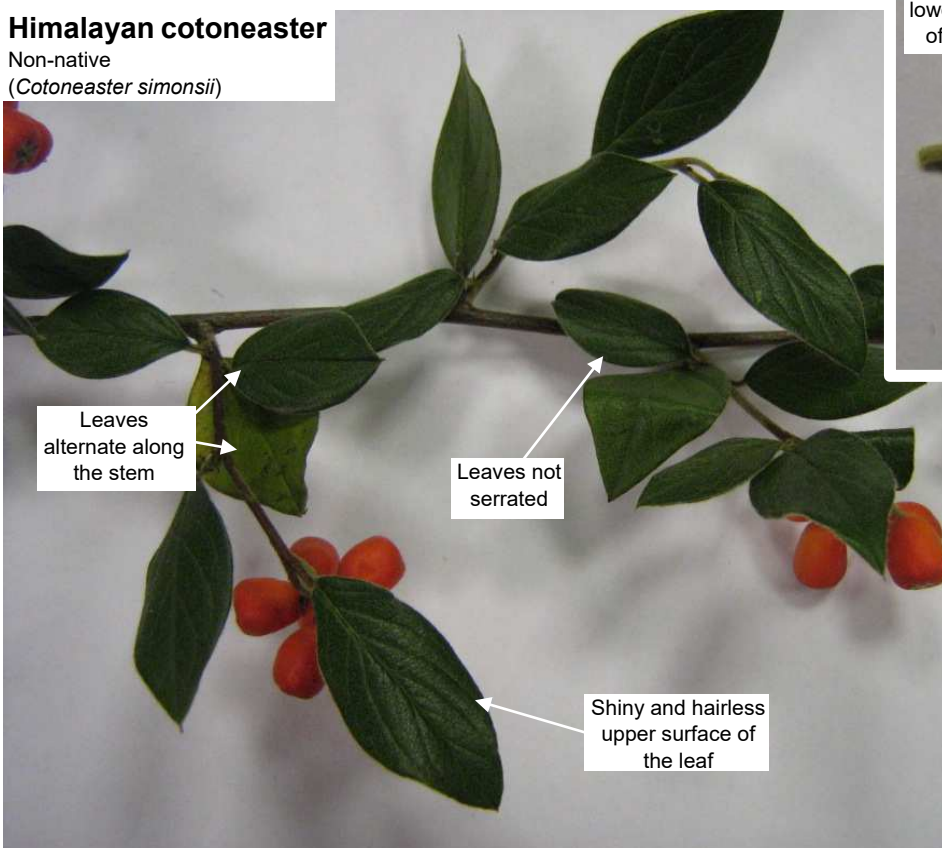


Himalayan cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster simonsii*)

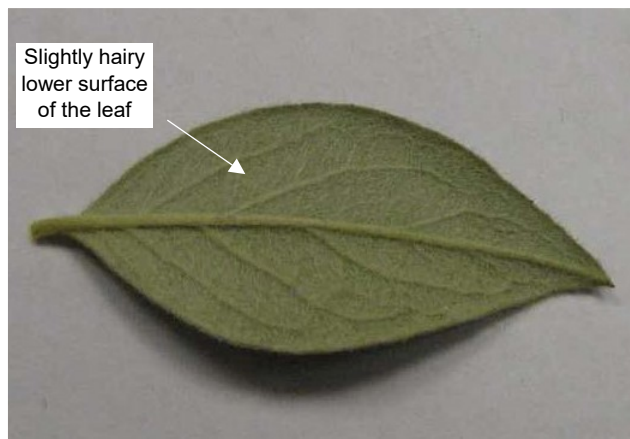
Key ID Features

Himalayan cotoneaster

Non-native
(*Cotoneaster simonsii*)



Slightly hairy
lower surface
of the leaf



Report any sightings via; CEDaR Online Recording - <https://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI>, iRecord app or Invasive Species Northern Ireland website - <http://invasivespeciesni.co.uk/report-sighting>

Identification throughout the year

Evergreen species such as the small-leaved cotoneaster can be identified throughout the year by its leaves. Deciduous species can be identified by the presence of the red berries which can remain throughout winter and, in the case of wall cotoneaster, by the distinctive herringbone-shaped branches.



Similar Species

Firethorn
Non-native
(*Pracantha coccinea*)



A shrub with small serrated leaves that alternate along the stem, which has long thorns

Wilson's honeysuckle
Non-native
(*Lonicera nitida*)



Similar to the small leaved cotoneasters, leaves opposite not alternate

Aromatic wintergreens
Non-native
(*Gaultheria* species)



An evergreen shrub with alternate leaves and bell shaped flowers, unlike the five petalled flowers of cotoneasters

Other similar species which may be confused with cotoneaster include:

Escallonia (*Escallonia macrantha*) - an evergreen shrub which has alternate serrated leaves and numerous pinkish-red flowers, no thorns;

Barberry (*Berberis vulgaris*) - a thorny shrub with small serrated leaves, yellow flowers and red lozenge-shaped berries;

Sea buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*) - a thorny densely branched shrub with alternate long thin leaves with bright orange berries on female plants.

Distribution

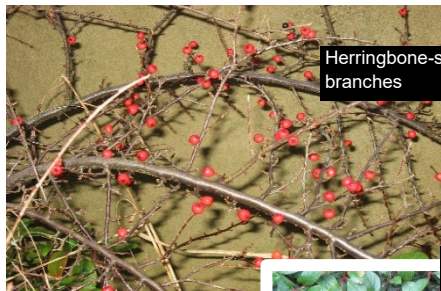
Cotoneaster species are widespread throughout Northern Ireland.



Source: NBN Gateway. Check website for current distribution.

Some other species of Cotoneaster

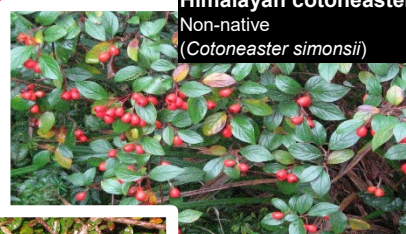
Wall cotoneaster
Non-native
(*Cotoneaster horizontalis*)



Herringbone-shaped branches



Himalayan cotoneaster
Non-native
(*Cotoneaster simonsii*)



Evergreen habit

Small-leaved cotoneaster
Non-native
(*Cotoneaster microphyllus*)



References and further reading:

- Johnson, O and More, D (2004) "Collins Tree Guide". HarperCollins
- Preston, C D, Pearman, D A and Dines, T A (editors) (2002) "New Atlas of the British and Irish Flora". Oxford University Press
- Stace, C (1999) "Field Flora of the British Isles". Cambridge University Press
- Photos from: Olaf Booy, David Fenwick, Mike McCabe, Helen Parish.

Adapted for Northern Ireland
Environment Agency 2020