



## Tree Blaise Drummond

I'm always drawing and painting trees.  
And planting them.

Over the years I've planted hundreds on the couple of acres we live on in the middle of Ireland. In the summer our holding looks like a little oasis amongst the barer farmed fields that surround it, with their cattle and sheep chewing everything down. We have apples, pears, cherries, plums, mulberries, almonds, figs, walnuts, hazelnuts and even a peach or two. And plenty more that you can't eat, but maybe the birds and bees can.

Driving up and down the same routes through the seasons and years you get to know all the trees along the way and see them mark the passage of time as they change. There are trees that have their particular moment, maybe in spring as the leaves burst the buds open, or when their greens turn to browns in autumn. These are the sorts of things that catch your eye and might end up put down in a painting or drawing. But I thought perhaps this time it would be interesting to stay with one tree through the whole cycle of a year.

I started out last winter, looking at dozens of potential candidates along the roads of my daily driving. A tree that required a special pilgrimage was no use. It had to be one I could observe day by day and that had various other charms in terms of maturity, scale and shape.

The sycamore, *Acer pseudoplatanus*, is a native tree of central and southern Europe and no-one knows quite how and when it first came to be in Ireland but it is now our second most common tree, after the ash. Fast growing and relatively shortlived, some consider it a weed hereabouts but it can make a handsome tree. Like this one that I chose in the end, standing solitary in a field across from a church in the townland of An Currach, County Longford.

For one year I watched it, from its bare winter skeleton to the lime green opening leaf buds of spring, its large leaved and full shady canopy of summer turning slowly to brown, red and yellow. And the autumn winds like a magnet, pulling the leaves from the tree and so back again to the bare branches that carry it through another winter. And so on it goes.

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