

## VEGETATION IN ELVEPARKEN

The dominant type of trees along the river is alder (latin: *Alnus Incana*), and here along the river where the soil is very moist the trees become largely bushy. Where the conditions are good alder may be up to 20m tall. Alder shed the leaves while they are still green. It may do so because it is capable of extracting nitrogen from the air in the soil through mushroom bulbs that exist on the roots. Due to the rich contents of nitrogen the alder leaves fertilises the biotope. Alder wood has low calorific value and is not in demand as firewood, but during world war 2 alder wood was used in gas generators for cars.

Goat willow (latin: *Salix Caprea*) is seen several places in Elveparken, some bigger trees, but also for a large part as bushy growth. The goat willow is flowering in early spring, and the male goat willows large yellow catkins are of major importance for bumble bees, bees and other insects collecting nectar and pollen. Moose and roe deer are often grazing on the goat willow, and beavers are cutting down the goat willow to eat bark and twigs. The long thin annual shoots have been used to make baskets, and twigs and leaves were in the earlier days used as additional fodder supplement on the farms. The bark of the goat willow contains salicylic acid and was earlier used as pain relief by decoction (as a tea).

Here and there you will see patches of silver birch (latin: *Betula*), and some fallen giants bear the witness that there have been some large birches. There are three kinds of birch in Norway, and in Elveparken there are mostly common silver birch (Latin: *Betula Pubscens*) which be 10 – 20 m tall. Moose, roe deer and hares are grazing on silver birch. Shoots and seeds are sought by black grouse, grouse and smaller birds. But the beavers are cutting down silver birch to eat leaves and twigs. In Norway the silver birch is mainly used as firewood (high calorific value), but it is also worth mentioning that the bark is still used in handicraft works and that the bottom bark earlier was used in the tanning of leather. Xylitol is a sweetener that is extracted from birch wood.

More scarcely it is possible to find rowan (mountain ash), bird cherry and red elderberry, but you have to look carefully to find them outside the time of blossom and berries.



Foto: Kjell Erik Sandberg