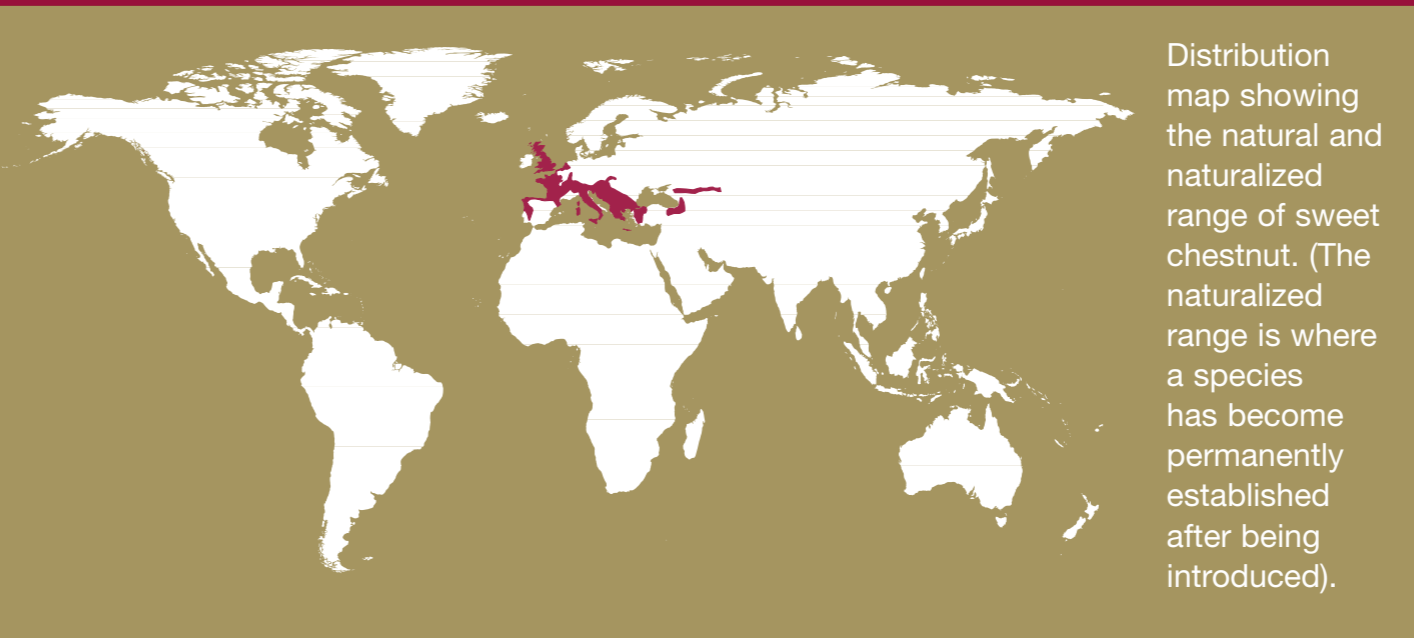


# Sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa*



Sweet chestnut coppice in the process of being cut.



Distribution map showing the natural and naturalized range of sweet chestnut. (The naturalized range is where a species has become permanently established after being introduced).



illustrations by John White

The sweet chestnut has distinctive prickly fruit as well as long leaves with edges that look like saw teeth.

What do the following things have in common: bread, puddings, soups, confectionery and beer?

The products above can all be made using nuts from the sweet chestnut. In fact these trees are widely grown in Europe specially for their delicious nuts which can be eaten raw, roasted or even ground to make flour. Some people even think that the Romans' craving for sweet chestnuts led them to introduce the tree into Britain.

Sweet chestnut wood is durable and timber from large trees is very valuable. It is used to make furniture, barrels, fencing and roof beams. Chestnut also regrows very well from a cut stump, producing long, straight limbs which are useful for many purposes including fencing, fuel and charcoal. You are looking at an area of woodland where this has been done regularly, a practice known as 'coppicing'. You may be able to see a big mound on the ground nearby – this is a traditional way of marking the boundary of an area of coppice.

Did you know?

Bedgebury's Visitor Centre is heated by burning woodchips produced from the sweet chestnut coppice around you. Our need to produce more renewable green energy means that this kind of use may expand in future.