

At the Hay Festival 2026, on the eve of Oak Apply Day, writers Jules Acton, Anita Roy and Andrew Simms, together with campaigner from the Woodland Trust, Tamara Ulliyart, explored the distinguished folklore of the oak tree, sharing extraordinary tales of the nation's forests and how they enrich our lives, as well as the threats to them and what we can all do to make a difference.

Then, with a huge range of contributions from the audience who wrote words, lines and phrases inspired by their love of trees on leaf-shaped pieces of paper, a crowd sourced poem was written out by Andrew in an hour after the event. It was then read out in a small ceremony by an old oak tree in the heart of the festival site. You can find a [recording of the event itself here](#), and some background to Oak Apple Day can be [found here](#).

Oak Apple Day

Plant ideas that feed the soul
Plant seeds for those to come
See how trees make landscapes whole
Us small parts of nature's sum

Hay welcomes like a forest clearing
We gather sharing spores of thought
How to bear the heat that's nearing
Pray green shade won't fall far short

Your words we weave with leaf in garlands
And dance our claim on Oak Apple Day
To walk by right in ancient woodland
Forgotten forests on our way

Now we go back to our trees
Home as the lowly hedgehog knows
Where tiny wasps meet fungal frenzies
Make ink from oak so knowledge flows

And don't forget to stroke the slug
Watch it glow beneath the arbour
See where the musky badger dug
As rowan, alder, and us grow older

But comfort comes as trees live on
Come back from felling to prop up mines
Talk to ancestors when we're gone
Their susurrus words on thermals climb

We are kin, mossy tendrils to deep mycelium
From life's dark ancient bones
Embrace the shade, hedgehog's emporium
In woodland we are never alone

What's lost, forgotten can return
Knowing nature as our mother, father
There is still time, we can re-learn
Our one home is the Crann Bethadh*

(Crann Bethadh - pronounced 'cran beth-ah', is Gaelic for tree of life)