

Tilia americana (American Linden) Linden Family (Tiliaceae)

Introduction:

This American native was used for centuries for its fibrous inner bark and fragrant flowers. It is a good shade tree for parks and other large areas. It bears unique flowers and large, heart-shaped leaves. The tree is stately as a single specimen or when it is allowed to form a clump. Unless suckers are removed from the base of the tree, a clump of small trees rather than one large tree will form.

Although the beautiful bark of the young tree is smooth, with age, distinctive scaly ridges form. In winter, the tree's branch architecture can be fully appreciated.

Culture:

This tree will develop to its full potential if given full sun and rich, moist, well-drained soil. American linden will tolerate clay, a wide pH range and heat. It is noted for its ability to adapt to less-than-ideal conditions. Although it is tenacious, drought may cause leaf scorch or unsightly foliage. Its narrow crotches and soft wood can make the American linden susceptible to storm damage.

Cultivars:

'Fastigiata' - This tree is called the pyramidal American linden because of its narrow form.

'Redmond' - The most commonly planted linden. It is considered by authorities to be misnamed and is actually the species itself.

'Rosehill' - The fastest growing American linden, it is described as an improved hybrid.

Additional comments:

Linden was cultivated in North America as early as 1752 for its wood, leaves, flowers and bark. The tree's flowers are very attractive to bees and linden is an important source of high quality honey. Hollowed out linden trees found in the woods are often filled with honey.

The attractive white wood of linden is often used for beehive honey frames. The fragrant flowers are also distilled for use in perfumes.



Botanical Characteristics:

Native habitat: Eastern North America, west to Tennessee; moist woods.

Growth habit: This linden is broadly columnar with low, drooping branches that are upturned at the ends. It may have multiple leaders.

Tree size: American linden grows to 60 to 80 feet at a medium rate. Soil condition and fertility strongly influence height and rate of growth.

Flower and fruit: Clusters of pale yellow, very fragrant small flowers hang midway from a long, leafy bract. Flowers become clusters of pea-sized nutlets.

Leaf: The characteristic 8-inch, heart-shaped leaves are coarse-toothed, dullish green above and paler green below. Fall color is not remarkable.

Hardiness: Winter hardy to USDA zone 3.

***Tilia americana* (American Linden)**
Linden Family (Tiliaceae)
Page 2

Additional information (continued):

The tree's edible leaves have been used for livestock and human consumption and the fibrous, pliable inner bark (bast) is a significant source of fiber for ropes, cords, mats and nets. Because it is a source of bast, the common name "basswood" is derived. Oil from the linden seed pod has been extracted and used as a substitute for olive oil. The beautiful linden wood is white, odorless and carvable. The Kentucky champion tree is in the Lexington Cemetery.

The genus name, *Tilia*, is derived from the Greek word for feather, *ptilon*, and refers to the long, seed-bearing bract. The common name, linden, is derived from the Latin word for pliable, *lind*, referring to the fibrous inner bark.

When Carl von Linné (*linné*, the Swedish word for the linden tree) was knighted, he became Count of the Linden Tree. Carl von Linné is better known as the Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus, who used his revolutionary binomial system of nomenclature to Latinize his Swedish name.



Emerging leaves in spring