

Rhizotron & Xstrata Treetop Walkway

European lime *Tilia x europaea*

No relation to the fruit of the same name, the common or European lime nevertheless has an impressive history and an elegant appearance. An import from the Netherlands it is most often found as a street tree or in planted in stately parks and gardens.



Tilia x europaea at Kew

Featured Tree

Age: -
Date planted: -
Height: 18m

Highlight on Interactive Map

Species Information

 **Conservation Status:** Common.

 **Place of Origin:** natural hybrid; Europe

 Type: **Deciduous** and **Broadleaf**

 Habitat Types: -

 Family: Tiliaceae ([Display all species of this family](#)).

 Scientific Name: *Tilia x europaea*

Despite its name, this tree has nothing to do with the lime fruit, *Citrus aurantifolia*. The European, or common lime, is a natural hybrid of the small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*) and the large-leaved lime (*Tilia platyphyllos*). The word lime in this case is a form of the word linden, which is derived from the German word 'linde' meaning rope.

Although some *Tilia* species have been resident in the British Isles for thousands of years, most of the limes found in Britain today were imported from the Netherlands in 17th and 18th centuries. At this time, they were a must-have in the gardens of stately homes either on their own or in 'lime avenues'.

As Britain's tallest broad-leaved tree at 130ft (40m), it adds a certain splendour to any park but it is perhaps more commonly seen nowadays alongside our roads. Whilst this may look impressive at first glance, it can actually prove somewhat messy.

Aphids feed on the leaves of the lime and remnants of their partially-digested meal drip onto whatever is beneath, be it the pavement or cars. A fungus then turns these black, which although perfectly natural, is not always appreciated. In addition, their growth can become unmanageable in summer, which is not ideal for urban areas. On the other hand its ability to withstand regularly pruning is a definite plus.

The wood of the lime tree is fine-grained and used mainly for wood carvings and musical instruments, including the piano. In the past, the stringy inner bark was used to make ropes and mats, although this has become less common since the increase in the use of synthetic materials.

Further information:

The leaves of *Tilia x europaea* are around 10cm long and almost as wide, and are pleasingly heart-shaped. Its flowers, when they appear in early July, are a greenish-yellow colour and are sweet-smelling. This aroma attracts bees, which enjoy their abundant nectar. As a result, owners of bee hives are big fans of the lime tree - as where bees collect nectar so honey will follow.

As well as attracting bees, which do a fine job of pollination, the tree is regularly visited by moths. The green caterpillar of the lime hawk moth is one of a number of insects that feed on the tree's leaves.



Tilia x europaea