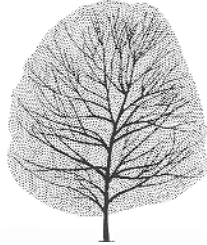


Platanus x acerifolia - London Planetree (*Platanaceae*)

Platanus x acerifolia is a tree that can withstand the rigors of the urban environment including streets and parking lot islands. London Planetree has exfoliating bark and solid green summer color. It is a utilitarian tree.

Form



FEATURES

- large tree
- to 80' tall x 60' wide
- upright pyramidal to upright oval in youth, becoming irregular and spreading with age
- rapid rate

Culture

- full sun or partial shade
- prefers moist sites but is very adaptable to a variety of soils, compaction, and moisture

conditions as well as restricted root space; considered quite tolerant to urban conditions, including air pollution

-widely planted in Europe and becoming more popular in the U.S.

-anthracnose (*Gnomonia veneta*) is a potentially serious disease that causes severe dieback of the emerging stems and foliage in afflicted trees in mid- to late-spring, and a resulting "witches' broom" of subsequent whorled stems that emerge in early summer; the London Planetree is believed to be more tolerant of anthracnose than the American Sycamore, but is susceptible to powdery mildew

-widely available in B&B form

Foliage

-alternate 3- to 5-lobed, incised, pubescent, light green-gray

-shape resembles a Sugar Maple leaf

-autumn color brown-yellow to yellowish green; unattractive



Flowers

-monoecious, insignificant, in Apr.

Fruits

-tan furry balls, typically found in pairs

-many fruits are winter persistent on 3" pendulous peduncles

Twigs

-gray-green

Trunk

-cream and green interior bark, tan-gray exterior exfoliating bark

-green-brown-gray platy lower trunk

-can get to 4' diameter

USAGE

Function

-shade, specimen, or focal point tree in open areas

-street and parking lot island tree

Texture

-bold in foliage and when bare

-average density in foliage and open density when bare

Assets

-wet or dry site tolerant

-gray-green exfoliating ornamental bark on trunk and limbs

-urban tolerant in general

Liabilities

-poor autumn color

-exfoliating bark litter, especially in mid-summer

-occasional storm damage

-canker stain is a serious fungal disease

-frost cracks on trunks

-may show leaf scorch in very dry summers

-lace bugs may cause premature defoliation, but do not harm the tree

Habitat

-Zone 4

-believed to be of hybrid origin involving a cross of American Sycamore (*P. occidentalis*) and Oriental Planetree (*P. orientalis*), which confers anthracnose resistance and pollution tolerance

SELECTIONS

Alternates

-trees with ornamental bark

-large shade trees

-trees for wet sites

Cultivars – Variants – Related species

-*P. x acerifolia* 'Bloodgood' - more resistant to anthracnose but susceptible to powdery mildew.

"Excellent tree for urban situations. Adaptable to adverse soil conditions, city atmosphere, heat and drought. Highly resistant to anthracnose. A rapid growing tree for parks, golf courses and campuses. Exfoliating bark." (Bailey Nursery Catalog)

-*P. x acerifolia* 'Liberty' and *P. x acerifolia* 'Columbia' were introduced by the U.S. National Arboretum and selected for more resistance to powdery mildew and anthracnose. Both are more pyramidal in shape.

-*Platanus occidentalis* - American Sycamore - native American bottomland tree (see its factsheet)

Comparing the Sycamore and the Planetree

-although American Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) and London Planetree (*Platanus x acerifolia*) are often difficult to tell apart at first glance, the following features, especially in combination, can be used to differentiate between them:

-London Planetree is now the preferred choice of nursery growers due to its relative anthracnose resistance, and is found much more often in an urban site where it has obviously been intentionally transplanted

-Sycamore is native to Eastern North America and is a predominate tree found along streams, rivers, bottomlands, and neglected wastelands, while London Planetree rarely escapes to the wild

-London Planetree has relatively smooth bark, with an inner bark that is primarily olive green, while Sycamore has a bark that strongly exfoliates in mid-summer to expose an interior bark that is a mottled combination of white, cream, green, and gray

-London Planetree usually has its fruits borne as 2 per stalk, while Sycamore usually has its fruits borne as 1 per stalk

-Sycamore is susceptible to leaf and stem anthracnose in spring, while London Planetree is prone to canker stain (a fungal disease of the bark and cambium) and frost cracks (originating as fissures of the bark and cambium in winter)

-London Planetree is quite tolerant of poor soils and aerial pollution, whereas Sycamore prefers rich, deep, moist soils and no pollution

-only London Planetree will develop many small knobs on its smooth trunk with maturity which are not associated with healed-over branch stubs, while both Sycamore and London Planetree may each have large knots on their trunks with maturity that represent sites of previous branch attachment