



Photo and information courtesy of Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

<https://www.wildflower.org/>

Basswood - Tilia americana

Basswood is a large stately, deciduous tree, ranging in size from 60 - 80ft, occasionally larger, with a spread of 50ft. When young, the growth pattern is conical becoming rounded with age. This tree often sprout at the base, to form new trees around the parent. The leaves are oval, becoming yellow or more often brown in the fall. Flowers are inconspicuous but fragrant, creamy-yellow flowers and are borne on **axillary** cymes with partially adnate foliaceous bracts. The structure of the flower, prevents nectar from being washed out by rain. Large **tree** with long trunk and a dense crown of many small, often drooping branches and large leaves

Two mature trees have enough flowers that equal an acre of sweet clover for nectar production. Twelve or so Linden trees in an acre planted as a savannah can provide enough nectar to make 1500 pounds of honey. The flowers are available for two weeks and the flow is concentrated enough that beekeepers can extract nearly pure Linden honey where there are plenty of trees. Linden honey has a mildly minty flavor.

Duration: Perennial

Habit: Tree

Leaf: Green

Autumn Foliage: yes

Flower: Creamy - pale yellow

Fruit: Tan brown

Bloom Time: Apr , May , Jun , Jul

Distribution

USA: AL , AR , CT , DC , DE , FL , GA , IA , IL , IN , KS , KY , LA , MA , MD , ME , MI , MN , MO , MS , NC , ND , NE , NH , NJ , NY , OH , OK , PA , RI , SC , SD , TN , TX , VA , VT , WI , WV

Canada: MB , NB , ON , QC

Native Distribution: S. Que. to s.e. Man. & e. ND, s. to w. NC, TN, LA & e. TX, with disjunct populations in central Texas

Native Habitat: Upland, **deciduous** woods; north & east slopes of mesic ravines

Growing Conditions

Water Use: Medium

Light Requirement: Sun , Part Shade , Shade

Soil Moisture: Dry , Moist

Soil pH: Circumneutral (pH 6.8-7.2)

CaCO₃ Tolerance: Low

Soil Description: Moist, rich, well-drained, loamy soils.

Trees grow at a medium to fast rate.

Benefit

Use Medicinal: A hot bath with basswood flowers, followed by a cup of linden-flower tea, is said to soothe cold symptoms and enhance sleep. The flowers are also used in beauty products. (Kershaw)

Use Other: **Native** peoples and settlers soaked the inner **bark** in water to separate its tough fibres, which were then used to make ropes, nets, mats, shoes, clothing and thread. Some tribes carved ritual masks on living trees, then split the masks away to hollow and dry the inside. If the **tree** survived, the mask was believed to have supernatural powers. (Kershaw)

Value to Beneficial Insects

Special Value to Native Bees

Special Value to Honey Bees

Propagation

Description: Untreated seeds germinate in 2-3 years. Seeds germinate most easily if fruits are collected as they first turn slightly brown and are planted immediately. Mechanical or chemical pretreatment of the hard pericarp and seed coat hastens germination.

Seed Collection: Seeds germinate most easily if fruits are collected as they first turn slightly brown. For storage, dry seeds and store at room temperature up to two years.

Seed Treatment: Scarify mechanically or soak in concentrated sulfuric acid and moist chill for 3 months.

Commercially Avail: yes