

*Tilia americana*

[Synonyms : *Tilia canadensis*, *Tilia glabra*, *Tilia heterophylla*, *Tilia latifolia*, *Tilia nigra*]

**AMERICAN LINDEN** is a deciduous tree. Native to eastern North America (particularly in the east and in Canada) it has small, very fragrant, yellow or white flowers and leaves that turn a faded yellow in Autumn.

It is also known as American basswood, American lime, American linn tree, *Amerikaanse Linde* (Dutch), *Amerikanlehmus* (Finnish), Basswood, Basswood linden, Basswood tree, Bast tree, Beetree, Black lime tree, Daddynut tree, *Hinde-hi* (Omaha and Ponca North American Indian), *Hishke* (Winnebago North American Indian), *Hi-ta-cha* (Dakota North American Indian), Lime tree, Linden, Linn tree, *Lípa americká* (Czech), Monkeynut tree, Red basswood, Spoonwood, *Svartlind* (Swedish), Whistlewood, White basswood, White lind, Whitewood, Wikey, and Wycopy, Yellow basswood; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of matrimony.

Warning – the flowers of the American linden can cause vomiting and diarrhoea.

*Americana* means ‘of or from America (North or South)’.

Various North American Indian tribes used the bark fibre for thread, twine or rope including the Iroquois, Omaha, Ponca, some of the Algonkin, the Cherokee, Meskwaki, some of the Chippewa, the Potawatomi, some of the Dakota, the Malecite and the Menominee. The Menominee women collected the bark in the Spring and after stripping it divided it as needed for such things as fish-nets, snowshoe nets, matting, or baskets. The Pawnee Indians wove matting with it as well as spinning cordage like other tribes. Like many of the other tribes it was used for sewing thread by the Chippewa. Bark fibre was used to make clothing – the Meskwaki used it for shoes, and the Malecite tribe made it into belts. Cherokee Indians used the tough wood for building, making furniture and also for carving, and the Chippewa tribe made canoes out of it.

Buds and young twigs were eaten raw or cooked as a vegetable, by the Cherokee tribe.

Several North American Indian tribes including some of the Algonkin prized the tree as a source of medicine. Apart from using it as a stimulant and to cause vomiting the Iroquois also used it during childbirth, prescribed it for internal bleeding and fluid retention, and applied it to burns. The Meskwaki tribe turned to it for treating lung disorders generally, and the Iroquois and Cherokee used it in the treatment of tuberculosis. Cherokee Indians valued it as a remedy for dysentery, stomach upsets and coughs, and they and the Meskwaki applied it to skin problems. It was used to heal wounds by Micmac Indians, some of the Algonkin used a leaf infusion as an eye-wash, and the Micmac and Malecite tribes both prescribed it for worms.

Its blossom is used to make basswood tea (similar to linden tea, *Tilia cordata*) but as it can cause nausea this can only be drunk sparingly. Its honey which has a slightly acid tang is prized by some people.

This soft lightweight wood is a source of cheap timber today. It can be used for manufacturing pulp – and then paper – and for making furniture. It can often be used also for the white keys on a piano as well as for making toys and picture frames.