

Lime/Linden → Lindris (Old English)  
linde/hris – lime tree/underwood

Tilia (Latin) → Til (Old French) → Tilleul (Modern French)

### The rise and fall of lime woodland – *T. cordata*

Comes into England around 8000 years ago. from SE, and then spreads N and W. Stops before Scotland, not present in Ireland. Dominant lowland tree in Neolithic, and by 3500BC had reached the maximum northerly extent of its native range (Lake District/Upper Swaledale). Decline of lime dominance due to temperature (high level of infertile seeds produced in cooler climate) and more pressure from human interference – as native trees go, limes have very palatable leaves so suffer from a higher grazing pressure and therefore poor regrowth. Lime's modern distribution has not changed much since the Conquest, in localized areas it is still the dominant tree of ancient woodland such as between Lavenham (Suffolk) and Braintree (Essex) but is widely absent from other areas. Some of its loss in its native range was due to the creation of Forests (e.g. Epping). Lime dominated areas were typically replaced over time by oak. SL Lime is strictly a woodland tree so where it occurs in/as hedgerows (rare) it can be an indicator of lost ancient woodland.



SL Lime coppice, Groton Wood, Suffolk

### Uses

Lime wood was used much more widely in the past than modern times, clues left in language like 'tilia', the name for Roman writing tablets even if they were made from other woods, and that linden was originally used as an adjective, akin to wooden/oaken, testify to its prevalence.

Due to its lightness the wood is prized for delicate figurative work and larger domestic vessels. It was favoured by 17thC. sculptor Grinling Gibbons.

Lime bark was used in prehistory for cordage and twine making. It does not swell when wet which makes it useful for fishing purposes – both for nets and boat ropes. This usage survived longer in Nordic countries than other European countries where it was readily supplanted by hemp. There is a history of lime being used for clothing in Japan where very fine preparation of fibres of native limes is still practiced today but no evidence for similar uses in western Europe.



Lime bast dyed with a range of natural dyes including woad, apple, blackthorn and birch.

Lime wood Hoop-a-Hog skittle set

Unusual among European woodland trees, lime has heavily scented flowers that are best collected after flowering at Mid-Summer and dried away from direct sunlight. Used as a relaxant for nervous tension and raised blood pressure, and in combination with other herbs for cold and flu symptoms. Flowers also provide high quality honey.



Carved icicles dyes with woad or 'ebonized' with iron.



Nail Gall, *Eriophyes tiliae*. A common mite on limes that does not hurt the tree.

Lime's tannin content makes both the bast and the wood suitable for dyeing. It produces a light blue-ish smokey grey when iron acetate or sulphate is applied.

The soft nature of the wood means that it can be easily shaped with just sandpaper and is great for decorative work.



## *Tilia-phia* with The Woodland Haberdasher



Limes are native and are our longest lived species except yew

- ❖ Small leaved lime - *Tilia cordata* (lime with the heart shaped leaves)
- ❖ Large leaved lime - *Tilia platyphyllos* (lime with the broad leaves [Greek]. LL Lime is largely confined to limestone rocks and is rarer than SL Lime. Found Welsh Borders, Derbyshire, Yorks, Sussex Downs.

Nearly all Common limes, *Tilia x europaea* (*prev. vulgaris*), found in a wood will be planted however natural hybrids are possible although rare. As it is easily propagated from suckers it was heavily planted as a garden and landscape tree from 17thC. onwards from non-native stock. Not naturalized.