

Trees That Shade Your Way

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Sycamore, specifically American Sycamore. *Platanus occidentalis*.



When mature, Sycamore is a massive tree with heavy, spreading branches that give a zigzag impression. These stately trees reach up to and over 100 feet tall. Commonly known as Plane Trees, Buttonball, Buttonwood and Sycamore, they are easy to grow and provide excellent shade. These lofty trees are strictly suitable for growing in large yards and avenues rather than small yards and narrow streets where they will eventually overtake and outgrow a small space. They are deciduous trees and are native species of southeastern Europe, Asia Minor and North America. See *P. acerifolia* (London Plane Tree) & var. *pyramidalis*; *P. occidentalis* (American Plane Tree); *P. orientalis* (Oriental Plane Tree); *P. cuneata*; *P. racemosa*

(California Plane Tree); *P. Wrightii*.

Sycamore trees are susceptible to attacks by anthracnose, twig cankers and leaf blights. There are sprays available to prevent and treat these diseases. They produce wood of good quality. It is hard, strong and coarse-grained. It can be used for making furniture, interior finish, siding, musical instruments and other devices. This wood is sometimes called Lacewood because of its pretty markings that are seen when it is cut radially.

Sycamore trees produce large, glossy, bright green, Maple-like leaves having 3 to 5 shallow lobes. They should be spaced at least 60 feet apart because they grow so large. The tiny, inconspicuous flowers of these trees are produced in round heads at the ends of string-like stalks. Round seedpods, an inch or so in diameter, dangle from the branches on pendulous stems; they are green in the summer turning brown in the winter. In winter, the persistent fruits resemble Christmas tree ornaments.



One helpful suggestion for young trees is to shorten the side branches a couple times during the summer as well as remove side branches along the lower part of the trunk. The object is to produce a tree with a single trunk clear of branches that runs well up into the crown. A tree with a strong single trunk will be able to endure storms much better than a tree with multiple trunks that start a few feet from the ground. These trees should be fertilized every year or two and provided with plenty of water during dry periods to help prevent the attack of disease. Grow Sycamore in full sun. They will survive in any deep soil, even one that is alkaline, but the best is one that is moist and fairly rich. Mature Sycamore trees should only be pruned in late winter.