Lindens

Genus Characteristics

Leaves: Lindens have alternately-arranged cordate (heart-shaped) leaves with uneven bases. Margins are serrate. Leaf size, presence of hairs, and color of underside are all important species identifiers.

Tilia cordata

Tilia americana

Fruit and Flowers: When in flower, lindens are extremely attractive to pollinators. Blooms are tiny, yellow, and fragrant. Lindens bloom in mid-summer. Lindens produce tiny fruits (nutlets) that hang in clusters below pale green bracts, maturing through summer.

Tilia platyphyllos

Tilia americana

Bark: Linden bark is uniformly brown and furrows with age. It is inconspicuous in color and pattern.

Tilia americana

Tilia tomentosa

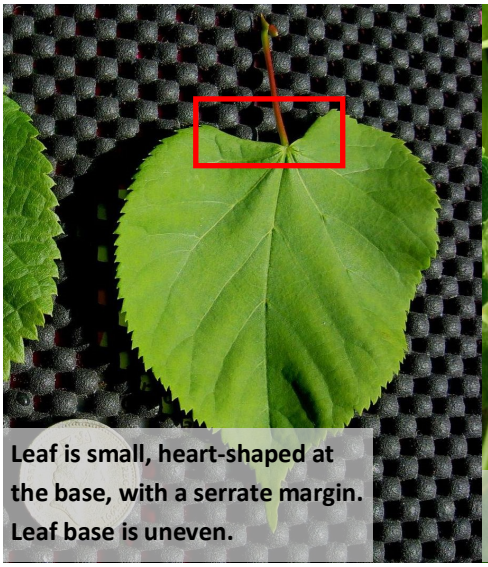
Form: Lindens are medium to large trees, depending on variety. There are many nursery cultivars on the market that range in size and form. Most lindens are broad. Some have a round crown, and others appear to be shaped like a teardrop. Lindens often sucker from the base when stressed.

Tilia platyphyllos

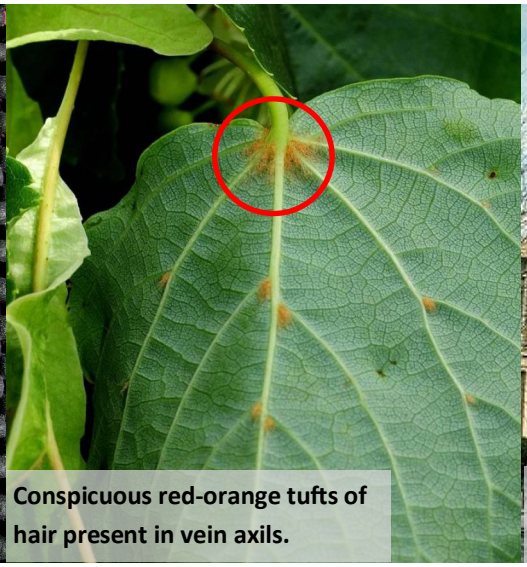
Tilia cordata

Lindens

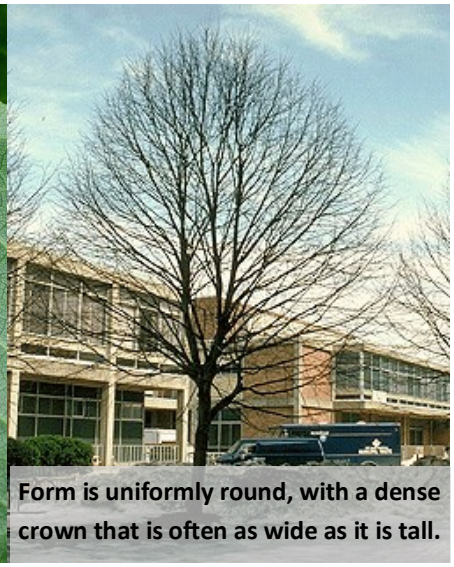
Tilia cordata—Littleleaf linden



Leaf is small, heart-shaped at the base, with a serrate margin. Leaf base is uneven.



Conspicuous red-orange tufts of hair present in vein axils.

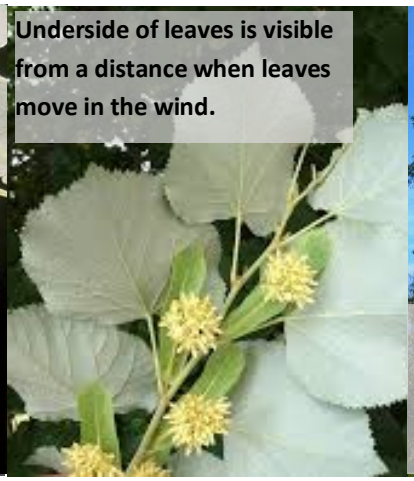


Form is uniformly round, with a dense crown that is often as wide as it is tall.

Tilia tomentosum—Silver linden

Very uneven leaf-base—more noticeable than *T. cordata*. Leaves are nearly as wide as they are long.

Underside of leaf is covered in dense silver fuzz, causing leaf to appear silver from below. Leaves are larger than *T. cordata.*



Underside of leaves is visible from a distance when leaves move in the wind.

Silver lindens can mature to be large trees. Form is upright, with a broad round crown.

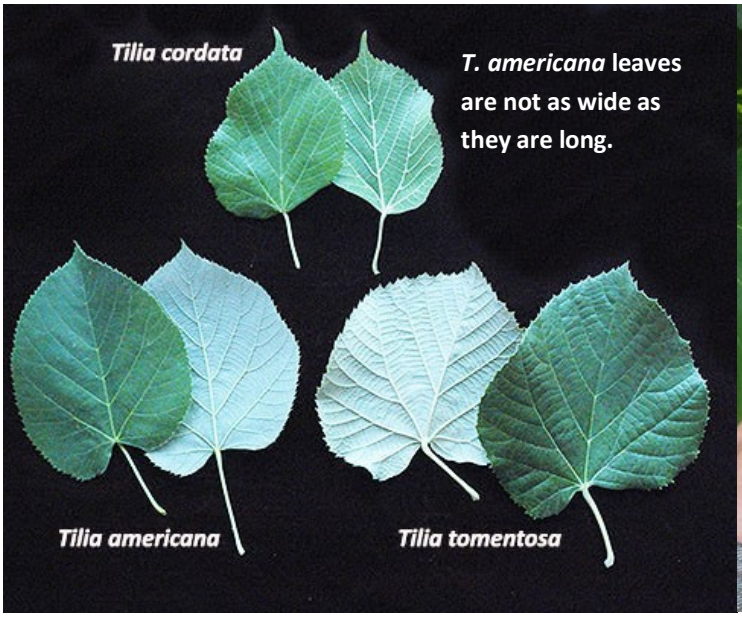
Tilia platyphyllos—Large-leaf linden

Leaves are smaller than *T. americana* (up to 5in long) and dark green, with light fuzz on underside. Fuzz is not as dense or as white as *T. tomentosum.*

Hairs present on veins and underside of leaf. Underside of leaf is dark green despite presence of hairs (unlike *T. tomentosum*).

Tree has a round crown and overall teardrop shape. Form can vary depending on cultivar.

Tilia americana—American linden



Lindens share many common characteristics, and key identifying features can be miniscule. There is a lot of variability between trees and identification can be tricky. Many nursery varieties are on the market, and those cultivars often have a different form than the straight species. If you are not sure of species, take a sample! If Urban Forestry staff is stumped, we'll ask the experts at Hoyt Arboretum.