

Platanus x acerifolia 'Bloodgood': 'Bloodgood' London Planetree¹

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Introduction

A large tree resulting in a cross between *Platanus orientalis* and *Platanus occidentalis* suitable for use in USDA hardiness zone 4b or warmer. The tree will reach a height of 85 feet and a spread of 70 feet. Pyramidal in youth, it develops a spreading rounded crown with age supported by a few, very large-diameter branches. These branches should be



Figure 1. Middle-aged *Platanus x acerifolia* 'Bloodgood': 'Bloodgood' London Planetree
Credits: Ed Gilman

spaced two to four feet apart along the trunk to develop a strong structure. The dominant central leader which typically develops on London Planetree usually assures that the structure of major limbs is desirable with little corrective pruning required other than removing occasionally occurring upright branches with tight crotches. It is also helpful to thin out the many branches which develop early on the central trunk. The bark is patchy and very attractive and may be the plants best ornamental attribute. These patches range from creamy-white to olive-green. Large sections of bark may be shed from the tree as it grows older. This is normal and only needs to be disposed of.

General Information

Scientific name: *Platanus x acerifolia*

Pronunciation: PLAT-uh-nus x ass-er-ih-FOLE-ee-uh

Common name(s): 'Bloodgood' London Planetree

Family: *Platanaceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5A through 9A (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: specimen; street without sidewalk; shade; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; sidewalk cutout (tree pit); tree lawn > 6 ft wide; urban tolerant; highway median

Availability: not native to North America

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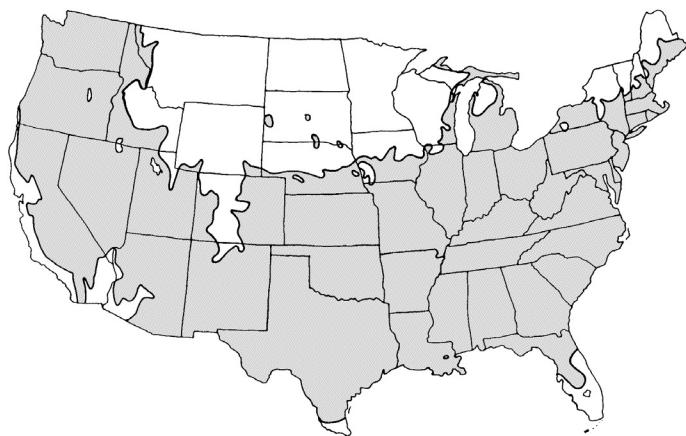


Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 70 to 85 feet
Spread: 50 to 70 feet
Crown uniformity: symmetrical
Crown shape: pyramidal, round, spreading
Crown density: dense
Growth rate: fast
Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: lobed, incised
Leaf shape: ovate, star-shaped
Leaf venation: palmate, pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches, 8 to 12 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: yellow

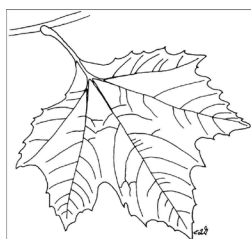


Figure 3. Foliage

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: red
Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: round
Fruit length: .5 to 1 inch

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; showy; typically one trunk; thorns

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: medium

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; extended flooding; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: can form large surface roots

Winter interest: yes

Outstanding tree: yes

Ozone sensitivity: sensitive

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: resistant

Pest resistance: sensitive to pests/diseases

Use and Management

The plant tolerates dry soil (but scorches in dry weather) and city conditions well, adapts to most soils including alkaline and is more resistant (not immune) to the anthracnose that afflicts *Platanus occidentalis*. However, it is susceptible to canker stain, a disease which has caused its demise in some areas, and is often seen infested with lace bugs which will not kill the tree but causes premature defoliation in late summer. It is also reported to be susceptible to ozone pollution injury in laboratory tests at levels often present during the summer, but damage from air pollution in the landscapes appears minimal. Some people object to the large leaves which often begin falling from the tree in late summer.

Some horticulturists consider this a messy tree due to early leaf drop from drought, bark shedding, and lace bugs. Leaves blow around in the wind during the fall and decompose slowly in the landscape creating a distinctive “crunch” underfoot. Leaves make great compost in a compost pile.

Some tree managers limit use as a street tree due to its large size, susceptibility to canker stain, bacterial leaf scorch, and lace bug injury. But it is a good durable tree for many areas where soil is poor and compacted. Also somewhat tolerant of coastal conditions, and well-adapted to areas with poor drainage. But it may be best saved for moist sites with plenty of room for root and crown expansion.

The National Arboretum in 1984 released two *Platanus occidentalis* x *Platanus orientalis* which could prove to be superior to the parents: *Platanus* x *acerifolia* 'Columbia' - upright, orange-grey bark, five-lobed leaves; *Platanus* x *acerifolia* 'Liberty' - upright pyramid, five-lobed leaves, reportedly more resistant to powdery mildew and anthracnose, though not immune.

Pests

Aphids will suck the sap from Planetree leaves. Heavy infestations deposit honeydew on lower leaves and objects beneath the tree, such as cars and sidewalks.

Sycamore lace bugs feed on the undersides of the leaves causing a stippled appearance and premature defoliation in late summer. The insects leave black flecks on the lower leaf surface. Neither aphids nor lace bugs will kill the tree.

Diseases

Some fungi cause leaf spots.

Anthracnose: 'Bloodgood' has been shown to be resistant to anthracnose, but it is not immune. Anthracnose causes early symptoms on young leaves resembling frost injury. When the leaves are almost fully grown light brown areas appear along the veins. Later the infected leaves fall off and trees may be nearly completely defoliated in spring or early summer. The disease can cause twig and branch cankers and a witches-broom appearance at the end of the branches. The trees send out a second crop of leaves but repeated attacks can lower tree vigor. Use a properly labeled fungicide to help control the disease. Fertilization helps trees withstand repeated defoliation.

Canker stain is very serious on London Planetree and can kill the tree.

Bacterial leaf scorch can devastate London Planetree.