



## AMERICAN BASSWOOD *Tilia americana* L.



**A**merican basswood or linden occurs as scattered specimens throughout the state. It grows to a height of 50–70 feet and a diameter of 2–3 feet. The branches are slender, somewhat pendulous, comparatively small and numerous, forming a broad and rounded head.

The **bark** on the trunk of old trees is deeply and irregularly furrowed. On young trees, it is smooth or slightly fissured and has a grayish appearance.

The **leaves** are alternate, 5–6 inches long with uneven bases. They are broadly egg-shaped to heart-shaped in outline, and toothed; the upper surface

*Light, soft, easily worked and carved, American basswood is used for molding, yardsticks, veneer, dowels, furniture, carvings and pulp.*





*The fruit of American basswood is attached to a distinctive leaf-like bract.*



is dark green, while the lower is yellow-green and shiny.

The **flowers** are greenish-yellow, borne on a slender stalk that is attached to a rather long, yellowish, leaf-like bract. They are fragrant, contain an abundance of nectar and open in July.

The **fruit** is clustered, spherical, covered with short buff-colored hairs, woody and about as large as a pea. It remains attached to the leaf-like bract when it falls.

The **twigs** have a zigzag pattern and bright red buds.

The **wood** is light, soft, easily worked and carved. It is used for molding, yardsticks, veneer, dowels, furniture, pattern stock, carvings and pulp. Traditionally it was used to make butter box molds, dough bowls and other kitchen items that touched food.

In Germany, basswood is called the bee tree. Bees make an excellent grade of honey from the flowers. The young fruit and flowers ground into a paste make an excellent substitute for chocolate.

The **European linden** (*Tilia europaea* L.) and **Little-leaf linden** (*Tilia cordata* Mill.) are commonly planted as shade trees. They are smaller in height than our native species and with smaller leaves. Baxter Boulevard in Portland is lined with both of these species.



MAINE REGISTER OF BIG TREES 2008  
American Basswood Circumference: 224" Height: 85' Crown Spread: 63' Location: Strong

