

## The Basswood

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Basswood (*Tilia americana* L.) is also known as American linden. We featured the little-leaf linden (*Tilia cordata* Mill.) in early June because it is much more abundant than basswood in the streets of Halifax. The HRM Urban Forest Master Plan (2013) called for a shift toward native or near-native species for street-tree plantings, so basswood has lately become the species of choice from the genus *Tilia*.

Basswood's native range extends throughout the so-called Great-Lakes/St.-Lawrence Forest of eastern Canada as well as the St. John River Valley in New Brunswick (it is widespread in the Northeast US too). This means that we consider it to be an Acadian forest species even though it is not native to Nova Scotia. The concept of nativeness is rather awkwardly applied to political jurisdictions - if history had provided us with one Maritime province (including NB, NS, and PE), basswood would be native to it!



I grew up in and near woodlands containing basswood in southern and middle Ontario but never paid much attention to it on account of its relatively sparse distribution. I do not recall basswood



stands but rather that it occurred in mixtures with other hardwoods like sugar maple. Basswood grows in sufficient quantity in Quebec that there is a lumber industry based on it, lumber that makes its way at least into the furniture industry. Over the past two decades, my wife and I have had numerous cabinets made from basswood by Lake City Woodworkers in Dartmouth.

Like the other *Tilia* species, basswood grows to be a large tree. The basswoods planted in the streets of Halifax in the past decade all seem to be doing well, sporting dense crowns. As Julietta noted in the little-leaf-linden article, trees of the *Tilia* genus are great sources of nectar from which bees will make honey. I have noticed that even the young basswoods in the streets are prolifically bearing flowers and fruits (many tree species will only flower somewhat later in

life). I hope the basswoods will continue to provide the same rich perfumes in the streetside air that we get when the lindens are flowering.

