

Tree of the Month, March 2015
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Tuliptree

Liriodendrum tulipifera

The *Liriodendrum tulipifera* was named by Linnaeus, the father of our binomial naming system, and it is a lovely name that means “lily tree bearing tulips”. It is a name



that fits it perfectly.

The Tuliptree is one of those trees that has many common names, Yellow Poplar, Tulip Poplar and was called Canoe Wood Tree by the native people of Eastern America where this tree originates. All these names point to some characteristic of the tree that was appreciated. The *tulip* references the beautiful pale yellow flowers that come out in our area in about June. Often we can't see the flowers because these trees are tall growers. They are actually the tallest of the deciduous (those that lose their leaves in winter) species in North America and can exceed 165'. The wood from the Tuliptree is a beautiful pale yellow color and is prized for its easy workability by woodcarvers.

The tall straight trunks of the Tuliptree make it a standout in the forest. Two of the more famous specimens are still alive at Mt. Vernon, Virginia and were planted by George, himself, or his slaves. Many Tulip trees were shipped to Europe in the 1600's and were highly prized by wealthy European collectors at the time. I know of a forest preserve area

that has a platform reaching into a towering Tuliptree canopy so visitors can appreciate the regal and special nature of this American beauty. Tulip trees prefer to grow in rich, moist soil and often inhabit the lowlands of the Eastern half of the United States. They have a distinctive leaf shape that also resembles a tulip and a spectacular yellow fall color. It makes for an excellent replacement for the many Ash trees we have lost recently and deserves more attention in our landscapes.



Tuliptree fruit