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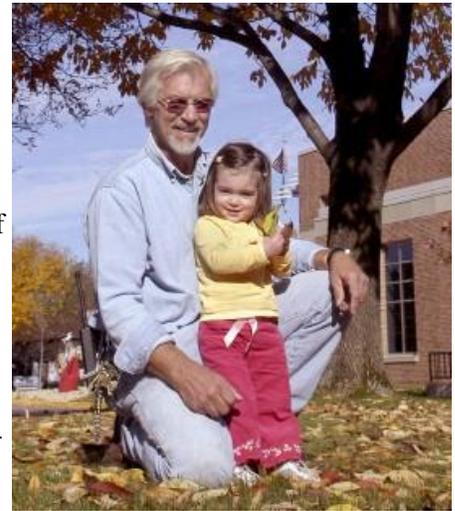
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The Marvelous Littleleaf Linden

Bill Meyer, WSU Senior Groundskeeper (Retired)

This past September, my wife and I spent three weeks traveling and camping in Colorado and Utah. During that time we visited and hiked in 5 National Parks. As usual when we vacation in a different part of the country, we observe the trees that are found in those regions. Colorado has its aspens and evergreens, while Utah has its Pinyon Pines, Ponderosa Pines, and Junipers. The Pinyon Pine and Juniper have adapted to the hot, dry conditions that are often found in Utah. These trees can be seen throughout the National Parks of central and eastern Utah. Interestingly, the fruit (seed) of the Pinyon Pine is said to be an important food source for the southwestern Native Americans.



But the tree that I would like to discuss in today's newsletter is the Littleleaf Linden (*Tilia cordata*). This past April on Arbor Day, Winona State University staff, students, and volunteers planted two Littleleaf Lindens on the main campus on the west side of Phelps Hall. While the Linden is a fairly common tree, I think that it is an underappreciated tree. The tree is a European introduction and can be found on the boulevards of Berlin, but I think it does better in a yard or park rather than the boulevard. This certainly is the case at WSU where buses and large trucks often break the lower branches of a Linden planted on a boulevard. But in a relatively large yard or park, the tree can flourish.

The Littleleaf Linden grows rapidly and is very winter hardy. It has a dense, symmetrical shape and grows well in sun or partial shade. It transplants well and is tolerant of air pollutants. However, the Linden is sensitive to road salt (another reason to think twice before planting it on a boulevard), and not very tolerant of drought.

The real reason I think a Linden is such a great additional to a yard is its flowers. The tree is a prolific bloomer with small, fragrant creamy-yellow flowers that appear in late June. The abundant nectar of these flowers attracts bees in such great numbers that a constant humming can be heard near the tree. Hummingbirds love the flowers, too.

Tom Grier, co-author of two books on Winona State University's trees, shot thousands of pictures of the many trees on campus throughout the year. I remember one day he contacted me and excitedly related that there was a bee in the background of a Littleleaf Linden closeup picture. Sure enough, looking at the picture of the Linden flower closely, a pollinator could be found looking for nectar.

Another feature of the Littleleaf Linden flower is that herbal teas can be made from the blossoms. Supposedly it is used to treat gastric problems and to relieve coughs. The flowers have high concentrations of flavonoids and polyphenols, compounds having antioxidant properties.

Maybe next spring is the time to consider adding the attractive Littleleaf Linden to your landscape. The tree with the small heart shaped leaves and the aromatic flowers is sure to please.

