

## *Platanus* × *hispanica*

## London Plane Tree

PLAT-tuh-nus hiss-PAN-ih-kah

*Platanus* - Gr., flat

*hispanica* - L., Spanish

Platanaceae

Synonym: *Platanus* × *acerifolia*



Hybrid

Simple, Alternate

Deciduous, 50–100 ft.

The London plane tree is the most commonly grown urban tree in the temperates. From Buenos Aires to New York City to Paris, Madrid, Sydney, and Shanghai, this hybrid of mysterious origin shades boulevards, parks, and squares. These stoic trees are resistant to air pollution, dust, root compaction, and other brutalities of urban living. Many authorities believe London plane to be a hybrid between Oriental plane (*P. orientalis*), from Eurasia, and American sycamore (*P. occidentalis*), from the eastern United States. When these two species were brought into the confines of the same European garden (likely in the late seventeenth century), vigorous hybrids resulted that quickly became popular in London and other major European cities. London plane can be recognized by its leathery, woolly, maple-like leaves, its hanging, spherical clusters of flowers and fruit, and its mottled, olive green to cream-colored bark. This tree is often subjected to a pruning practice called “pollarding” in which the new growth is cut off each year, resulting in a shapely, stunted tree with clublike branches. The closely related native California sycamore (*P. racemosa*) can be distinguished from the London plane by its more deeply lobed leaves. These two species have reportedly been producing populations of fertile hybrids in parts of California.



*P. occidentalis*



*P. × hispanica*



*P. racemosa*



Fruits



Pollarded tree



Without exception, I've found that helping someone plant a tree is a positive experience, and people who plant trees are positive, forward-looking people.

—Jeffrey G. Meyer