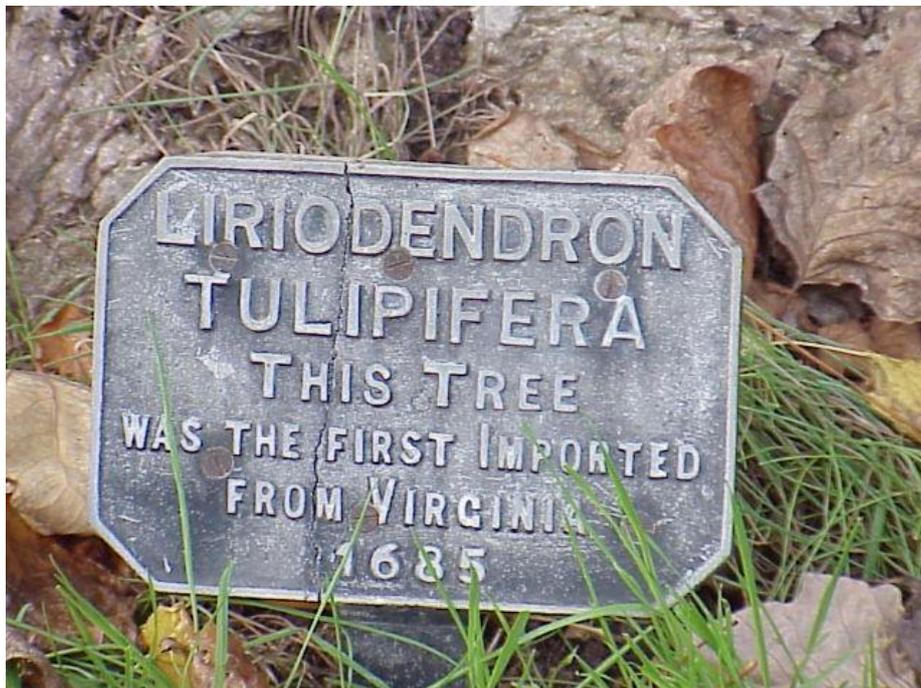


# Tulip Tree In The Garden Of Esher Place In Esher



There is one [tulip tree \(\*Liriodendron tulipifera\*\)](#) in the garden of Esher Place in [Esher \(county of Surrey\)](#).

Believed to be from Bishop Gunning's original introduction to Europe - something which its slow and steady growth over the last 110 years supports. The rounded bole forks equally from about 2m. The current measurement was made by Brian Spooner, Dick Alder and Mariko Parslow from the Surrey Tree Project.

The girth of the tree is 9.24 m measured at a height of 90 cm (2006,

[TheTreeRegisterOwenJohnson](#)). Its height is around 22.00 m (Nov 8, 2013

### TULIP TREE - LIRIODENDRON TULIPIFERA

Considering it was first introduced from North America in the mid 1600s, its magnificent form, its tolerance of pollution and its suitability for town planting, it is remarkable that there are so few Tulip Trees in London. It is not rare but neither is it widespread, and since it has many of the qualities of the London Plane which was first planted in London at about the same time, (some say by the Tradescants) it is surprising that it has not been as frequently planted. (there are records of a Plane planted at Barnes in 1680 which is still to be seen near the Wetland Centre in Barn Elms, and a Tulip Tree at Bishop Compton's Fulham Palace in 1688, almost on opposite sides of the Thames to one another but the Fulham Tree has not survived to this day although Webster spoke of a Tulip Tree at Fulham Palace which might have been the original planting). Being in the Magnolia family its sensitivity on re-planting may account for its infrequency. Philip Miller comments that at first "***This tree was formerly preferred with great Care in Green-houses, by which means many of them were destroyed – there being many of these Trees now in England which have arrived at a large size and produce Flowers every year, since they have been planted abroad***". (ie outside)

John Evelyn in his famous "Sylva or a Discourse on Forest-Trees" of 1664 is a little confused about the Tulip Tree believing it to be a sort of Poplar to be found in Virginia "***of a very peculiar shap'd leaf, as if the point of it were cut off, which grows very well with the curious amongst us to a considerable stature. I conceive it was first brought over by John Tradescant, under the name of tulip-tree (from the likeness of the flowers) but it is not, that I find, taken much notice of in any of our herbals: I wish we had more of them: but they are difficult to elevate at first***".

Collinson writing in the 1761 noted two remarkable Tulip trees which indicates that from the first they have grown well in this country. At Waltham Abbey there was a tree in flower in June 1745 that was 96 feet high and with a trunk girth of 9 feet, that he claimed was the largest tree of its type. He also recorded that in 1756, a famous Tulip tree in the garden of Lord Peterborough at Parson's Green near Fulham died. This tree was above 70 feet in height and perhaps 100 years old "***being the first tree of the kind that was raised in England***", which confirms its introduction being in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Webster did not describe it in his list of London trees but mentioned two specimens, one in Kensington Gardens 50 feet high (this may be the *Liriodendron tulipifera* in Dial Walk) and the other which he claimed was the largest in London, 70 feet (28 metres) high in Golders Hill Park. There is now an avenue of Tulip trees in Regent's Park in the Avenue Garden and also a good specimen at Syon Park in the Woodland Walk.

In its homeland, which extends down the north eastern American continent from Nova Scotia to Florida, it can reach up to 57 metres high and even here in England there are trees 36 metres (118 feet) high, and this nobility of stature is matched by the colour, texture and uniqueness of the foliage, which is always a refreshing green, through spring and summer and completes the year by turning to golden brown or rich yellow in Autumn.

Each leaf has a shape like a maple without the central lobe, and I have heard it described not unreasonably as tulip-like in outline, but the common name of the tree is more accurately derived from the flowers which are like small tulips, 6cms long at their largest, and which, once the tree is mature are borne freely in June and July. The flowers are, however, green and yellow and are carried up to the full height of the tree so they are not conspicuous except where they are present on low hanging branches, or when viewed from above which is sometimes possible from a nearby building or bridge. In a way I think this is fortunate, saving the tree from becoming a gaudy show-off like some other members of the Magnolia tribe, and helping to retain the dignity which makes it a worthy subject for urban planting. The flowers are beloved by bees. The fruit is a narrow, pointed cylinder of brown that usually lasts throughout the winter but although seeds are produced in vast quantities few are fertile.

The Tulip Tree is present in many parks and in some private gardens where they also make a significant contribution to the street scene, (Warrington Crescent W9, Crystal Palace Park Road) but garden owners should bear in mind the ultimate size of this tree in relation to the size of their residence, and the speed at which it can grow (20 metres in 40 years) .

Liriodendrons are now beginning to be planted as pavement trees and young trees can be seen in Ufford Road SE1, Pembroke Road W8 but one of the best examples of this tree can be seen in Dulwich College Road SE21 growing in a wide grass verge beside the road where in company with Red Oaks it makes a fine autumn display, but is as much admired for its sturdy, grey trunk mottled with orange-brown, and the form of its densely leafed, full canopy of foliage.

There are several varieties of the Tulip Tree to be found. *L. tulipifera* 'Aureomarginata' has variegated leaves margined with yellow and a specimen of this variety has been named a Champion Tree of London and can be found in Gunnersbury Park where it had reached a height of 22 metres in 1995 (the tallest in the country), and there is another young tree at Fulham Palace. *L. tulipifera* 'Fastigiatum' is a columnar form and 'Integrifolia' a variety without lateral leaf lobes giving it almost rectangular leaves (a tree in the Royal Botanic Gardens is decaying), both are smaller and on the whole the varieties do not improve upon the type, which is a desirable tree for further planting in London with a life span that will give 250 years of continuing pleasure.

The botanical name comes from the Greek *lirion* a lily and *dendron* a tree while *tulipifera* means tulip bearing.