

Standing Tall: The Upright Swede (*Tilia cordata* ‘Swedish Upright’)

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Some fifty years ago, the Arnold Arboretum introduced a cultivar of littleleaf linden (*Tilia cordata*) to the world. In the same issue where the Arboretum witchhazel introduction *Hamamelis* × *intermedia* ‘Arnold Promise’ was officially published, Donald Wyman (1963) lauds the merits of an unusual linden with a narrow habit, bestowing upon it the name ‘Swedish Upright’. At the time of its registration, the original tree (accession 12112-A) growing atop Peters Hill was 35 feet (10.7 meters) in height and had a width of just 15 feet (4.6 meters). (In the *Arnoldia* article, the numeral 1 was accidentally left off the 15, suggesting an even more narrow spread—perhaps a ‘Swedish Pencil’ instead!) Well before the official registration and publication of the cultivar name, the tree was being watched. Its slenderness was noted as early as 1950, and a photo of it graced the cover of the July 15, 1960, issue of *American Nurseryman*, with an accompanying article by Wyman promoting the then yet-to-be-named cultivar’s habit. He described how “the upper branches are slightly upright; just above the middle they are horizontal, and below that they are markedly drooping to pendulous.” The form, he notes, is akin to that of pin oak (*Quercus palustris*).

And where did this tree originate? Over 100 years ago, the Arboretum acquired propagation material from taxonomist Alfred Rehder, whose legacy appears throughout this issue. Little is known about the original source beyond the fact that scions arrived from Sweden in 1906. It is not known if Rehder brought the material with him, or sent it to Boston while he was in Europe conducting research in preparation for the *Bradley Bibliography*. Although there is no mention as to why Rehder was interested in the scions in the first place, it is likely that he recognized an unusual habit on a particular tree in Sweden and thought it worth procuring for the Arboretum’s collection.

The original tree currently stands 42.5 feet (13 meters) tall, with a maximum spread of

19.5 feet (5.9 meters), although functionally the width is less. Its trunk diameter at breast height is 18.75 inches (47.5 centimeters). This centenarian is in good health and will, we hope, continue on for many more years. Two younger accessions (one from 1961 and another from 1991), clones of the original tree, also grow in the Arboretum collections and share the lean attributes of the original.

Tilia cordata is appreciated for its ability to grow in a wide array of environments—sites that range from parks and landscapes to street edges with poorer soils. Too often, I see littleleaf lindens (usually one of the many available cultivars such as ‘Greenspire’) shoehorned between the street and the side of a building, where they struggle to survive with limited space and often succumb within a few years. I often wonder how ‘Swedish Upright’ would do instead. Assuming it possesses the stress tolerance of the species (and there is no reason to think otherwise), I like to think it would do very well. Like the rest of the littleleaf lindens, ‘Swedish Upright’ produces deep green, slightly glossy leaves that may develop shades of yellow in the autumn. Small, fragrant, yellowish flowers are produced in early to mid summer, and are followed by the fruits—small, globose nutlets with accompanying strap-like bracts that mature from pale green to tan.

In the 1963 *Arnoldia* article about ‘Swedish Upright’ Donald Wyman credited Rehder for originally selecting the plant, but he missed the opportunity to mention that in the very month the cultivar was registered (September 1963), Alfred Rehder would have turned 100. Today, we can celebrate both Rehder’s 150th birthday and the 50th anniversary of this handsome tree’s introduction.

Wyman, D. 1963. New plants registered. *Arnoldia* 23(9): 111–118.

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