

Liriodendron - Growing Guide

Growing Liriodendron

2019 was a vintage year at Caerhays because, for the first time, all three of our different liriodendron trees produced flowers for the first time in the same year: *L. chinense*, *L. tulipifera* and *L. tulipifera* 'Aureomarginata'. We have yet to see flowers on all three at Burncoose but, although the June flowers can be difficult to spot high up in the tree, and although we have had to wait 28 years for *L. chinense* to actually perform, the flowers are intricate and beautiful.

Liriodendron are members of the Magnoliaceae family, and their flowers do resemble those of a magnolia, but they have colour which are not common in UK grown magnolias. You can see them at the end of this article.

L. chinense has flowers which are pale green on the outside and green with yellow veining initially within. When fully open the inside of the flowers turn yellow and then darker orange. *L. tulipifera* also has tulip shaped flowers which are yellow-green banded with orange near the base of the flower. The outer tepals on *L. tulipifera* 'Aureomarginata' (unlike *tulipifera* where they are green) also have bright yellow edging but, with us, they are rather smaller than those of *tulipifera*.

Until 30 years or so ago it was thought that there was only a single species of liriodendron originating from east North America: *L. tulipifera*. Although Ernest Wilson did introduce *L. chinense* in 1901 it must have been lost in cultivation and was only reintroduced to the UK in 1996.

The two species can easily be identified by their leaf shape. Both are somewhat odd but *L. chinense* has narrower pointed 'waists' at the end of the leaves (the leaf shape of a Mandarin's jacket). In immaturity these leaves are larger and the difference is easier to spot.

All Liriodendron are extremely quick growing trees in any fertile soil and can readily achieve 50ft in height in 30 years. They need plenty of room! They are, however, prone to losing side branches in storms and can therefore form trees with multiple leaders and slightly odd trunk shapes. One of the main reasons for growing them is not in fact their peculiar flowers but their superb yellow autumn colour which can be breathtaking in the sun on a still autumn day. With us *L. chinense* holds its leaf colour longer than *L. tulipifera* and lasts for weeks despite the odd west wind. On younger trees especially the leaves hold on the tree longer into autumn than on many other woodland garden trees.



Liriodendron chinense



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Liriodendron chinense



Liriodendron chinense



Liriodendron tulipifera



Liriodendron tulipifera



Liriodendron tulipifera



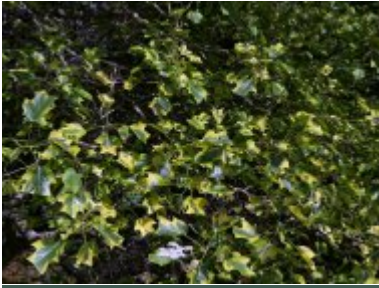
Liriodendron tulipifera



Liriodendron tulipifera



Liriodendron tulipifera
'Aureomarginata'



Liriodendron tulipifera
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Liriodendron tulipifera
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Liriodendron tulipifera
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Liriodendron tulipifera
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Liriodendron tulipifera
'Aureomarginata'

View this video on Youtube here <https://www.youtube.com/5IBMx8LWQOg>

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