

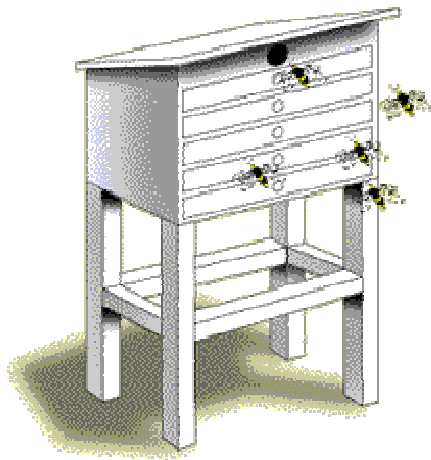
Basswood - *Tilia Americana*



Common names: basswood, linden and American lime. In the lumber industry this tree is referred to by the common name, basswood, only. It is an abundant, deciduous hardwood that grows throughout the eastern half of North America from the Canadian Provinces, southward to Florida. Most basswood lumber production, however, comes from the Lakes States, Central States and Middle Atlantic

States. Found in open, moist areas of hardwood forests, it is a large, shapely tree that forms a cylindrical tower with a conical top. Because it is so stately, it was traditionally used to line the long drives of 18th century Colonial mansions. Today, it is a universal American city and town tree. Known to grow as high as 124 feet, basswood usually grows to 50 to 80 feet high with a trunk diameter of 2 to 3 feet. The National Register of Big Trees identifies today's largest basswood as growing in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, and it stands 94 feet high with a trunk circumference of 292 inches and a crown spread of 91 feet.

The wood of the basswood tree is lightweight and fairly soft, but is a true hardwood. It has a fine even textured grain; straight with few character marks. The sapwood is creamy white and merges so gradually with its pale brown heartwood that it is difficult to tell the difference. Shrinkage is great when it is first cut but after seasoning it is very stable. Basswood boards never twist, split, or warp in use. It glues very well and is famous for its carvability.



The combined softness of the wood with the regularity of its fine grain has made basswood the wood of choice for wood-carvers throughout the centuries. The undisputed master of woodcarving is Grinling Gibbons who worked in London from 1670 to 1710. As premier decorative furniture and interior panel carvers, Gibbons and his followers worked exclusively in basswood. Because basswood has no odor or taste at all, it has traditionally been used in the food industry for tools, utensils and containers. Beehives, Venetian blinds and ornate picture frames were, and still are, made from basswood. Basswood is a useful wood because it is simultaneously light in weight, and strong, stable and dependable. It is available as veneer and as boards in a full range of grades and thickness, in a low to medium price range. Modern furniture manufacturers use basswood in large items to help reduce the

weight. It is also commonly used for interior sash, door frames moldings and woodwork to be painted. Its carvability makes it a first choice for engineering patterns and for hat and shoe blocks.