

# Conservation Corner

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The linden broke her ranks and rent  
The woodbine wreaths that bind her,  
And down the middle buzz! She went  
With all her bees behind her!

This rather startling image from Stanza 5 of Alfred Tennyson's *Amphion* will introduce this week's tree friend *Tilia americana*, commonly known as Basswood, American Linden, or simply the Bee-tree. Basswood trees, often in communities with sugar maples and oak trees, may be found growing on moist uplands across SE Canada and Eastern United States. In Iowa, basswood trees may be found in every county, including Pocahontas where they grow naturally along creeks and rivers or where they have been planted on our farms and in our towns.

These stately, sturdy trees with their massive main limbs and large, heart-shaped leaves provide dense shade and golden fall color. Linden flowers, on the other hand, are small and non-showy. That is, except for their fragrance. Dripping with nectar, the flower clusters attract both native bees and honeybees. Basswood honey is prized for its distinctive menthol taste. Following pollination, winged stems help propel the nutlets away from the parent tree.

Linden trees are good candidates for coppicing, a method of woodland management that exploits a tree's tendency to send new shoots from a stump or root. Coppicing quickly produces lumber for biomass, wattle fencing, and poles. If you come upon a line of mature linden trees on a woodland walk, perhaps they sprouted along a fallen trunk.

The name basswood comes from the fibrous, tough inner bark or "bast" of linden trees used by Native Americans for cords, thongs, and ropes. The white, close-grained, knot-free wood may be found in hive frames, boxes, crates, barrels, veneer, and woodcarvings. Iroquois Indians carved ceremonial masks on living trees, another startling image, before cutting them off and hollowing out their backs. If the tree survived, it was believed the mask held supernatural powers.

Linden trees benefit wildlife by providing hollow trunks for cavity nesters. Did you know hollow trees found in woodlands may be filled with honey? In addition to providing abundant nectar for insects, lindens also provide seeds for chipmunks, mice, and squirrels as well as leaves for the caterpillars of several moths and butterflies. Linden trees aid in biological control by attracting predatory or parasitoid insects that in turn prey upon pest insects and even provide medicinal help for colds, coughs, fevers, and infections.

PCCB is offering the 'Redmond Linden' cultivar on our Spring Tree Sale. Order one soon and then enjoy its pyramidal shape, rapid growth rate, drought tolerance, fall color, and summer fragrance for years to come. Finally, a joyful image.

Looking ahead, save the date and plan now to attend the Pocahontas Art Walk on Saturday, November 25. Be sure to stop in at the ISU Extension Office on Main Street from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. for a Conservation Make & Take Workshop. Together we'll create Christmas birds and bird feeders to celebrate the season!

