

# Liquidambar formosana

## Chinese sweet gum, Formosan gum



*Liquidambar formosana* (Chinese sweet gum, Formosan gum) is found in Southern China, South Korea, Laos, Vietnam and Taiwan. In these areas the tree can attain a height of thirty to forty metres; in cultivation, this usually stays limited to approximately twenty-five metres tall and fifteen metres wide. The rare *Liquidambar formosana* has a broadly pyramidal crown with dense branching. The trunk will eventually fork high into the tree and consequently the upright main trunk does not extend right up to the top. In 1884, the Chinese sweet gum was first introduced in Kew Gardens, United Kingdom.

At the end of April or early May the Chinese sweet gum bears unremarkable yellow-green flowers. After flowering the species bears upright bristly capsules typical for the Liquidambar. The tree is also recognisable by the 3-lobed leaf which has a conspicuous, finely serrated edge. The foliage emerges bronze and changes to a matt-shiny dark green in the summer and has a hairy underside and petiole. *Liquidambar formosana* has lovely autumn colour in different shades of red-violet, orange-red and deep dark red. This can be enjoyed for a long time as the leaf stays on the tree well into winter. The juvenile stem or trunk is erect, smooth and grey and as it matures the tree assumes a darker, grooved bark. *Liquidambar formosana* has downy hairy twigs which are firstly olive green and later red-brown.

*Liquidambar formosana* is reasonably sensitive to wind and frost. In a sheltered site in nutrient-rich and moist soil the species forms a beautiful, interesting eye-catching specimen for a park or large garden, for example. The Chinese sweet gum - thanks to its wide, dense crown shape - is perfect for using as shade planting. Plant *Liquidambar formosana* in a sunny spot for the most attractive autumnal colour.

### TYPES OF PLANTING

**Tree types:** standard trees, feathered trees, multi-stemmed trees, shade trees

### USE

**Location:** avenue, park, central reservation, large garden, cemetery | **Pavement:** none, open

### CHARACTERISTICS

**Crown shape:** wide pyramidal | **Crown structure:** dense | **Height:** 15 - 25 m | **Width:** 10 - 15 m | **Winter hardiness zone:** 7A - 9B

### ASPECTS

**Wind:** intolerant to wind | **Soil:** loess, sabulous clay, peaty, heavy clay, light clay, sand, loamy soil, all soils | **Nutrient level:** rich in nutrients | **Soil moisture level:** moist, wet | **Light requirements:** sun | **pH range:** acidic, neutral

### PLANTKENMERKEN

**Flowers:** discrete | **Flower colour:** yellow-green | **Flowering period:** April - May | **Leaf colour:** buds bronze, dark green | **Leaves:** deciduous, palmate, matt polished, underside hairy, laciniate, serrate, lobate | **Autumn colour:** orange-red, dark red, red-violet | **Fruits:** striking, capsule | **Fruit colour:** brown, green | **Bark colour:** grey | **Bark:** smooth | **Twig colour:** red-brown, olive green | **Twigs:** hairy, with lenticels | **Root system:** deep, shallow, extensive, highly branched, clinging aerial roots

