

Sorbus domestica
service tree, sorb tree, true service tree



Sorbus domestica (service tree) is a medium-sized deciduous tree that comes from South-East Europe, North Africa and Asia Minor. Since the rise of the Roman Empire, it has spread and become naturalised elsewhere. Because it was prized for its large, tasty fruits, the service tree is often found planted in abandoned orchards. It is an uncommon, light-loving tree that grows in deciduous forests and does not take well to competition from other plants. Usually found growing with *Quercus petraea, Ulmus minor* and *Acer campestre.* The service tree is slow growing and generally forms a single stem. It can get approximately fifteen to twenty metres tall with an egg-shaped to round crown shape.

The leaves of *Sorbus domestica* are unevenly pinnate, matt green and gently serrated on the edges. In October, they change to a beautiful yellow and orange to deep red. The flowers are fairly large within the Sorbus genus and appear between the end of April and June in loose inflorescences attractive to butterflies, bees and other insects. The yellow, orange or red fruits are fairly large, and usually shaped like apples or pears. They are eaten by birds and small mammals but also harvested by humans. The bark is grey-brown, retains its smoothness and later peels off in longish rectangular strips. The winter buds are also noticeably glossy and tacky.

The *Sorbus domestica* is a useful ornamental and edible tree which can live for a few hundred years but is prone to canker. It can be planted in any deep, well-drained and fertile soil. This heat-loving tree can cope very well with dry conditions and grows on virtually any type of soil although it prefers neutral to acidic soils. The service tree is suitable for medium-sized to large gardens and landscapes where it has important ecological value. Fruits can be eaten when ripe or overripe but can also be used to make alcoholic drinks (cider), jam and juice. The wood is thick and very valuable for carpentry.

TYPES OF PLANTING

Tree types: standard trees, multi-stemmed trees, fruit trees | **Topiary on stem**: multi-stem umbrella

USE

Location: park, central reservation, large garden, countryside, ecological zone | **Pavement**: none, open | **Planting concepts**: food forest, Landscape planting

CHARACTERISTICS

Crown shape: rounded, egg-shaped | **Crown structure**: semi-open | **Height**: 15 - 20 m | **Width**: 8 - 10 m | **Winter hardiness zone**: 5A - 8B

ASPECTS

Wind: tolerant to wind | **Soil**: loess, sabulous clay, light clay, sand, loamy soil | **Nutrient level**: low in nutrients, moderately rich in nutrients, rich in nutrients | **Soil moisture level**: dry, moist | **Light requirements**: sun | **pH range**: acidic, neutral, alkaline | **Host plant/forage plant**: bees, butterflies, birds, small mammals, humans

PLANTKENMERKEN

Flowers: umbels, striking, big, unpleasantly scented | **Flower colour**: white | **Flowering period**: April - June | **Leaf colour**: matt green, underside grey-green | **Leaves**: deciduous, ovate, dentate, pinnate | **Autumn colour**: yellow, yellow-orange, orange, orange-red, dark red | **Fruits**: striking, edible, large, berry, apple, pear | **Fruit colour**: yellow, red, green | **Bark colour**: grey-brown | **Bark**: peeling, smooth, later on rough, spiral | **Twig colour**: cinnamon-brown | **Twigs**: bare, vertical branches, thickly branched | **Root system**: deep, highly branched,

EBBEN
trees since 1862

TreeEbb