

## Trees of the Year: past and future

Susyn Andrews

### *Zelkova* (Tree of the Year 1993)

Rafael Govaerts wrote in to say that he visited Crete in 1987 with the intention of bringing back living material of *Zelkova abelicea*. Eventually, after a long search, he found a mature tree on the eastern side of the island. The tree was full of immature seeds, all of which appeared to be empty and so he brought back a few twigs. He put them in plastic bags to keep fresh but opened the bags every day to let some air in. After a week, he returned to Belgium and budded them onto some seedlings of *Z.serrata*. Three out of four took very quickly and easily. Today the grafted tree in Belgium is some 2.5m high and somewhat thin, but doing well.

Govaerts wonders if this easy method might be possible for other Mediterranean taxa, i.e. would it work for the endangered *Z.sicula* from Sicily? Apparently, after Dutch Elm disease wiped out most of the Belgian elms, one method of propagation involved grafting *Ulmus* onto *Zelkova*. It might work the other way round, grafting *Zelkova* onto *Ulmus*, though the former would then become susceptible to Dutch Elm disease. Comments please.

### *Davidia* (Tree of the Year 1994)

Ulrich Würth works in a Westerstede nursery in northern Germany. There they have grown *Davidia* for many years and the younger plants are in containers. During 2000 most of the latter stood in houses in very warm conditions. Four of these flowered without the typical white bracts and it was on these plants that Herr Würth saw bees. Is it possible that bees pollinate *Davidia*? However, on these 8-10 year old plants there are never fruits.

On the nursery there is a 100+ year-old *Davidia*, which produces fertile seed each year, but no moths have been spotted to date.

Philippe de Spoelberch sent a photograph (see p.148) comparing the fruits of *D.involucrata* var. *involucrata* with those of *D.involucrata* var. *vilmoriniana*. These four fruits were sent to Philippe from High Beeches by Anne Boscawen and are from E.H.Wilson's original introduction of *Davidia*. They are conspicuously smaller than the fruits of var. *vilmoriniana* from a tree at Herkenrode. Another interesting phenomenon that Phillippe has noted is the occasional development of two fruits on the flowers of *Davidia*. This explains the fact that the junction between the peduncle and the normal single fruit is at an angle. He has also recently heard that if fertilization is not immediate, only one fruit develops.

### *Ginkgo biloba* (Tree of the Year 1995)

Committee B of the Royal Horticultural Society visited Guernsey in late April 2002 and among their number were several IDS members. One of the plants

that left us open-mouthed was an old *Ginkgo biloba* in Candie gardens. When I wrote up the genus as the Tree of the Year for 1995 (Andrews 1996), the only mention I had was that it was 21m x 101cm and that was a 1986 measurement. We all thought the Candie Gardens *Ginkgo* must be a very old tree; so we measured it and it was 3.75m at 1.25m and 3.85m at 1m. A nearby glasshouse was built in 1792.

The *Ginkgo* was introduced into Europe c. 1730 and arrived in England in 1754. The Duke of Argyll obtained a tree and on his death in 1782, it came to Kew. The Candie Gardens tree looks only slightly younger. The Gardens were originally planted by the Priaux family and now belong to the State of Guernsey (T.de Malahide 1970).

I wrote to Rob Waterman, a local IDS member, and he came up with the following information. The two glasshouses at Candie Gardens are said to be the oldest on the island. The original dwelling house was built c.1780. Rob's measurements over a period of time are:

20m x 3.15 m girth (1986)

20m x 3.39m girth (1993)

20m x 3.78m girth (2002).

Guernsey sea winds are far worse than most people think, and Rob wonders if this prevents the tree from making as much height as it might, and putting energy into increasing its girth instead.

This is the best tree in Guernsey for colour. Last autumn (2002) it produced fruit, possibly for the first time; many of the fruits aborted, but about 30 fell to the ground, and although some were ill-formed about 20 seeds were obtained which have now been planted. There are two young gingkos within 400 m, and a male tree at the old Caledonian nursery, half a mile away.

Having seen the illustration of a 1000 year old *Ginkgo* with tschi-tschi roots, shown in Dick van Hoey Smith's 50th Anniversary book (page 140), Rob Waterman went to look at the Candie tree and noted similar roots just beginning to appear, the largest being about 112cm up the trunk.

#### REFERENCES

Andrews, S.(1996) Tree of the Year:*Ginkgo biloba*. Int. Dendrol. Soc. Year Book 1995:14-31

Malahide, T. de (1970). Tour of Guernsey, Jersey and Brittany, 16-26th April, 1969.

Int. Dendrol. Soc. Year Book 1969:36-56.

#### *Nyssa* (Tree of the Year 2000)

While I was in the Pacific North West in late August 2002, looking at laven- ders, I attended the Far West Show in Portland, Oregon. This is one of the largest horticultural trade shows in North America. Among the interesting plants that I noticed was *Nyssa sylvatica* 'Wildfire'.

According to Steve Hottovy of Beyond Green LLC (beyondgrn@aol.com) *pers.comm.*, it was a chance seedling found by him in 1990 in Dayton, Oregon, among a bed of one year old container plants. He says that the plant exhibits strong central leader development with good side branching. The new growth emerges red and holds its colouring a long time. The seed source was central Indiana and the leaves turn orange in fall. It has not flowered to date.

**Tree of the Year 2002-3: *Liquidambar***

My apologies, but I have had to postpone *Liquidambar* as the 2002 Tree of the Year, as commitments to RBG Kew have completely occupied my time. Only *L.styraciflua* or sweetgum grows to a good size within the British Isles and Ireland, so I am looking forward to hearing about the performances of *L. formosana* and *L.orientalis* from other parts of the world as well. To date I have hardly received a thing!

Please send your comments and any other information to Susyn Andrews, 86 Thompson Avenue, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4JN, UK, to arrive not later than 31 August, 2003.

**Please note my change of address.**

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