ARNOLD ARBORETUM
HARVARD UNIVERSITY BULLETIN
OF
POPULAR INFORMATION

JAMAICA PLAIN, MASS.

JUNE 22, 1921

Beech Trees. The Arboretum is fortunate in having in its collection eight of the ten species of Beech-trees which have been discovered up to the present time and are recognized by botanists. They are *Fagus grandifolia* of eastern North America, *F. ferruginea* of Europe, *F. orientalis* of southwestern Asia, *F. longipetiolata*, *F. Engleriana* and *F. lucida* of western China, and *F. Sieboldii* and *F. japonica* of Japan.

Fagus grandifolia differs from the other species so far as they are known here in the habit of sometimes producing stems from the roots; these often grow into small trees which form dense thickets round the parent trunk. The bark of all the species is smooth and pale, but that of the American tree is paler, a least, than that of the European tree, and the pale blue-gray bark of the stems and large branches make this tree in winter one of the most beautiful inhabitants of the forests of eastern North America. The American Beech is a common tree from eastern Canada to Florida and eastern Texas, and to Minnesota and Oklahoma. At the north it grows on uplands and mountain slopes, and often forms pure forests of considerable extent; southward the Beech varies from the northern tree in its thicker, less coarsely toothed leaves, and in the shorter and less crowded prickles on the fruit (var. *caroliniana*), and often grows on the bottom lands of streams or the borders of swamps. At the north the Beech is rarely more than seventy or eighty feet tall, but at the south it is taller and in the Mississippi valley on the rich loess of northern Louisiana and western Mississippi it is often a magnificent tree a hundred and twenty feet high with a tall trunk from three to four feet in diameter, and a fit associate of the great evergreen Magnolia (*M. grandiflora*) which also

grows in this soil to its greatest size. Planted by itself in the open ground the American Beech does not grow well, and rarely makes a handsome specimen, but does best when many trees are planted so close together that the lower branches are killed and tall trunks formed.

Fagus sylvatica, the European species, is distributed over a large part of Europe except in the extreme north, growing to great perfection in England, Denmark, parts of Germany, and on the mountains of the Balkan Peninsula, often forming pure forests and growing to a height of more than a hundred feet. It is a hardy and handsome tree in New England, where it seems to be perfectly at home, and grows faster and makes a handsomer specimen tree than the American species. There is no record, unfortunately, of the date of the introduction of this tree into the United States, but judging by the size of some of the trees here it must have been at least a hundred years ago. The finest European Beeches in the neighborhood of Boston are on Longwood Mall, a strip of turf extending east from Kent Street and between Chatham and Beech Streets in Brookline. This Mall was laid out by David Sears at the time he was engaged in developing his Longwood property seventy-five or eighty years ago, and it is probable that these Beech-trees were planted at about that time. There are sixteen of these trees, thirteen with green leaves and three of the purple-leaved variety. They are all in good health and are short-stemmed specimens from sixty to seventy feet tall with wide-spreading branches which on some of the trees sweep the ground. These trees now belong to the Town of Brookline, to which Longwood Mall and three other squares in the Longwood district were left by Mr. Sears. Several varieties of the European Beech have been found in Europe and are propagated and sold by nurserymen. The best known of these varieties is the so-called Purple Beech with leaves which are pale red in spring and deep red-purple at maturity. The Purple Beech was found growing naturally in the forest in three or four places in central Europe, and the first account of it was published as long ago as 1680. Seedlings of the Purple Beech sometimes have purple leaves; such seedlings often differ in shades of color, and to some of these trees names have been given. The Purple Beech is better known and more generally planted in this country than the typical green-leaved form, and for many years now has been a favorite with tree-planters in the northeastern states. The Copper Beech (var. *cuprea*) which is probably a seedling of the Purple Beech, has paler copper red leaves than those of that tree. An interesting form (var. *pendula*) of the European Beech is a comparatively low tree with horizontal or slightly pendulous branches from which hang almost vertically the secondary branches, the whole forming a tent-like head almost as broad as high. This tree was at one time somewhat planted in this country, and the largest specimen known here is the tree growing on what was once part of the Parsons Nursery in Flushing, Long Island. This tree is said to be one of the finest specimens in existence. A picture of it can be found in Wilson's *Romance of Our Trees*. There are other forms of the European Beech with pendulous branches differing somewhat in habit from the var. *pendula* to which names have been given (vars. *bornyensis*, *remillyen-*

1921. "Beech Trees." *Bulletin of popular information - Arnold Arboretum, Harvard University* 7(11), 41–42. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.321138>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/216958>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.321138>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/321138>

Holding Institution

Harvard University Botany Libraries

Sponsored by

BHL-SIL-FEDLINK

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Public domain. The BHL considers that this work is no longer under copyright protection.

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.