

## 16 Common Lime *Tilia x europaea*

A hybrid between small-leaved and large-leaved lime, common lime has characteristics of both species. The bark is pale grey-brown and irregularly ridged, with characteristic large burrs and leaf shoots at the base of the tree. You can see lines, or avenues of Common Limes around Ashby Castle, along the railway line and opposite Willesley Park Golf Club.

### Did you know?

Common limes are often host to heavy aphid populations which drip sticky honeydew deposits on anything lying underneath the trees.

### Value to wildlife

Lime leaves are eaten by the caterpillars of many moth species, including the lime hawk, peppered, vapourer, triangle and scarce hook-tip moths. They are very attractive to aphids, providing a source of food for their predators, including hoverflies, ladybirds and many species of bird. Bees also drink the aphid honeydew deposited on the leaves. The flowers provide nectar and pollen for insects, particularly bees.

Long-lived trees provide dead wood for wood-boring beetles, and nesting holes for birds.

### Mythology and symbolism.

Limes have long been associated with fertility. In France and Switzerland, limes are a symbol of liberty and the trees were planted to commemorate battles.

### Uses of common lime.

Lime wood is soft and light, white-yellow and finely textured. It is easy to work and often used in wood turning, carving and furniture making. Lime bark was traditionally used to make rope, and lime flowers were considered a valuable source of food for honey bees. The wood does not warp and is still used today to make sounding boards and piano keys. Limes can be coppiced and used for fuel, hop-poles, bean sticks, cups, ladles, bowls and even Morris-dancing sticks.

