

Northern Beeches [Fagus]



The beech family [Fagaceae]-oaks, beeches and southern beeches of the temperate zones - forms part of our collections. This family also has members in the tropics. The current global distribution of Fagaceae shows the early linkages of the Gondwana land masses.

Its botanical name *Fagus* is derived from the Greek word for food, phagus, from the edible seed, beech nuts.

The beech has a species in Europe, *sylvatica*, one in North America, *grandifolia*, another in Eastern Europe and Asia Minor, *orientalis*, and four species in Asia including *engleriana* in central China and *lucida* in western China, plus two in the relatively small area of Japan, *japonica* and *crenata*.

Also in Europe there are places where a twisted form of the beech grows. When mapped these are in a single line across Europe. Many grow true from seed indicating that their genetic structure has been affected, perhaps by radiation from a meteorite.

Several dozen ornamental cultivars have been selected from the European species.

The beech tree remains a popular source of timber from the temperate broadleaf forests of the lower altitudes of Europe and North America. Specimens can be seen growing in the Arboretum's collections.



Fagus sylvatica



Fagus crenata



Beech nuts

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The leaves shown below are samples of northern beeches from the US, Europe and Asia and show the similarity between the leaves and fruits.

The map shows the distribution of their former land connections between the continental plates.



American Beech
Fagus grandifolia
US

Common Beech
Fagus sylvatica
Europe

Oriental Beech
Fagus orientalis
Asia

