

LONDON PLANE TREE

In Australia, the London plane is used extensively as a street tree in major cities, particularly Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

The tree is used because of its

1. resilience to warm weather
2. its benefits as a shade tree, cooling footpaths and public places, and lose their leaves during winter allowing in sunlight
3. their resistance to breakage
4. tolerance of urban harsh urban environments to deal with pollution
5. the trees are fairly wind-resistant.

It has a number of problems in urban use,

1. The large leaves can create a disposal problem in cities, as they are tough and sometimes can take more than one year to break down if they remain whole.
2. Their root systems cause continual damage to roads. Some roads have been significantly uplifted by the tree roots. All of this is an additional expense to the city.
3. London plane trees contain trichomes and achene fibres. These fibres can cause respiratory and eye symptoms due to irritation. The pollen they produce are short, stiff hairs shed by the young leaves. These pollens levels are the same as grass pollen levels are at their highest when they are dispersing their seeds; The hairs are known for making people cough and irritating the skin. They are an irritant if breathed in and can exacerbate breathing difficulties for people including hay fever and asthma.



People often need water or a mouthful of bread to clear the fine particles from their throats. People affected by Plane Tree pollen makes going to find a picnic in the park with friends, walking or working in the area where they are located are challenging.

Professor Robyn O'Hehir, an expert in allergies from Monash University in Melbourne, said plane trees could cause throat irritation even in people who are not prone to allergies. She warned people in Melbourne to 'avoid prominent plane tree areas'.

Ed Newbigin University of Melbourne botanist has stated plane trees can cause 'irritation to the eyes and skin'.

Tim Flannery Australian scientist called them; "... foreign weeds ... about as much use to our wildlife as concrete posts."

The City of Sydney is phasing out the many hundreds of London plane trees lining inner city streets, mainly because of the ongoing debate over their role in causing allergies in people susceptible to hay fever and asthma.

The Union is asking Councils to –

1. install air-sampling devices on the roofs of three buildings to collect a continuous record of airborne pollens in the area for the residences who live in streets lined with these trees.
2. gradually reduce the number of plane trees across the city as they grow old and need replacing with a wider mix of trees, including native species.
3. place a ban on further plantings of London Plane Trees within any Council. The City's of Swan and Bayswater have both placed bans on the planting of these trees.

