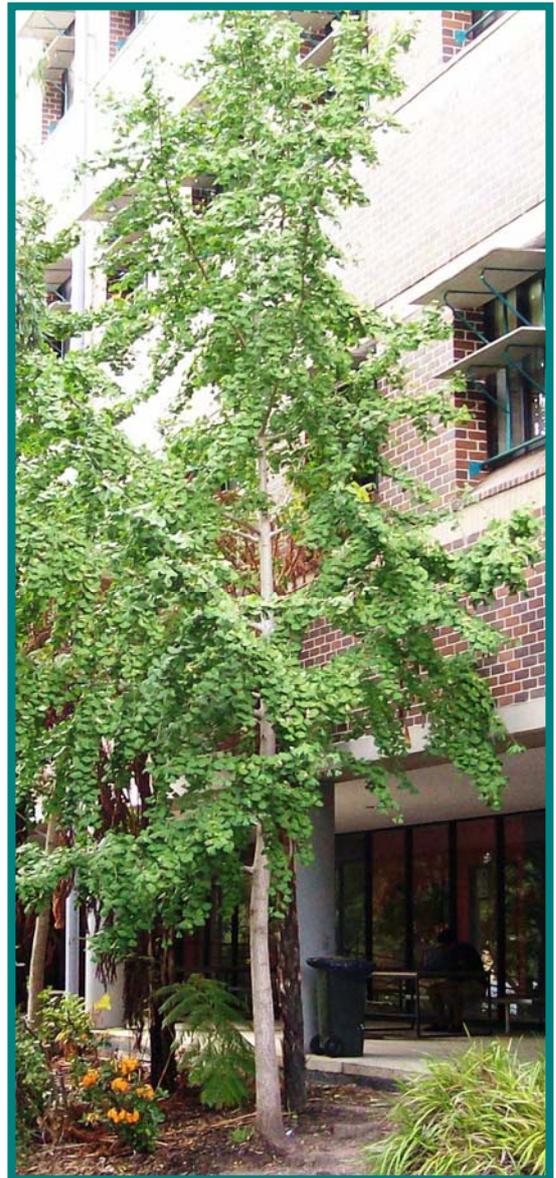


Plant of the Week

Ginkgo biloba

Ginkgo biloba is known in the wild from only a few scattered locations in the Tian Mu Shan (天目山) Reserve in Zhejiang Province of Eastern China although it is possible that the trees may have been planted in the wild by Chinese monks, up to 1000 years ago. The genus *Ginkgo* was widespread throughout Laurasia in the Jurassic and Early Cretaceous and fossils are also known from the Southern Hemisphere. Since its discovery by western botanists in 1690, *Ginkgo biloba* has become a popular garden tree world wide. In many Chinese cities, *Ginkgo* has been planted extensively as a street tree, not only because of its beauty but also because of its ability to survive high levels of air pollution. *Ginkgo* does not fit comfortably within any plant group and is usually placed within its own division, the Ginkgophyta, although it is considered to be closely related to gymnosperms (conifers and cycads).



Ginkgo biloba is the National Tree of China and

it is known variously as yín xìng shù 银杏树, “Silver Apricot Tree”, bǎi guǒ shù 白果树 “White Fruit

yā jiǎo shù 鸭脚树, “Duck’s Foot Tree”. Elsewhere in the world it is often also known as the “Maidenhair Tree” because of the similarity of the leaves to the leaflets of *Adiantum*, the Maidenhair Fern.

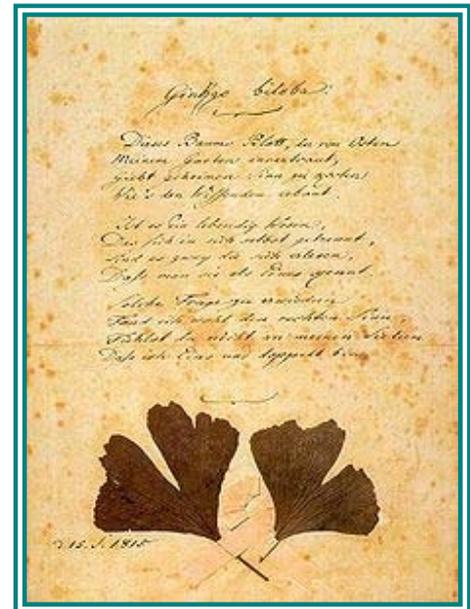


Ginkgo biloba

In 1815, **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe** wrote a poem entitled “*Gingo biloba*’ (sic) which he sent together with two *Ginkgo* leaves from his garden, to Marianne von Willemer, the wife of a Frankfurt banker.

Gingo Biloba

*This leaf from a tree in the East,
Has been given to my garden.
It reveals a certain secret,
Which pleases me and thoughtful
people.
Is it a living being,
Which has separated in itself?
Or are these two, who chose
To be recognized as one?
Answering this kind of question,
Haven't I found the proper
meaning,
Don't you feel in my songs,
That I'm one and double?*



English translation and image from Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ginkgo_biloba

A.J. Downing & K.D. Downing, 28.02.2011

(唐爱森, 唐科文 - 2011年02月28日)

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