Hamamelidaceae Liquidambar

Liquidambar formosana var. monticola

Formosan sweet gum

Height 20 - 25 (40) m
Crown broad fan-shaped, dark, dense crown
Bark and branches grey smooth trunk (no corky wings)
Leaf palmate lobed, 3-lobed, dark green, 8 - 15 cm long
Attractive autumn colour red
Flowers yellowish-green, unremarkable, end of April
Fruits spiky, brown capsule on a long stalk, Ø 2.5 cm
Spines/thorns none
Toxicity non-toxic (usually)
Soil type nutritious, humid soils
Soil moisture suitable for wet soil
Paving tolerates paving
Winter hardiness 7a (-17.7 to -15.0 °C)
Wind resistance moderate
Application parks, squares, cemeteries, large gardens
Type/shape clearstem tree
Origin Southwest China (Hupeh, Szechuan)

A natural variety of L. formosana. Preferred for planting in our climate rather than the species because it resists frost better. The tree has numerous branches and grows with a vigorous vertical trunk that is grey and smooth. Young twigs change colour from olive-green to brownish-grey. This Liquidambar does not have corky wings. The leaves are 8 - 15 cm long and 10 - 17 cm wide. It is always 3-lobed, in contrast to the species which also has 5-lobed specimens. The hairless leaves are flat-glossy and turn to a particularly beautiful scarlet-red in autumn. Following the unremarkable flowering, large spiky fruit capsules, measuring approximately 2.5 cm, appear on long, thin stalks. They remain hanging on the tree until deep into winter. Prefers a sheltered site.