



# Pagoda Tree – Sophora japonica

Object No. 2 | Orchards of liberation (Sady osvobození)

---

In professional publications you can find this tree under the Latin name of Sophora Japonica. The generic name is derived from the Arabic term sophira and indicates the tree with flowers similar to pea flowers. The specific epithet Japanese got this tree somewhat unfairly. Its home is Southeast Asia, especially China and Korea, though not Japanese. In the Czech lands, people can admire this tree since 1835 when the Pagoda Trees were first planted in the Prague Royal game preserve.

However, our Pagoda Tree is growing in Brno, in Sady Osvobození. Sady Osvobození - The Orchards of Liberation, are named in honor of the liberation of Brno from the Nazi army. Brno was liberated in April 26, 1945. The listeners then could hear from their radio receivers words similar to these:

"Soviet troops of Marshal Rodion Yakovlevich Malinovsky's second Ukrainian front fought with the German army. Their defenses could not resist the great onslaught of tanks and the infantry for a long time. At 10:30 am, the Czechoslovakian flag fluttered from the building of the Municipal Office on Žerotínovo square. About the noon, the five hundred-membered garrison of the Špilberk Castle gave up."

Anyway, back to the Pagoda Tree. This tree is planted in the parks not only because of its resistance to urban environment but also for its decorativeness. The young, odd-pinnate leaves similar to Acacia are vivid green. During the maturation they grow darker and very elegant. Because the branches of Pagoda Tree grow throughout the whole season, their ends are decorated by young, bright-colored leaves. In maturity, the tree begins to bloom with creamily white flowers of butterfly shape which are arranged into panicles.

In Chinese medicine, the Pagoda Tree ranks among the fifty most important medicinal plants. Undeveloped flowers of Pagoda Tree are used primarily as an excellent source of rutin which has a beneficial effect on the strength of the blood vessels. Drinking of the decoction in the Far East was preferred mainly by the nobility since it facilitated digestion. Nevertheless, we don't recommend to experiment with the fruits and flowers of this tree because they include, among other things, cytisin. This poisonous alkaloid causes nausea and vomiting. In the past, its flowers and pods used to be the source of yellow dye. Its wood is significant as well. In its homeland it is, thanks to its solidity, used as a building material.