

New Trees in Union Square



The 24 semi-mature trees planted into Union Square may look just like trees, but there is a good deal of subtle meaning in their choice. Outside the shops are two red maples (*Acer rubrum*) and three cut-leaved silver maples (*A. saccharinum* 'Born's Gracious') which turn red and gold, respectively, in the autumn. This is matched by the golden autumn foliage of six hybrid elms (*Ulmus clusius*) to be planted in front of the library and the contrasting deep green foliage of two upright Persian ironwoods (*Parrotia persica* 'Vanessa') and a Japanese hornbeam (*Carpinus japonica*) between the Chapel and the Union. You might recognise these as the University colours.

These colours are further developed by the foliage of two Norway maples (*Acer platanoides* 'Princeton Gold') and two honey locusts (*Gleditsia triacanthos* 'Sunburst') on the way to the bus stop that are golden-yellow all summer. Autumn colour is added to by the Persian ironwoods that turn a wonderful mixture of orange, red and purple. For a bit of variety in winter, there are also two Sichuan birches (*Betula szechuanica*) with chalk-white bark planted at strategic locations.

Another meaning comes from the origin of the trees. The native lands of the ironwoods and hornbeam mark the two sides of the old USSR while the red and silver maples opposite are from North America. Part of the funding for these trees kindly came from the alumnus

Philip Davies who studied American Studies while his alumna wife Rosamund studied Russian – a fitting tribute.

Yet another meaning is the unusual nature of many of these trees and their value in education through the University Arboretum. For example, by the bus stop is a rare form of the oriental plane with deeply dissected leaves (*Platanus orientalis* 'Digitata') and an unusual lime (*Tilia henryana*) which has bristle-teeth along the edges of the leaves, both from China.