

CARPINUS BETULUS L. (COMMON HORNBEAM)



HABITAT AND ECOLOGY

The hornbeam is a typical mesophilic species of temperate climates, occurring on lowlands, hills and the low mountain belt. High summer temperatures limit its distribution in the south, while it is a very hardy species and even found in frost hollows. It favours deep moist and well-drained soils from sub-acid to calcareous, although it can tolerate wet heavy clay to light dry sandy soils, but never acid. It grows in full to partial sunny conditions and it is also one of the few strongly shade-tolerant native trees in Europe, though slightly less than beech.

IMPORTANCE AND USAGE

The wood of the hornbeam is white, dense, very hard and strong. The wood has cross-grains and is therefore difficult to work. It is not flexible and shrinks greatly during the drying process. For these reasons, hornbeam has a low commercial interest and has never been industrially cultivated. The wood has a high calorific value as it burns slowly, making it excellent fuel wood and charcoal.

DISTRIBUTION

The hornbeam has a wide range which covers southern Europe (excluding the Iberian Peninsula), Central Europe, up to southern England and the south of Sweden.

