



Oleaceae (tribus Oleae)

Cartrema Raf.

Chionanthus L.

Forestiera Poir.

(*Fraxinus* L. → separate key)

Ligustrum L.

Nestegis Raf.

Notelaea Vent.

Olea L.

Osmanthus Lour.

Phillyrea L.

Picconia DC.

Syringa L.

VEGETATIVE KEY TO SPECIES CULTIVATED IN WESTERN EUROPE

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(8 March 2013 - 25 November 2020)

Vegetative identification key.

Introduction:

This key is based on vegetative characteristics, and therefore also of use when flowers and fruits are absent.

- Use a 10x hand lens to check pubescence, scales, teeth and venation pattern in general.
- Start counting veins at base of the lamina with first clearly ascending secondary vein, do not include intercalary veins, nor these ending in the apex.
- Look at the entire plant. Young specimens, shade, and strong shoots give an atypical view.
- Beware of hybridisation, especially with plants raised from seed other than wild origin.

Taxa treated in this key: → p10.

Taxa referred to synonymy in this key: → p10.

Remarks: → p10.

References:

- JDL herbarium and [illustrations](#)
- living specimens, in various arboreta, botanic gardens and collections
- literature:

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[Plantentuin Universiteit Gent](#)

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KEY TO GROUPS

- 01 a Leaf **at least in part** compound (with 3-more leaflets), **OR/IF** simple then with lamina pinnatisect to deeply lobed (lobe length >1/3 lamina width). **GROUP A → p2**
- b Leaf simple. Lamina margin entire, dentate or (sub)lobed (lobe length <1/3 lamina width). **02**
- 02 a Lamina margin often dentate: varying from minutely crenulate to serrulate or distantly dentate to (sub)lobed (teeth and lobe height/length <1/3 lamina width). **03**
- b Lamina margin predominantly entire (rarely few shoots with minutely dentate leaves). . **04**
- 03 a Dentate/lobed lamina margin with teeth spinulose. **GROUP B1 → p3**
- b Dentate/lobed lamina margin with teeth acute to obtuse. **GROUP B2 → p3**
- 04 a Lamina LS finely reticulate: tertiary vein areoles and sometimes up to quaternary vein areoles quite visible (10x LENS). **05**
- b Lamina LS poorly reticulate: tertiary vein areoles not or partly visible. **07**
- 05 a Terminal bud abortive, reduced, or replaced by 2 lateral buds. **GROUP C1 → p5**
- b Terminal bud predominantly present. **06**
- 06 a Terminal bud with 2 (sub)valvate scales visible (10x LENS). **GROUP C2 → p5**
- b Terminal bud with several imbricate scales visible. **GROUP C3 → p6**
- 07 a Petiole predominantly 6-10(-20) mm. **GROUP D1 → p7**
- b Petiole predominantly 2-6 mm. **GROUP D2 → p8**

GROUP A
LEAF at least in part COMPOUND (with 3-more leaflets),
OR/IF SIMPLE then lamina pinnatisect to deeply lobed (lobe length >1/3 lamina width).

- 01 a Leaf pinnately compound. **02**
- b Leaf simple, with lamina variable: both entire **AND** variable deeply lobed to pinnatisect. **03**
- 02 a Lamina with 7-11 leaflets **AND** leaflet sessile with margin entire. ***Syringa pinnatifolia***
 Lamina not simultaneously with the characters mentioned above. → **genus *Fraxinus***
- 03 a Pinnatisect leaves with 2-4 narrow lobes/side. ***Syringa protolaciniata***
- b Pinnatisect leaves with ≤3 narrow lobes/side. **04**
- 04 a Pinnatisect leaves with 1-3 narrow lobes/side. ***Syringa ×laciniata***
- b Pinnatisect leaves with 1-2 narrow lobes/side. ***Syringa ×diversifolia***

GROUP B1
LAMINA DENTATE/LOBED - margin with teeth spinulose -

- 01 a Lamina LS reticulation rather strongly developed: quaternary vein areoles between two secondary veins numerous and obvious (10× LENS). 02
- b Lamina LS reticulation rather weakly developed: tertiary vein areoles between two secondary veins few or partly obscured. 03
- 02 a Dentate lamina with forward directed small teeth, ≤2 mm. *Osmanthus fragrans*
- b Dentate lamina with sideward directed larger teeth, 2-4 mm. *Osmanthus yunnanensis*
- 03 a Petiole predominantly ≤6 mm. 04
- b Petiole predominantly >6 mm. 06
- 04 a Dentate lamina margin with >10 teeth/side. *Phillyrea latifolia*
- b Dentate lamina margin predominantly with ≤10 teeth/side. 05
- 05 a Lamina rigid and texture very thick, US and LS secondary veins obscure and only visible in part with 10× LENS. *Osmanthus delavayi*
- b Lamina +/- supple and texture leathery, US and LS secondary veins +/- visible and quite so with 10× LENS. *Osmanthus delavayi* 'Latifolius'
- 06 a Dentate lamina margin minutely spinulose dentate, teeth ≤2 mm. .. *Osmanthus serrulatus*
- b Dentate lamina margin coarsely spinulose dentate to lobed, teeth (lobes) 3-10 mm. 07
- 07 a Dentate lamina margin with 1-3 large +/- triangular teeth-lobes/side.
 *Osmanthus heterophyllus*
- b Dentate lamina margin with (2-)4-10(-12) coarse teeth-lobes/side. 08
- 08 a Lamina length/width predominantly ≥2/1, largest teeth >5mm. *Osmanthus armatus*
- b Lamina length/width predominantly ≤2/1, largest teeth <5mm. *Osmanthus ×fortunei*

GROUP B2
LAMINA DENTATE/LOBED - margin with teeth acute to obtuse -

- 01 a Shoot at least in part with lateral buds in whorls of three.
 *Fraxinus angustifolia* 'Monophylla'
- b Shoot with lateral buds (sub)opposite. 02
- 02 a Current year shoot 4-ribbed. Secondary year shoot often with internodes 4-ribbed.
 *Fraxinus anomala*
- b Current year shoot flattened and/or widened at nodes. 03
- 03 a Terminal bud 5-10 mm AND black. *Fraxinus excelsior* 'Diversifolia'
- b Terminal bud <5 mm AND/OR brown to greenish. 04

04 a	Lamina L/W 6/1-4/1.	<i>Phillyrea angustifolia</i>	
	b Lamina L/W ≤4/1.		05
05 a	Lamina midvein length predominantly 1-4(-5) cm <u>AND</u> margin with 6-10(-12) teeth/side.		06
	b Lamina midvein length predominantly >4 cm, <u>OR</u> margin predominantly with 10-20 teeth/side.		08
06 a	Lamina narrowly elliptic to oblanceolate, base attenuate. Margin entire to minutely dentate with inward directed teeth.	<i>Forestiera neomexicana</i>	
	b Lamina broadly elliptic to (sub)orbicular, base broadly cuneate to rounded. Margin dentate with outward directed teeth.		07
07 a	Lamina rigid and texture very thick, US and LS secondary veins obscure and only visible in part with 10× LENS.	<i>Osmanthus delavayi</i>	
	b Lamina +/- supple and texture leathery, US and LS secondary veins +/- visible and quite so with 10× LENS.	<i>Osmanthus delavayi</i> 'Latifolius'	
08 a	Lamina apex predominantly obtuse to rounded.		09
	b Lamina apex acute to (short) acuminate.		11
09 a	Plant deciduous. Lamina LS venation pubescent, with up to quaternary vein areoles clearly visible (10× LENS).	<i>Chionanthus retusus</i>	
	b Plant evergreen. Lamina LS venation glabrous, with tertiary vein areoles not or slightly visible in part.		10
10 a	Dentate lamina margin with teeth restricted to apical half. Petiole predominantly 6-10 mm.	<i>Picconia azorica</i>	
	b Dentate lamina margin with teeth often from base to apex. Petiole predominantly 2-6 mm.	<i>Phillyrea latifolia</i>	
11 a	Lamina midvein length 7-15 cm.	<i>Picconia excelsa</i>	
	b Lamina midvein length <8 cm.		12
12 a	Lamina margin with 20-50 teeth/side.		13
	b Lamina margin with (10-)15-20 teeth/side.		14
13 a	Lamina LS glabrous.	<i>Osmanthus suavis</i>	
	b Lamina LS midvein pubescent and surface scattered pubescent.	<i>Forestiera ligustrina</i>	
14 a	Lamina apex obtuse to acute.	<i>Phillyrea latifolia</i>	
	b Lamina apex acute to (sub)acuminate.		15
15 a	Lamina LS irregularly mottled and dotted (10× LENS).	<i>Osmanthus × burkwoodii</i>	
	b Lamina LS regularly and very finely dotted	<i>Osmanthus delavayi × suavis</i>	

GROUP C1
LAMINA ENTIRE WITH LS FINELY RETICULATE (10× LENS).
Terminal bud abortive, reduced, or replaced by 2 buds.

- 01 a Lamina base predominantly (sub)cordate to (sub)truncate. 02
b Lamina base predominantly rounded to cuneate. 03
- 02 a Lamina ovate, apex rather gradually long acuminate [flowers mid-May]. .. ***Syringa vulgaris***
b Lamina broadly ovate to orbicular-ovate, apex rather acute to abruptly acuminate [flowers early May]. ***Syringa oblata***
- Hybrids between previous taxa flowering from mid-April. ***Syringa xhyacinthiflora***
- 03 a Lamina width often >6 cm. ***Syringa reticulata***
- Lamina LS pubescent at least on midvein. ***Syringa reticulata* subsp. *reticulata***
- Lamina LS glabrous. ***Syringa reticulata* subsp. *amurensis***
b Lamina width rarely >6 cm. 04
- 04 a Lamina broadly ovate to (sub)orbicular. ***Syringa meyeri***
b Lamina ovate. 05
- 05 a Lamina LS clearly pubescent **AND** secondary veins clearly elevated (10× LENS).
..... ***Syringa pubescens***
- Shoot pubescent, lamina LS venation pubescent. ***Syringa pubescens* subsp. *microphylla***
- Shoot glabrous to glabrescent, lamina LS secondary veins +/- pubescent. ***Syringa pubescens* subsp. *patula***
b Lamina LS glabrous to glabrescent **AND** secondary veins not or (slightly) elevated in part. 06
- 06 a Lamina LS glabrous to glabrescent **AND** secondary veins not to slightly elevated (10× LENS). ***Syringa reticulata* subsp. *pekinensis***
b Lamina LS glabrous **AND** larger secondary veins clearly elevated. ***Syringa xchinensis***

GROUP C2
LAMINA ENTIRE WITH LS FINELY RETICULATE (10× LENS).
Terminal bud scales valvate.

- 02 a Lamina lanceolate: L/W ≥6/1, texture thick leathery. ***Nestegis cunninghamii***
b Lamina elliptic, ovate or obovate: L/W ≤4/1, texture +/- papery and thin. 03
- 03 a Petiole ≤10 mm **AND** lamina predominantly 3-10 cm. ***Chionanthus pygmaeus***
b Petiole 10-30 mm, **OR** lamina often 10-20 cm. 04

- 04 a Lamina apex obtuse to rounded, rarely acute AND largest leaves with secondary veins ≤ 7 /side (intercalary veins NOT included). *Chionanthus retusus*
- b Lamina apex acute to acuminate AND largest leaves with secondary veins 7-10(-more)/side (intercalary veins NOT included). *Chionanthus virginicus*

GROUP C3
LAMINA ENTIRE WITH LS FINELY RETICULATE (10x LENS).
Current year shoot terminal bud scales imbricate.

- 01 a Lamina L/W $\geq 3/1$ AND base attenuate. *Forestiera neomexicana*
- b Lamina L/W $\leq 3/1$, OR base cuneate, or rounded to cordate. 02
- 02 a Plant evergreen. Lamina +/- thick leathery. 03
- b Plant deciduous. Lamina thin, papery. 04
- 03 a Lamina margin undulate in most leaves. *Osmanthus yunnanensis*
- b Lamina margin straight. *Osmanthus decorus*
- 04 a Shoot slender: $\emptyset \leq 2$ mm AND lamina margin fimbriate (10x LENS). *Syringa tomentella*
- Lamina LS (almost) glabrous (10x LENS). *Syringa tomentella* subsp. *yunnanensis*
- Lamina LS clearly pubescent.
- Lamina US pubescent, LS pubescent. *Syringa tomentella* subsp. *tomentella*
- Lamina US glabrous, LS midvein and secondary veins pubescent. *Syringa tomentella* subsp. *sweginzowii*
- b Shoot +/- firm: $\emptyset > 2$ mm, AND/OR lamina margin +/- ciliate. 05
- 05 a Lamina LS papillose AND glabrous (10x LENS). *Syringa emodi*
- b Lamina LS not papillose, OR pubescent (10x LENS). 06
- 06 a Lamina midvein length 8-18 cm AND apex acute to acuminate or acuminate to caudate in part of the leaves [panicle nodding or pendulous]. *Syringa komarowii*
- Panicle rather cylindrical, compact, $\emptyset \leq 5$ cm. *Syringa komarowii* subsp. *komarowii*
- Panicle rather cylindrical-pyramidal, often interrupted, \emptyset 3-10 cm *Syringa komarowii* subsp. *reflexa*
- b Lamina apex acute to acuminate (never caudate), OR midvein length predominantly 5-12 cm [panicle +/- erect or spreading]. 07
- 08 a Lamina predominantly: broadly elliptic, LS glaucous/whitish green AND midvein length 5-12(-14) cm [panicle ≤ 20 cm; corolla tube funnel-shaped, lobes erect]. *Syringa josikaea*
- b Lamina predominantly broadly elliptic to oblong, OR LS pale green OR midvein length 8-18 cm [panicle > 20 cm, OR corolla cylindrical, OR lobes spreading]. *Syringa villosa*
- Shoot soon pale grey. Lamina LS rather pale green [panicle 20-30 cm; corolla tube funnel-shaped, lobes erect, tip incurved]..... *Syringa villosa* subsp. *wolfii*
- Shoot soon brownish. Lamina LS rather glaucous green [panicle < 20 cm; corolla tube cylindrical, lobes spreading]. *Syringa villosa* subsp. *villosa*

GROUP D1
LAMINA ENTIRE WITH LS POORLY RETICULATE (10× LENS).
Petiole predominantly 6-10(-20) mm.

- 01 a Plant pubescent on lamina LS or petiole or shoot. 02
 b Plant glabrous. 03
- 02 a Lamina LS secondary veins often 8-10/side. *Ligustrum sinense*
 b Lamina LS secondary veins predominantly 6-8/side. *Ligustrum foliosum*
- 03 a Lamina apex predominantly obtuse to rounded. *Picconia azorica*
 b Lamina apex acute to (short) acuminate pr +/- caudate. 04
- 04 a Lamina thin papery. 05
 b Lamina +/- thick leathery. 06
- 05 a Secondary veins (6-)10-16/side. Apex acuminate to +/- caudate. *Ligustrum compactum*
 b Secondary veins 6-10/side. Apex acute to acuminate. *Ligustrum sinense*
- 06 a Lamina lanceolate to narrowly elliptic L/W predominantly >4/1. *Nestegis lanceolata*
 b Lamina ovate to elliptic L/W predominantly <4/1. 07
- 07 a Lamina often wavy AND/OR margin often undulate. 08
 b Lamina margin rather straight or almost so. 09
- 08 a Lamina LS secondary veins anastomosing near margin (10× LENS). *Picconia excelsa*
 b Lamina LS secondary veins forming areoles near margin. *Nestegis apetala*
- 09 a Lamina <4/1 AND obovate to oblanceolate, or (narrowly) elliptic to oblanceolate AND
 base attenuate. *Cartrema americana*
 b Lamina ≤3/1, OR ovate to elliptic or elliptic to oblong, or oblong to linear, OR base
 rounded to (broadly) cuneate. 10
- 10 a Lamina US venation obscure to the naked eye. 11
 b Lamina US venation clearly visible. 12
- 11 a Lamina apex obtuse to acute, secondary veins ≤6/side. *Ligustrum japonicum*
 b Lamina apex acute to acuminate, secondary veins 6-8/side. *Ligustrum lucidum*
- 12 a Lamina apex acute to acuminate. *Osmanthus serrulatus*
 b Lamina apex acute. 13
- 13 a Lamina LS several tertiary veins clearly visible between each secondary vein (10× LENS).
 *Osmanthus decorus*
 b Lamina LS tertiary veins obscured to only slightly visible between some secondary veins
 usually near margin. 13

- 13 a Spring flowering evergreen shrub. *Osmanthus marginatus*
 b Autumn flowering evergreen shrub. *Osmanthus rigidus*

GROUP D2
LAMINA ENTIRE WITH LS POORLY RETICULATE (10× LENS).
Petiole predominantly 2-6 mm.

- 01 a Lamina LS, at least in part, scattered to very densely grey-silvery scaly (10× LENS!!! sometimes it is necessary to check under different angles). *Olea europaea*
 b Lamina LS not scaly, often minutely (usually dark) dotted. 02
- 02 a Secondary vein axils often with domatia (10× LENS). *Chionanthus foveolatus*
 b Secondary vein axils without domatia. 03
- 03 a Shoot with two or more serial buds often present. 04
 b Shoot with serial buds absent. 06
- 04 a Lamina LS midvein depressed. *Notelaea ligustrina*
 b Lamina LS midvein elevated. 05
- 05 a Lamina length/width 6/1-4/1, base cuneate. *Phillyrea angustifolia*
 b Lamina length/width 3/1-2/1, base broadly cuneate to rounded or (sub)cordate.
 *Phillyrea latifolia*
- 06 a Lamina texture thick and rigid, 15-50 × 12-30 mm (larger on vigorous plants/shoots).
 *Ligustrum sempervirens*
 b Lamina texture rather thin and supple. 07
- 07 a Lamina size predominantly 10-30(-40) × 10-15(-20) mm. 08
 b Lamina size predominantly ≥40 × 20 mm. 11
- 08 a Lamina broadly ovate with largest width in or below the middle. *Ligustrum henryi*
 b Lamina broadly elliptic to (sub)orbicular with largest width in or sometimes above the middle. 09
- 09 a Lamina apex predominantly emarginate. *Ligustrum sinense*
 b Lamina apex acute to obtuse. 10
- 10 a Lamina LS with ≥3 rather obvious secondary veins/side. *Ligustrum delavayanum*
 b Lamina with 2(-3) rather obscure secondary veins/side. *Ligustrum morrisonense*
- 11 a Lamina apex predominantly obtuse to rounded, sometimes +/- retuse. 12
 b Lamina apex predominantly acute to (short) acuminate, OR very variable: shoots with lamina apex acute and shoots with lamina apex obtuse or shoots with both kinds. 14

- 12 a Lamina base predominantly attenuate. **Ligustrum quihoui**
 b Lamina base predominantly rounded to cuneate. 13
- 13 a Petiole predominantly 1-3 mm. **Ligustrum obtusifolium**
 b Petiole 2-6(-more) mm. **Ligustrum sinensis**
- 14 a Lamina length/width 5/1-10/1. **Nestegis montana**
 a Lamina L/W 4/1. 15
- 15 a Plant glabrescent to glabrous (10x LENS). 16
 b Plant clearly pubescent on shoot or lamina LS midvein and margin. 17
- 16 a Lamina (narrowly) ovate, with L/W 2/1-3/1. **Ligustrum ovalifolium**
 b Lamina narrowly ovate to lanceolate, with L/W 2/1-4/1. **Ligustrum vulgare**
- 17 a Lamina apex acute to (short)acuminate (petiole 3-5 mm). **Ligustrum tschonoskii**
 b Lamina apex acute to obtuse. 18
- 18 a Petiole 3-6 mm. **Ligustrum sinense**
 b Petiole predominantly <3 mm. **Ligustrum obtusifolium**
- Hybrid with *L. ovalifolium*: Lamina apex very variable: shoots with lamina apex acute, others with apex obtuse and shoots with both kinds of lamina present. **Ligustrum xibolium**

Taxa treated in this key.

Cartrema americana

Chionanthus foveolatus
Chionanthus pygmeus
Chionanthus retusus
Chionanthus virginicus

Forestiera ligustrina
Forestiera neomexicana

Ligustrum compactum
Ligustrum delavayanum
Ligustrum foliosum
Ligustrum henryi
Ligustrum xibolium (L. obtusifolium × L. ovalifolium)
Ligustrum japonicum
Ligustrum lucidum
Ligustrum morissonense
Ligustrum obtusifolium
Ligustrum ovalifolium
Ligustrum quihoui
Ligustrum sempervirens
Ligustrum sinense
Ligustrum tschonoskii
Ligustrum vulgare

Nestegis apetala
Nestegis cunninghamii
Nestegis montana
Nestegis lanceolata

Notelaea ligustrina

Olea europaea

Osmanthus americanus
Osmanthus armatus
Osmanthus x burkwoodii (O. delavayi × O. decorus)
Osmanthus decorus
Osmanthus delavayi
Osmanthus delavayi 'Latifolius'
Osmanthus delavayi × *suavis*

Osmanthus x fortunei (O. fragrans × O. heterophyllus)
Osmanthus fragrans
Osmanthus heterophyllus
Osmanthus marginatus
Osmanthus rigidus
Osmanthus serrulatus
Osmanthus suavis
Osmanthus yunnanensis

Phillyrea angustifolia
Phillyrea latifolia

Picconia azorica
Picconia excelsa

Syringa emodi
Syringa josikaea
Syringa komarowii
 - subsp. *komarowii*
 - subsp. *reflexa*
Syringa meyeri
Syringa oblata
Syringa pinnatifolia
Syringa protolaciniata
Syringa pubescens
 - subsp. *microphylla*
 - subsp. *patula*
 - subsp. *pubescens*
Syringa reticulata
 - subsp. *amurensis*
 - subsp. *pekinensis*
 - subsp. *reticulata*
Syringa tomentella
 - subsp. *sweginzowii*
 - subsp. *tomentella*
 - subsp. *yunnanensis*
Syringa villosa
 - subsp. *villosa*
 - subsp. *wolfii*
Syringa vulgaris

Taxa referred to synonymy in this key.

Ligustrum amurense → *L. obtusifolium* var. *suave*
Ligustrum chenaultii → *L. compactum*
Ligustrum confusum Hort. → *L. compactum*
Ligustrum indicum → *L. sinense*
Ligustrum insulare → *L. vulgare*
Ligustrum microcarpum → *L. sinense*
Ligustrum stauntonii → *L. sinense*

Osmanthus americanus → *Cartrema americana*
Osmanthus forrestii → *O. yunnanensis*
Osmanthus omeiensis → *O. marginatus*

Phillyrea media → *P. latifolia*

Syringa afganica → *S. protolaciniata*
Syringa amurensis → *S. reticulata* subsp. *amurensis*

Syringa chinensis → *S. oblata*
Syringa fauriei → *S. reticulata* subsp. *amurensis*
Syringa giraldiana → *S. pubescens* subsp. *microphylla*
Syringa japonica → *S. reticulata* subsp. *reticulata*
Syringa julianae → *S. pubescens* subsp. *microphylla*
Syringa microphylla → *S. pubescens* subsp. *microphylla*
Syringa reflexa → *S. komarowii* subsp. *reflexa*
Syringa pekinensis → *S. reticulata* subsp. *pekinensis*
Syringa patula → *S. pubescens* subsp. *patula*
Syringa potaninii → *S. pubescens* subsp. *microphylla*
Syringa sweginzowii → *S. tomentella* subsp. *sweginzowii*
Syringa tigerstedtii → *S. tomentella* subsp. *sweginzowii*
Syringa velutina → *S. pubescens* subsp. *patula*
Syringa yunnanensis → *S. tomentella* subsp. *yunnanensis*
Syringa wolfii → *S. villosa* subsp. *wolfii*

Remarks.

Plants in collections labelled *L. confusum*, *L. ibota*, *L. leucanthum*, *L. lindleyi*, *L. salicinum* are rather sporadically encountered. These are excluded in this key for the time being.

Ligustrum confusum with large leaves (lamina often >10 cm long) is *L. compactum*.

L. strongylophyllum with large leaves (lamina 5-8 × 2-3 cm with an obtuse to rounded apex) is usually *L. obtusifolium*.

