

## History of the arboretum

A “dendrological garden” was created in about 1873 from seedlings planted by Pierre Moullierfort (1846-1903), a teacher of forestry at the then Ecole nationale d'agriculture de Grignon. The trees and shrubs were classified by family and genus and arranged in rows for more convenient study.

In the absence of written archives, it is not clear how the arboretum developed until an inventory was drawn up in 1975-1978, with the two hundred or so trees and a number of plantations being clearly identified.

The last dedicated gardener maintained the arboretum until his retirement in 1985. A new inventory was carried out by a scientist from the French National Institute for Agricultural Research Institute in 1991.

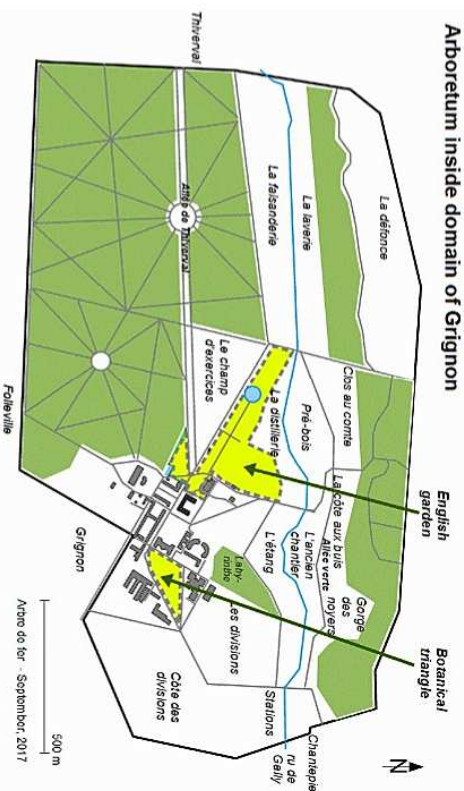
Thanks to training in pruning techniques by the CFPDAH centre in nearby Saint-Germain-en-Laye, basic maintenance was carried out as long as the centre remained active on the site, which was until about 2007.

The violent storm, known as Lothar, of December 1999, had a devastating impact on the arboretum, with winds exceeding 100 kilometres an hour. 23 trees were uprooted and 16 others damaged.

Since 2001, the Arbre de fer association has gradually been implementing a plan to rehabilitate the historic part of the arboretum, by tidying and improving the site and compiling a new inventory



## Arboretum inside domain of Grignon



The Grignon arboretum is now spread over two different zones within the campus of AgroParisTech in the park of the Grignon estate.

The original part is situated in the botanical triangle of the campus and is currently being renewed and enhanced in the English garden zone.

This arboretum with its 200 species is one of the major collections of trees in the Ile-de-France region.

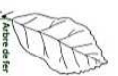
Though not normally open to the public, the Arbre de fer association regularly organises visits. Those interested are invited to contact

**Association de l'Arbre de fer**

**<http://www.arbredefer.fr/>**

**[contact@arbredefer.fr](mailto:contact@arbredefer.fr)**

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**Introduction to  
the Grignon Arboretum  
(F-78850 Thiverval-Grignon)**

*“Arboretums can hardly serve to counterbalance man's destructive fury but, beyond the beauty and harmony they promote, they are centres of knowledge where plant species are preserved.*

*They are a vital scientific and pedagogical tool and play an important role in the protection of our botanical heritage.*

*Succeeding generations of enthusiasts have passed on this inheritance as a precious treasure.”*

**Laure Bringer**

(The arboretums in the Ile-de-France and Centre regions of France, doctoral thesis in pharmacy, September, 1998)





**Weeping Japanese pagoda tree**  
*Sophora japonica* 'pendula'

Origin: Japan and Korea

This tree is very popular in Japan and can often be found growing near Buddhist temples. D'Incanville, a Jesuit priest sent to China in the mid 19th century, brought back specimens of this tree and many other plants. In 1747, Bernard Jussieu planted the first sophora in the Jardin du Roi at Versailles.

186



**Caucasian zelkova**  
*Zelkova carpinifolia*

Origin: northern Iran, Caucasus

Contrary to its European cousin the field elm, Zelkova does not appear to be particularly susceptible to Dutch elm disease. It is much used in the Caucasus region, its branches serving as fodder and its roots and bark producing yellow dye. In 1792, André Michaux introduced the first exemplars of Zelkova into France where they were brought into cultivation in the Jardin du Roi at Versailles.

146

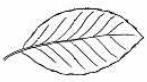


**Twisted beech tree**  
*Fagus sylvatica* 'tortuosa'

Main stands in Europe: Verzy (France), Sintel (Germany), Dalby-Söderskogs (Sweden)

The reasons for the uncommon shape of this tree are unknown, though genetic mutation is the most likely explanation of its crooked configuration.

113



**Persian ironwood**  
*Parrotia persica*

Origin: northern Iran and eastern Caucasus

This tree draws its name from the hardness of its wood. The arboretum possesses a fine example with a single trunk, unfortunately brought down by the storm of December 1999, though it is now growing again from the surviving stump. The association founded to safeguard and promote Grignon's natural heritage has chosen the name of this tree, "l'Arbre de fer", to symbolise the renaissance of the arboretum.

47



**Corsican pine**  
*Pinus nigra* subsp. *laricio*  
var. *corsicana*

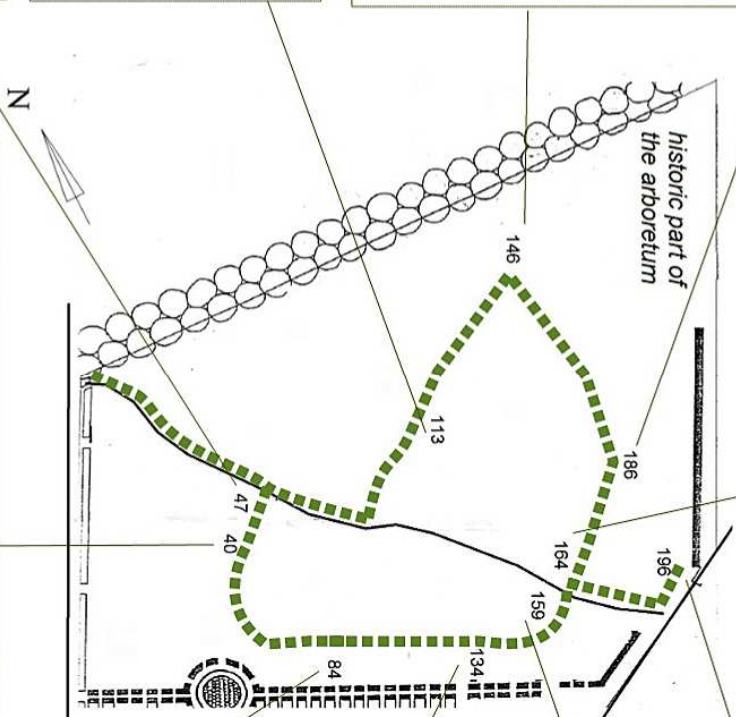
Origin: Corsica, Calabria and Sicily

The straight slender trunk of this slow-growing tree can grow to 50 metres tall. It flourishes naturally in the mountains of Corsica, between 600 and 1000 metres. The Greeks and Romans regarded the pine tree as a symbol of masculine sexuality, on account of its cones and its countless pollen grains.

164



historic part of  
the arboretum



**Honey locust**  
*Gleditsia triacanthos*

Origin: Canada and United States

The two striking features of this tree are its leguminous pods, which in Canada are said to taste like a mixture of castor oil and honey oil, and also its thorns, traditionally used as nails or pins. Its magnificent orange-tinged wood polishes well and is favoured by cabinetmakers. The flowers can be fermented to produce beer.

40



**Ginkgo tree**  
*Ginkgo biloba*

Origin: south-east China

This tree is something of a living fossil, as it dates back 150 million years to the Middle Jurassic era. It was grown by Buddhist priests first in China and then in Japan. In 1788, the botanist de Retigny acquired five specimens in England for the considerable sum of 40 silver ecus each, hence the name by which it is known in French, "l'arbre aux 40 écús".

196



**Atlas cedar**  
*Cedrus atlantica*

Origin: Algeria and Morocco

This rapidly-growing cedar was developed in nursery conditions only in 1837 by the Frenchman Sénéclauze. This mythical and sacred tree is frequently mentioned in the Bible and was employed by Kings David and Solomon in the construction of their palaces.

159



**Shellbark hickory**  
*Carya laciniosa*

Origin: eastern United States

It provides an excellent wood, hard, strong and flexible, used especially to make drumsticks. Its nuts were a major source of food for Native Americans. With age, the bark comes away from the trunk in narrow lacinate strips, hence this tree's Latin name.

134



**American persimmon**  
*Diospyros virginiana*

Origin: eastern United States

This tree has an attractive scaly bark with deep fissures. Of the Ebenaceae family, its exceptionally hard wood is used in the manufacture of golf clubs. It was cultivated from prehistoric times by Native Americans for its wood and persimmon fruit, rich in vitamin C.

84

