

A picture from about  
the 1940s

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# The Copper Beech



ROTHAMSTED  
RESEARCH

*Fagus sylvatica* “Purpurea” is a stunning, dark purple-leaved variety of common beech (*Fagus sylvatica*).

It has dark purple-red foliage in the spring but, like many other purple-leaved specimens, it gradually turns to a dark green-bronze as the summer progresses. In autumn, the deep bronze foliage turns to a golden brown.

*Fagus sylvatica* “Purpurea” is a tough tree and will thrive just about anywhere but it does not do well in exposed or coastal conditions. It is best suited to reasonably fertile and well drained soils but does not perform well on heavy clay or light sand, and being a shallow rooted tree under-planting is not recommended.

It is a large and majestic tree, of great beauty, and as such is a superb specimen to plant as a statement in parks and large estates. It is a great choice for creating contrast in the landscape, with its dark colours tending to draw the eye to it. It is best planted on the perimeter of a scheme but if planted too close to the front it is likely that specimens planted beyond it will be overlooked.

## Our tree's estimated parameters

Height: **29 metres**

Average crown spread radius:  
**(approx) 12 metres**

Diameter of stem at 1m:  
**1.5 metres**

Age class: **Mature**

Fungal fruiting bodies of *Meripilus giganteus*, growing from the tree's roots, have emerged from the ground in various locations close to the trunk. *Meripilus giganteus* is a fungus that can cause severe root decay in beech trees, and is frequently associated with tree failure. It is apparent that the fungus has been associated with this tree for a long time; the development of the large buttressing is likely to have been caused, at least in part, by the tree's response to the fungus. It appears that the tree has adapted to the fungus, and there is no indication of a high risk of failure.

The Copper Beech in 2018

