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Linden trees are the most common historic city trees in the Netherlands because they tolerate polluted urban air, survive pruning very well, create large shaded canopies, live for many decades, and fit traditional Dutch boulevard design. In Groningen, lindens are frequently used along canals, singels, and former waterways because their roots stabilise soil and because they visually recreate the atmosphere of old canal-lined streets.

Trees help create the recognizable "Groningen boulevard" atmosphere. Combined with historic facades, they soften the street visually and make the area feel less dominated by buses and asphalt.

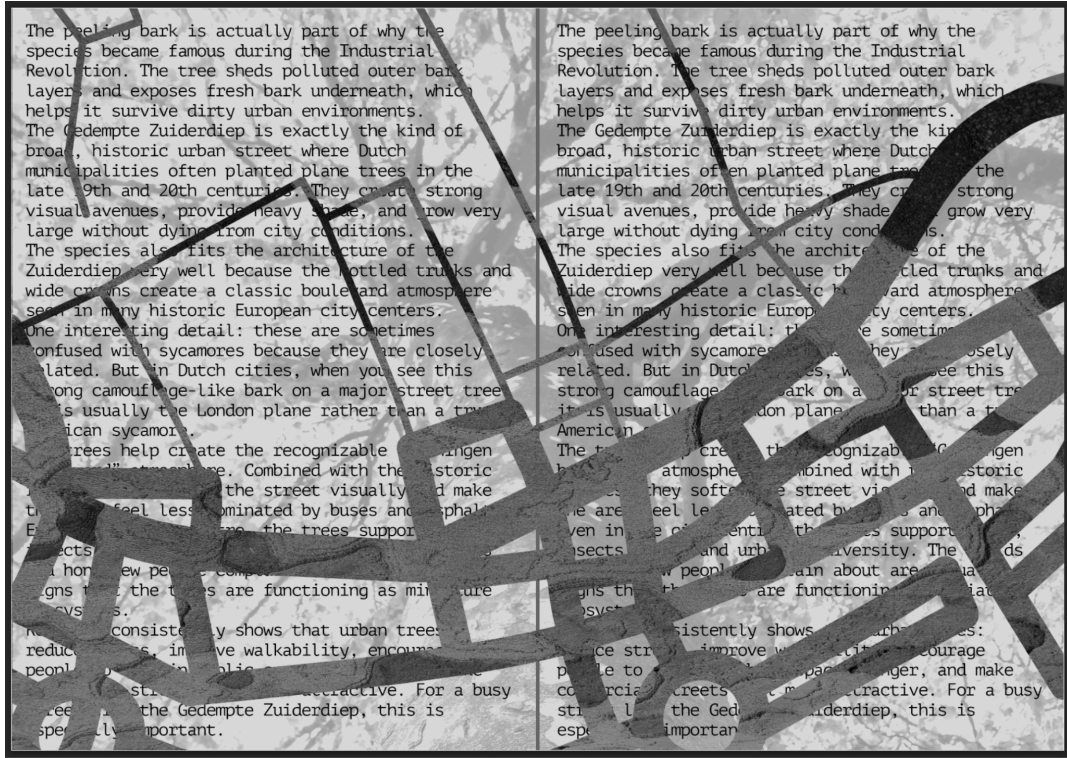
Even in the city centre, the trees support birds, insects, bees, and urban biodiversity. The birds and honeybees complain about the stress that the trees are actually functioning as miniature ecosystems. Research consistently shows that urban trees: reduce stress, improve walkability, encourage people to stay in public spaces longer, and make commercial streets feel more attractive.

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The peeling bark is actually part of why the species became famous during the Industrial Revolution. The tree sheds polluted outer bark layers and exposes fresh bark underneath, which helps it survive dirty urban environments.

The Gedempte Zuiderdiep is exactly the kind of broad, historic urban street where Dutch municipalities often planted plane trees in the late 19th and 20th centuries. They create strong visual avenues, provide heavy shade, and grow very large without dying from city conditions. The species also fits the architecture of the Zuiderdiep very well because the bottled trunks and wide crowns create a classic boulevard atmosphere seen in many historic European city centers.

One interesting detail: these are sometimes confused with sycamores because they are closely related. But in Dutch cities, when you see this strong camouflage-like bark on a major street tree, it is usually the London plane rather than a true American sycamore.

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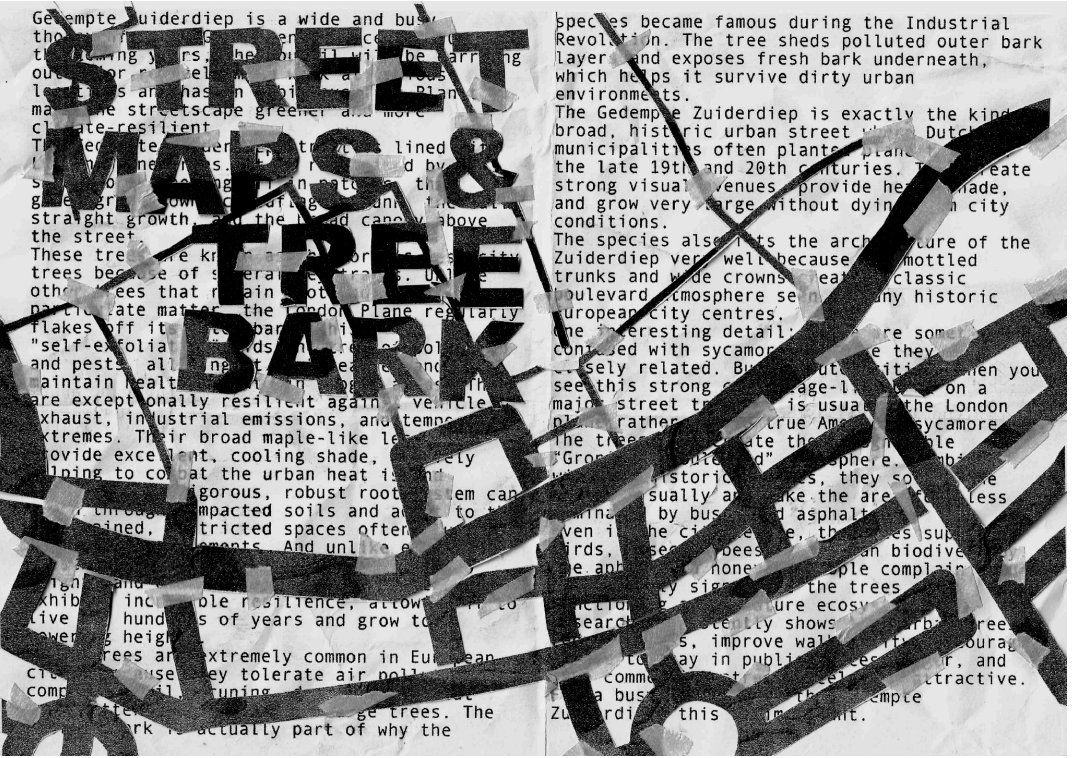
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Made on 17 May 2025

THE TREES OF THE ZUIDERDIEP

The trees along the streets of Dutch cities serve and contribute to multiple factors. Part of it carries historic significance when several streets were once water canals, but in modern times, trees serve to contribute to climate and cooling solutions; they boost the cities' ecology and add social value to walkways.

1265	1612	1880	1930 - 1953	1954	1977	2020
The original canals of Groningen were built to perform mainly functional duties, such as transport, defence, draining and trading.	The canal system was renewed when the Zuiderdiep became part of a larger planned urban expansion. Over time, the city increased and encouraged the planting of trees along canals and promenades.	The canal was filled in, earning the name "gedempt". It turned from a waterway to a broad urban street. Many Dutch cities used rows of trees to imitate the rhythm and openness of old canals after they were filled in.	During this era, bus stations were built across the city. As a result, the city and its street saw an increase in pedestrians and as such, the natural need for trees, shade and foliage grew.	Finally, the last part of the canal was filled, sealing off the street entirely and removing any traces of an ancient waterway.	After Groningen introduced its famous traffic circulation plan, the Zuiderdiep stopped functioning as a major through-road for cars. This allowed the street to evolve into a more pedestrian-friendly city space where trees became increasingly valuable.	Now, with the establishment of the Bomenplan, trees across the city are monitored. During construction or restructuring projects, trees are moved and replanted to make space for city expansion.

Made in Illustrator and Indesign

A timeline showing the expansion of the Gedempte Zuiderdiep and its trees

