The attractive linden tree with its large, heart-shape leaves can grow as tall as 100 feet. Native to Europe, it is now planted as a shade tree throughout the temperate world. The wonderful scent of the flowers gives it the name lime flower tree. It is also referred to by its botanic name Tilia. The flowers of several species have been used in traditional medicine. T. cordata is considered "official" and referred to as winter linden. It is used in Chinese medicine as duan Su Hua. Summer or large-leaf linden (T. platyphyllos) is also popular as tea. It is regulated in the US for flavoring in alcoholic beverages. These two species have the best flavor, due to the high amount of tannins they contain. The tea's sweet mucilaginous taste seems to be determined by a ratio between polysaccharides and tannins, which should be at least 2%. American basswood (L. americana) and silver linden (L. argenten) produce digestive distress such as nausea. The flowers of Crimean lime (T.x euchlora) are fatal to bees.

The five-petaled, light yellow flowers hanging from slender stalks are collected within five days after blooming, then quickly dried. Their tranquilizing effect eases headaches, including migraines, as well as insomnia, stress, and panic disorders. They also reduce high blood pressure and heart palpitations brought on by nervous tension. Traces of benzodiazepine-like compounds, related to those in anti-anxiety drugs, have been found. This may explain the flower's use to relieve anxiety. The tea has long been popular in Europe, especially France, to promote sleep and as a relaxing tea for children. An old belief that linden induces a narcotic intoxication has no support. A few books warn that those with heart problems should avoid it, but this is undocumented. The German Commission E Monograph states no contraindications.

The heady fragrance is due to essential oil, which represents up to 0.1% of the flowers' components (including citral, eugenol, limonene, and esters). Researchers found that the flowers sedate rodents just from inhaling the scent. Once used to treat epilepsy, it was said that just sitting under a flowering tree could produce a cure.

The pleasant-tasting linden tea (or a footbath) promotes sweating and treats feverish colds, especially when hot. It relieves sore throat and nasal congestion and is recommended particularly for dry coughs. (This use is similar to that of elderflower [Sambucus spp.], and the two are often combined.) Linden flowers contain more than 1% flavonoids (such as quercitin and kaempferol). Along with the compound coumaric acid, they appear to be responsible for linden's ability to increase sweating. These same compounds make the flowers useful in reducing intestinal spasms. They specifically relax the duodenum. Linden is a general digestion aid that increases digestive fluids, helps heal stomach ulcers, and counters diarrhea. It is also used to treat urinary tract infection and inflammation.

Linden flowers are astringent, yet very emollient, so have long been popular in lotions, creams, flower waters, and other complexions products on dry, chapped, or cracked skin and itchy skin conditions, such as rashes and bug bites. It is also used in hair-lightening shampoos. Studies show that linden fights infection and is somewhat antifungal. A clinically-used extract showed antibacterial action specifically against organisms that cause mouth infections. The flowers are traditionally used in a decoction as mouthwash, gargle, and eyewash. Wound healing and anti-inflammatory properties have been identified in T. x europaea (a hybrid of T. cordata and T. platyphyllos). Other species have not been investigated. The mucilaginous leaves and shoots of several species have been used as poultices to promote healing.

There is evidence that linden flower is also anti-diabetic and promotes iron absorption, so researchers suggested that it may be helpful as an iron deficiency preventive and to make iron more bioavailable. Weiss (Herbal Medicine, Thieme, 2000, see AHA 18:1) considers it an immune stimulant. Still other compounds in the flowers include phenolic and amino acids. The seed oil resembles olive oil, although it produces skin reactions in a few people. More than two dozen additional minor compounds have been identified in the flower, fruit, and wood. In the Middle Ages, statues of saints were carved from the soft wood, known as lignum sacrum. A modern use for the wood is as charcoal, which alleviates fermentation and gas produced in the intestinal tract. The flavorful honey is used medicinally.