



# Ginkgo: The Tree That Time Forgot

By Peter Crane

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**Ginkgo: The Tree That Time Forgot** By Peter Crane

**The life story of a very special tree, from the age of dinosaurs to the twenty-first century**

Perhaps the world's most distinctive tree, ginkgo has remained stubbornly unchanged for more than two hundred million years. A living link to the age of dinosaurs, it survived the great ice ages as a relic in China, but it earned its reprieve when people first found it useful about a thousand years ago. Today ginkgo is beloved for the elegance of its leaves, prized for its edible nuts, and revered for its longevity. This engaging book tells the rich and engaging story of a tree that people saved from extinction—a story that offers hope for other botanical biographies that are still being written.

Inspired by the historic ginkgo that has thrived in London's Kew Gardens since the 1760s, renowned botanist Peter Crane explores the history of the ginkgo from its mysterious origin through its proliferation, drastic decline, and ultimate resurgence. Crane also highlights the cultural and social significance of the ginkgo: its medicinal and nutritional uses, its power as a source of artistic and religious inspiration, and its importance as one of the world's most popular street trees. Readers of this book will be drawn to the nearest ginkgo, where they can experience firsthand the timeless beauty of the oldest tree on Earth.

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## **Ginkgo: The Tree That Time Forgot By Peter Crane Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"This intelligent, literate history is so enticing it will leave you greedy for more."—Dominique Browning,  
*New York Times Book Review*

(Dominique Browning *The New York Times Book Review*)

"This engaging book uses Ginkgo as a point of departure to examine a wide range of topics—the history of botanical exploration in China and Japan, as well as plant anatomy, physiology, evolution, extinction, and conservation. . . . It is both scholarly and accessible."—Scott Wing, Smithsonian Institution  
(Scott Wing 2012-08-20)

"*Ginkgo* takes a place among the best books on plants that I have had the pleasure of reading. It provides an extremely interesting account of a remarkable plant through space, time, and culture."—Peter H. Raven, President Emeritus, Missouri Botanical Garden

(Peter H. Raven 2012-08-21)

"My favorite Ginkgo is the iconic 'over my dead body' in Hibiya Park in Tokyo. Peter Crane's book will enchant both experts and newcomers to these splendid plants."—Robert M May, University of Oxford  
(Robert M May 2012-10-22)

"Peter Crane provides a compelling and definitive portrait of the Tree That Time Forgot: its ancient lineage, its natural history, and history interwoven with people....an eye-opening page turner about the Ginkgo in particular and trees in general. A triumph of beautifully written scholarship."—Thomas E. Lovejoy, University Professor of Environmental Science and Policy, George Mason University  
(Thomas E. Lovejoy 2012-10-25)

"The Ginkgo is the elder statesman of the plant world, and Peter Crane's erudite and fascinating biography is as absorbing as any account of the life of a Churchill or a Lincoln."—Michael McCarthy, Environment Editor, *The Independent*, London  
(Michael McCarthy 2012-10-31)

"An erudite blend of biology, cultural history, and tree lore, this poetic rhapsody to one very ancient but familiar tree is an enthralling sweep across deep time and the post-Linnaean world. A delightful read deserving to become a classic of natural history writing."—Gregory Long, President, The New York Botanical Garden  
(Gregory Long 2012-10-31)

"An entertaining introduction to botanical lore."—Kirkus Reviews  
(Kirkus Reviews)

"The Ginkgo tree is widely known but very few people know much about it. Peter Crane's superb new biography of this fascinating tree taps into science, culture, history, and medicine, using a single plant to tell a host of stories. Finally, Ginkgo gets its due."—Kirk Johnson, Sant Director, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution  
(Kirk Johnson 2013-01-08)

“This biography of the ginkgo tree offers a potent mix of science, history, and culture, exploring how plants have changed our lives and our planet. And Peter Crane . . . is the perfect person to tell the tale. . . With its meticulous footnotes, satisfying referencing and gripping narrative, I can see this becoming a commuter’s favorite for scientists and general readers alike. . . *Ginkgo* will inspire you to know and care for the organisms with which we share this planet in a new way.”—Sandra Knapp, *Nature*  
(Sandra Knapp *Nature*)

“Among a clutch of new books, *Ginkgo* has all the right ingredients. It is one of those rare works written by a scholar whose passion for his subject makes you want to go out and hug a ginkgo--or at least seek one out to examine it more closely.”—*New Scientist*  
(*New Scientist*)

“A remarkable book about a remarkable tree that came through from the age of the dinosaurs in one corner of China, and has now repopulated parks and gardens all over the world. An important biography of the ultimate survivor.”—Richard Fortey, author of *Horseshoe Crabs & Velvet Worms*  
(Richard Fortey 2012-10-02)

“You might think you’d have to be a scholarly sort of tree hugger to wrap your mind around *GINKGO: The Tree That Time Forgot*, by Peter Crane, but this intelligent, literate history is so enticing it will leave you greedy for more.”—Dominique Browning, *New York Times Book Review*  
(Dominique Browning *The New York Times Book Review*)

“It’s a personable story, as Crane examines the fossil record seeking to trace the plant’s evolution and the tree’s cultural impact.”—*The Chicago Tribune*  
(*The Chicago Tribune*)

“Readers of this fascinating history will be glad to know there is at least one life-form that owes its survival, not its destruction, to humans.”—*Scientific American*  
(*Scientific American*)

“Peter Crane’s *Ginkgo* is a remarkable accomplishment. I know of no other book on a single tree species that can compare with it for readability and thoroughness. It is a milestone in the botanical canon and will remain the most authoritative account of this fascinating species for many years to come.”—Edward S. Barnard  
(Edward S. Barnard)

“*Ginkgo cranei*, an extinct species of the family, is named after the author who lived beside the UK’s oldest Ginkgo while he was director of Kew Gardens. This qualification is dwarfed by the depth of Crane’s knowledge and the sparkle of his prose. He also reminds us why conservation matters: ‘Letting species go extinct when we have the power to intervene is like letting a library burn just when we are learning how to read.’”—Jane Owen, *The Financial Times* (Jane Owen *Financial Times* 2013-06-29)

“Peter Crane guides us through every aspect of the tree’s provenance, at the same time using it to weave an enthralling tale of people, history, evolution and conservation. He leaves no stone unturned in his quest to present the story of this remarkable tree . . . Those who read this book are likely to look upon the ginkgo tree with a sense of enchantment . . .”—Dr Graham Godfrey, *The Biologist*  
(Dr Graham Godfrey *The Biologist* 2013-09-01)

“[T]he appeal of a life form that saw the dinosaurs come and go prevails and makes this book a fascinating . . .

. read.”—Michael Gross, *Chemistry & Industry*  
(Michael Gross *Chemistry and Industry*)

“After reading this captivating book, you will never simply just look at a tree of any species again, and most certainly not a ginkgo, without pondering its cultural importance, how it came to be growing in this place at this time, and its reproductive biology, economic uses, and phylogenetic position.”—J. C. McElwain, *Science*  
(J. C. McElwain *Science*)

“Highly recommended.”—*Choice*  
(*Choice*)

“*Ginkgo* is a rare work about a tree unlike any other. Written by Peter Crane, a paleobotanist and former head of the UK’s Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, his passion for the subject makes you want to go out and hug a ginkgo.”—*New Scientist* (*New Scientist* 2013-11-30)

A Best Science Book of 2013, *New Scientist*  
(*New Scientist*)

“Apart from covering all the main aspects of the biology, growth, history and cultivation of *Ginkgo*, it includes a fascinating account of the study of fossil plants and of the personalities involved . . . This is a delightful book to read, alike to botanists and to anyone with an interest in trees.”—Martyn Rix, *Curtis’s Botanical Magazine*  
(Martyn Rix *Curtis’s Botanical Magazine*)

Shortlisted for the 2014 Phi Beta Kappa Award in Science.  
(Science, Short List *Phi Beta Kappa Award* 2014-08-18)

“Encyclopedic in breadth and depth, this ‘global biography’ of the ginkgo is an elegant account infused with the writer’s sense of wonderment for his subject. Reading it will likely make you seek out the nearest specimen to appreciate it anew.”—*Key Reporter*  
(*Key Reporter*)

## About the Author

**Peter Crane** is Carl W. Knobloch Jr. Dean and professor, School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, Yale University, and former director of The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, UK. He was awarded the 2014 International Prize for Biology by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. Crane divides his time between Oak Park, IL, and New Haven, CT.

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