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## Growing Shade

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In a broad band of country north of the Alps the sun shelter which makes an outdoor room for a street café or a garden restaurant is likely to be an assembly of tree umbrellas—a double row of living and growing trees, Horse Chestnuts or London Planes, trained into a flat-topped structure with a ten-foot ceiling and a leafy roof.

Many of these outdoor rooms are more than a hundred years old, once used by strangers traveling on horseback over hot, dusty roads, as well as by the village inhabitants escaping from the summer sun. The tree trunks are thirty to forty inches in diameter and some of the cantilevering branches are as thick as the roof beams in the local barns; their robust scale is in keeping with the adjacent buildings and spaces. The Horse Chestnuts make dark, solid shade; the leaf cover of the Planes is more translucent, more open, making changing dappled patterns.

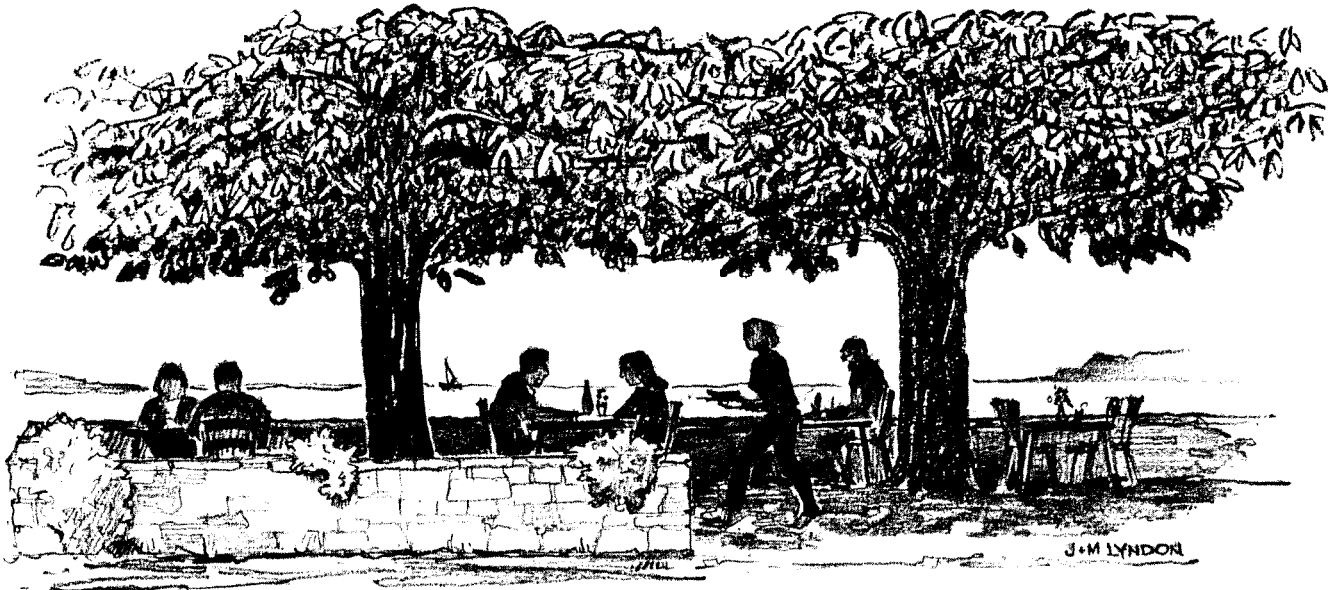
In this country of the tree umbrellas (a region which crosses national frontiers) the people are of Alemannic stock and speak variations of German. Their climate is classed as transitional. To the east are the hot, incontinent summers of central Europe—the Viennese escape in August to the mountains or the woods. North and west, the weather is tempered by the ocean—roofless cafés on Dutch beaches have glass walls to keep out the wind; the Danes add overhead heaters; the English grow roses over arbors and pergolas, more admired than sat under. In the south, Mediterranean peoples

have built colonnaded courts and arcaded market squares; the Greeks add ramadas for tourists, minimum structures roofed, on the beach, with matting and, in the towns, with grapevines (easy on water).

At first sight, the tree umbrellas seem to be a make-shift solution in a region where summer temperatures rarely exceed 90°F (102.5°F in Basel, July 1983, was an all-time Swiss record). In fact, they have survived and new ones are being grown because they are practical, inviting, and handsome; they do not block upper windows and when bare in the winter they let the sun through. They express the ethos of the people—happy among trees and like-minded company; skillful at combining natural and man-made components into outdoor places with a sense of permanence; content to invest time, work, and money on their surroundings—they live in small countries and they are not going anywhere.

As for training the trees, a German forester agreed that there was not much on the subject in books; and it would be under Parks not Forestry.

At the offices of a Swiss city parks department, the recommended expert explained: London Planes (*Platanus acerifolia*) are easier to manage than Horse Chestnuts (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), which persist in trying to grow high in the center. Planes will tolerate dirty air better than Chestnuts; dry soil is unsuitable for both. Buy the sapling, specially grown for the purpose, from a tree nursery. It will



Drawing by Maynard Lyndon and Joyce Earley Lyndon.

have an upright stem and three or four whippy branches. Plant and *at once* cut off the stem just above its junction with the top branch (Plane) or top pair (Chestnut). Train the branches by binding them to horizontal supports. As the tree grows, select and encourage subsidiary branches to become webs in the roof structure. Cut off unwanted growth in summer (*summer not autumn*), cleanly, back to its base. *Leave no stubs*. New shoots will sprout each season and produce the leaves; the shoots must be cut off biennially, back to their base, to maintain the required profile. Good luck!

As he was leaving the expert turned and called out, “Es ist nicht Kunst. Es ist fleissige Pflege.” It’s not art, it’s diligent attention.