The Complete Book of Trees of Britain and Europe
Tony Russell

The slant of this book is towards trees the reader is likely to encounter rather than native species. I think this is realistic.

He starts with a discussion of how trees evolved and of their structural elements. Trunk - hold the leaves above other competitors for light. Roots - get water and nutrients up to them. Leaves - create food from sunlight. And lastly, flowers - get seeds fertilized, and seeds, get dispersed and grow new trees.

Man has had a vastly important role in spreading seeds. Trains and steamships are a huge improvement over wind, water and animal excrement, their traditional methods of spreading. Ornamental species are worldwide. Such has become their dependency on man that there are many species of which the wild ancestors are unknown.

Given all this, it makes sense to look at trees from a gardener's perspective. Which trees for which environments, which seasons, which uses. The book does a good job of that.

I grew up with Jepsen's "Flowering Plants of California," a much more technical work. It was a better guide to the exact species of some wild tree, but not as useful to the public. This book is pitched at the layman with an interest in trees. That's me - a Californian transplanted to Ukraine. It tells me what I want to know about what I'm looking at.