

Maine Tree Species Fact Sheet

Common Names: Sugar Maple (Rock Maple, Hard Maple)

Botanical name: *Acer saccharum*

Tree Type: Deciduous



<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/commontr/images/SugarMaple.gif>

Physical Description:

Growth Habit: Sugar maple grows best in moist, upland soils. The bark on young trees is gray, close, smooth, firm becoming furrowed into long irregular plates lifting along one edge. The bark on older trees is deeply furrowed and light to darker gray. The twigs are slender, shining and the color of maple syrup. The leaves are opposite, 3-5 inches long and fully as wide, from 3-5 shallow lobes with widespread coarse teeth, dark green in color above and paler green below; the clefts are rounded at the base. The winter buds are very narrow, sharp-pointed, brown in color. The terminated buds are much longer than the lateral. The sides of the terminal lobe are parallel or divergent and the notches between the lobes are rounded.

Height: In the forest, the sugar maple grows 60-70 feet and has a diameter of 20-30 inches. Extremely large species have reached more than 130 feet.

Shape: The top is short and spreading. In the open, the branches begin 8-10 feet up, forming an egg-shaped head when the tree is young and has a broad rounded top when older.

Fruit/Seed Description/Dispersal Methods:

Sugar maple is monoecious or dioecious. The flowers are pendulous on long, slender, hairy stalks in clusters. They are greenish yellow and appear with the leaves. Each drooping cluster contains 8-14 flowers. The fruit is paired, in clusters, baseball shaped with wings and about 1 inch long. It ripens in September. The seeds join each other in a straight line and the wings turn down almost at right angles.

Range within Maine:

The sugar maple is found abundantly throughout the state in moist, rocky slopes. This species is hardy to Zone 4.

Distinguishing Features:

Distinguishing features of the sugar maple include the rounded cleft between the lobes of the leaves; the sharp-pointed brown buds and brown twigs. In the autumn, the leaves turn various shades of scarlet, orange or yellow.

Interesting Facts:

The sugar maple is the primary source for maple sugar and syrup. The wood is of a high grade. It is hard, strong, close-grained and tough with a fine, satiny surface. The wood is in great demand for flooring, veneer, and furniture, especially the “birds-eye” and curly patterned. Other uses include fuel, pulp, shoe lasts, canoe paddles and railroad ties.

Relationship to Wildlife:

Deer, moose and the snowshoe hare all browse on the sugar maple. Red, gray and flying squirrels feed on the seeds, buds, twigs and leaves. Porcupines consume the bark and can girdle the upper stem. Numerous birds use the tree for nesting.

Landscape Use:

The sugar maple is an attractive street or ornamental tree. It is however, sensitive to road salt.

Common Problems or Pests of the Tree in Maine:

Pests of the sugar maple include bud miners, aphids, borers, the gypsy moth, tent caterpillar, linden looper, and cankerworms. It is also susceptible to cankers, root rot and wilt.

References:

Forest Trees of Maine, Twelfth Edition. Maine Forest Service/Department of Conservation. 1995.

Know Your Trees. Cope, J.A. and F.E. Winch. Cornell Cooperative Extension. 1992.

Silvics of North America: www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/silvics_manual U.S. Department of Agriculture/Forest Service.



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