

# Maine Tree Species Fact Sheet

**Common Name:** Horsechestnut (Common Horsechestnut, European Horsechestnut)

**Botanical Name:** *Aesculus hippocastanum*



[http://www.mdidea.com/products/new/horse\\_chestnut01.jpg](http://www.mdidea.com/products/new/horse_chestnut01.jpg)

**Tree Type:** Deciduous

## **Physical Description:**

**Growth Habit:** The horsechestnut is a medium growing large shade tree. It grows best in rich, moist, well-drained soil. The bark is dark gray to brown; it becomes shallowly fissured into regular plate-like scales and resembles the bark of apple trees. On old trunks the bark exfoliates in plates and exposes an orangish-brown inner bark. The leaves are opposite and palmately compound with 7 leaflets (sometimes 5). Each leaflet is 4 to 10 inches long and obovate with an acuminate tip. The leaves are light green as they unfold and turn dark green at maturity. The leaf veins are impressed in the leaflets, making them appear corrugated. The buds are large, dark reddish brown and shiny with a sticky, gum-like substance.

**Height:** The horsechestnut usually grows to a height of 50-75 feet, although it can grow to be 100 feet or larger.

**Shape:** The horsechestnut has an upright oval to rounded outline, which is very striking, especially as the new leaves emerge. The lower branches hang down with the branch tips turning upward.

## **Fruit/Seed Description/Dispersal Methods:**

The flowers are perfect, and each one has 4 or 5 petals with a blotch color at the base, which starts yellowish and ends reddish. They are borne in 5 to 12 inch long and 2 to 5 inch wide terminal panicles in late spring, and are very showy. The fruit is rounded, spiny, and green with up to three glossy brown seeds. The fruit is poisonous when eaten.

## **Range within Maine:**

The horsechestnut is not a native tree and it is generally planted as a shade and ornamental tree. This species is hardy to Zone 4.

## **Distinguishing Features:**

The buds are large, resinous and reddish-brown. The leaves are large, palmately compound and each has seven leaflets with impressed veins.

## **Interesting Features:**

The wood is soft, light, and close-grained. In Europe it is used for carving and veneer.

## **Relationship to Wildlife:**

This tree is little used by wildlife, although hungry squirrels will sometimes eat the seeds.

## **Landscape Use:**

Because it is such a large tree, the horsechestnut is not recommended for small, residential properties. It is more suited for parks, golf courses and larger areas.

## **Common Problems or Pests of the Tree in Maine:**

This species is affected by leaf blotch, powdery mildew, leaf spot, wood rot, anthracnose, canker, walnut scale, Japanese beetle, bagworm, flat-headed borer, comstock mealybug, and the white-marked tussock moth.

## **References:**

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

*Manual of Woody Landscape Plants, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition.* Dirr, Michael A. Publishing L.L.C. 1998.

*Smithsonian Handbook: Trees.* Coombs, Allen J. Dorling Kindersly. 2002.

*The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Trees.* More, David and John White. Timber Press. 2002.

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<http://www.canr.uconn.edu/plsci/mbrand/a/aeship/aeship3.html>

