

Maine Tree Species Fact Sheet

Common Name: Silver Maple (Soft, White and River Maple)

Botanical Name: *Acer Saccharinum*

Tree Type: Deciduous

Physical Description:

Growth Habit: Silver maple is a long-lived, fast-growing, medium tree. The trunk is often separated into several upright branches near the ground. The crown is usually open and rounded. The bark of young stems is smooth; it becomes darker and furrowed to flaky on older stems. The root system is shallow and fibrous. The leaves are opposite, simple, 3-6 inches across, 5-lobed and the edges are irregular and sharply toothed. They are bright green above, and silvery white beneath and pubescent when young.

Height: Silver maple grows to a height of 60-80 feet with a trunk diameter of 2-3 feet.

Shape: Silver maple is an upright tree with strong spreading branches forming an oval to rounded crown with pendulous branchlets that turn up at the ends.

Fruit/Seed Description/Dispersal Methods:

Silver maple is monoecious. The greenish yellow to red flowers are without petals and open before the leaves appear. The fruit is a samara with wings spreading at an 80 to 90 degree angle, which ripens in the spring.

Range within Maine:

Silver maple is a common tree found throughout the state except along the coast. It grows largely on sandy banks along streams. This tree is hardy to Zone 3.

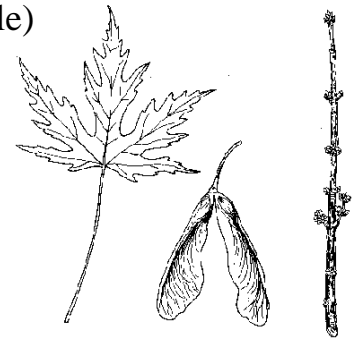
Distinguishing Features:

The bark is furrowed, separated into large thin scales, and is reddish brown in color. The twigs are curved upward at the tip, orange or red-brown above and green below, slender, with a bitter taste and rank odor when broken.

Interesting Features:

Silver maple wood is moderately hard, brittle, and close-grained. It is not as heavy or hard as that of sugar maple and is used for furniture, boxes, crates and paneling.

The sap can be used to make maple syrup.



Relationship to Wildlife:

Many birds, and small mammals, especially squirrels and chipmunks, eat silver maple seeds. White-tailed deer and rabbits browse the foliage. The soft wood of silver maple has a tendency to develop cavities which are used by cavity-nesting birds and mammals, and which also provide shelter for raccoons, opossums, squirrels, owls and woodpeckers.

Landscape Use:

Silver maple has been planted as an ornamental, but the limbs are easily broken in ice and snowstorms. Its use as an ornamental tree has declined due to breakage, tendency to rot, and prolific sprouting. The shallow roots invade water systems, the seeds are a nuisance, and it sheds a lot of twigs.

Common Problems of Pests of the Tree in Maine:

Silver maple is subject to damage by winds, ice, wood rot and insects. Its soft wood renders it susceptible to a number of wood rotting fungi. It is also susceptible to leaf molds and wilts, cankers, leafhoppers, borers, and many other pests.

References:

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

Manual of Woody Landscape Plants, 5th Edition. Dirr, Michael A. Publishing L.L.C. 1998.

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<http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/tree/acesah/all.html>



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