

Silver Maple (*Acer saccharinum*)

Silver maple is a large shade tree in the Sapindaceae (soapberry) family. It can grow up to 70 feet and have a spread of up to 50 feet. It gets its common name from the silvery undersides of its leaves. It is native to eastern North America and is often found in flood plains, along streams or rivers, or low-lying woodlands. It has attractive gray to dark brown bark that as the tree matures develops a shaggy appearance as the bark develops long thin flaky scales that exfoliate at the ends. This tree grows at a rapid pace and has a graceful form, making it once a very popular landscape tree. It has fallen out of favor recently because of its weak wood and tendency toward breakage.

Early settlers in the Ohio Valley found the sap from the silver maple to be superior to other maple trees for sugar quality, but production was too slow for commercial purposes. The trees were a staple in many new towns and homesteads on the frontier because of their rapid growth (for quick shade) and ability to adapt to a variety of soil conditions.

The Silver Maple typically will not be used in the urban forest as it grows very fast and is somewhat weak wooded as a result. Perhaps the worst thing about this tree is how aggressive the root system is.