

Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*)

The Sugar Maple is a large tree with rounded, dense crown and striking, multicolored foliage in autumn. It typically grows to 60-75 feet but this popular hardwood can grow much taller in the wild. The bark is smooth in youth, becoming quite shaggy with age. Its straight, central trunk; wide-spreading branches; and pointed crown are all attractive landscape characteristics but are less noted than the species' brilliant red, yellow and orange fall foliage. One of the best of the larger shade trees, the Sugar Maple is Canada's national tree, as represented by the "maple leaf" on its flag.

Maples, particularly Sugar Maple, are among the leading furniture woods. This species is used also for flooring, boxes and crates, and veneer. Some trees develop special grain patterns, including birdseye maple with dots suggesting the eyes of birds, and curly and fiddleback maple, with wavy annual rings. Such variations in grain are in great demand. The boiled concentrated sap is the commercial source of maple sugar and syrup, a use colonists learned from the Indians. Each tree yields between 5 and 60 gallons of sap per year; about 32 gallons of sap make 1 gallon of syrup or 4 1/2 pounds of sugar.

The Sugar Maple was a favorite street and park tree during the 19th century because it was easy to propagate and transplant, is fairly fast-growing, and has beautiful fall color. However, it proved too delicate to continue in that role after the rise of automobile-induced pollution and was replaced by other hardier species. It is intolerant of road salt.