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RECOGNIZING POPULAR MAPLES

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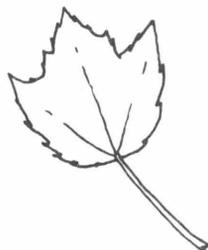
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For years maples have graced streets and residential properties, providing cool shade and beauty of form and foliage. The proliferation of new varieties with sundry shapes has made the identification of the common species more difficult. Listed here are the most reliable methods for identifying the more popular maples by their leaves.



Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*) is one of the easiest to identify because of its milky sap; all other maples listed here, with the exception of one (*A. campestre*), have clear sap. The best method of observing this is by removing a leaf and squeezing the thickened basal portion of the petiole. The typical form of Norway Maple is a regular broad oval. The Crimson King Norway Maple, because of its dark maroon foliage color, is often confused for the Red Maple listed below. The Red Maple, however, has green foliage and clear sap.



Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*) can be distinguished by its rounded leaf base and the three terminal pointed lobes of approximately equal length. The leaf margin has a saw-toothed appearance and the sinuses between the lobes form a broad, shallow "V." Particularly on sunny parts of the tree, the leaf petiole is often red.



Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*), prized for its vivid fall color, is perhaps the most difficult to identify. Its leaf margin is smooth with sparse pointed teeth. Whereas the Norway Maple has five large lobes, the Sugar Maple has three with two reduced lobes at the base. Hence, the Sugar Maple leaf is the more narrow of the two, and, of course, has clear sap. The form of the Sugar Maple is a rather regular upright oval.



Silver Maple (*Acer saccharinum*) is not recommended for urban planting because of its sewer-loving roots and the tendency to form narrow, brittle crotches. However, it is widely planted because of its fast growth rate. Two features are distinguishing: the very deeply-cut sinuses between the lobes and the prominent silver coloration of the leaf undersurface.



Hedge Maple (*Acer campestre*), like the Norway Maple, has white sap. In addition, its leaf is small and has five short, blunt lobes with smooth margins. Although this tree has no fall color, its dense growth habit makes it an excellent plant for a clipped hedge or for screening.



Amur Maple (*Acer ginnala*) is unique in that its terminal lobe is very conspicuously elongated in relation to the two lateral lobes. The leaf margin is saw-toothed and the leaf base is rounded somewhat like Red Maple. The fall color is brilliant scarlet and while the leaves are still green, the fruit turns a bright red for an interesting effect. This is another good small tree for specimen use or for screening.



Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum*) is so highly regarded as an ornamental tree that there are hundreds of variants available. The leaves are quite variable in shape, but generally possess 5-9 pointed, saw-toothed lobes. The lobes are arranged in a radial fashion like fingers on a hand. The leaf color varies depending upon variety, but generally is green, dark red, or bronze-colored.



Box-Elder (*Acer negundo*) is without fall color, but grows in the most difficult sites. Its fast growth creates a fast screen until a more desirable species can be established. This is the only maple discussed here which has compound leaves. The leaflets are 3 to 5 in number, being irregularly and sparsely toothed. It is helpful to note that the leaves are arranged opposite from one another on green twigs.

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