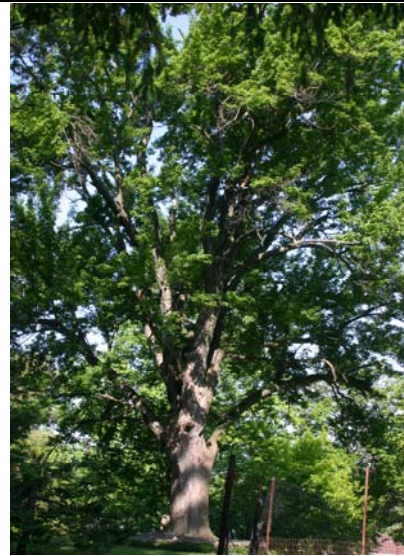


# Red Maple

*Acer rubrum*

Soft Maple, Swamp Maple

Red Maple is the quintessential fall foliage tree of New England. It is widely distributed across a native habitat ranging from Newfoundland to Florida and west to the Mississippi. It's branches are brittle and susceptible to ice and wind damage often yielding a poorly formed tree in harsh climates. Though a distant second to the Sugar Maple, Red Maple sap can produce maple syrup. Red Maple is rapid growing, especially in its early years, though relatively short lived, generally succumbing to disease. It will grow across widely varied habitats. Known as soft maple, its wood is less desirable than Sugar Maple, but is often substituted. It is highly prized as browse for wildlife and fresh growth is attractive to deer. The street of my boyhood home was lined with Red Maple and there was a particularly impressive specimen in the south yard.



## Identification

### Leaves

Opposite, 3-5 palmate lobes with serrate margins. Sinuses relatively shallow. Light green above, nearly white below; brilliant red in autumn.



### Bark/Wood

Bark of young trees is smooth and gray, with age, becomes darker and breaks into long scaly plates. Wood close grained and lightly colored.



### Flower/Fruit

Monoecious; tiny, perfect red flowers early spring. Double samara half inch fruit with divergent wings appear May - June. Bears as young as 4 yrs.



### Form

Medium sized. Bole generally clear under competition, rounded crown in open. Branch breaks. Rooting habit varies with habitat.



### Uses

Wood is often substituted for hard maple, but is softer in texture and not as finely grained. Used in furniture. Red Maple sap is used for syrup and equal in sweetness and quality to Sugar Maple, but much shorter tapping season.

### Ethnobotany

Native Americans used the bark as an analgesic and as a remedy for hives and muscle aches. Tea brewed from the inner bark was used to treat cough and diarrhea.

### Native Distribution

One of the most widely distributed trees of North America, native to all states east of Mississippi.

### Establishment

Generally tolerant of competition. Seeds germinate easily. Susceptible to mechanical damage.

## Growing Conditions and Culture

Mature Size 90'Hx50'Wx3'dbh  
 USDA Zone 4-9  
 Light Requirements Shade to Sun

Soils Diverse  
 Drought Tolerant? Moderate  
 Inundation Tolerant? Moderate

### Pests/Damaging Agents

Many trunk rot fungi and stem diseases attack Red Maple and will create cavities for nesting birds. Leaf diseases are of minor importance. Sensitive to fire damage.

### Similar Species

Sugar Maple  
 Sugar maple flowers are yellow vs red. Sugar Maple lobes have three distinct points; Red Maple more serrated and whitish underneath. Scaly plates on bark of Red Maple. Horseshoe samara v angular.

### Propagation

Seed - no pre-germination requirements and will germinate immediately after ripening.

### Source(s)

Transplants from Walden, NY.