



Sugar Maple (*Acer Saccharum*) – Sweet Tree of Spring



Did you Know?

The Sugar Maple leaf is graced upon the Canadian flag. They are also famous for secreting the deliciously sweet maple syrup all Canadians know and love.

This tree is classified amongst the hardwood deciduous, meaning it loses its leaves in the fall and winter, and grows them out again in spring and throughout summer.

Photo: Louis Landry (2006)

Habitat – Grows best on deep, fertile, moist and well drained soils. Also grows well in deep soils on the Canadian Shield.

Size – Medium-sized to large trees, up to 35 meters high and 90-100 centimeters in diameter. Can reach 200 years old or more.

Range – This tree can be found from the southeast corner of Manitoba, throughout Ontario, Quebec, all of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia extending down into the eastern United States

Status – Ontario Status: S5, Secure. Canadian Status: Secure.

Identification:

The Sugar Maple Tree can be identified fairly easy. Look for opposite leaves that are segmented into five lobes (three large ones in the middle, two on each side) with a dark green colour on the outside and a lighter green on the underside. The lobes are characterized by pointed ends and U-shaped notches between lobes. Its seeds are developed in winged keys. The bark on a young Sugar Maple is dark grayish brown, smooth and firm. As the tree grows, it forms into





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irregular plates lifting along one edge.

Photo: Louis Landry (2006)

Interesting Facts

This tree is most stunning in the fall when its leaves turn into various shades of red, orange and yellow. When temperatures fall and day light time decreases, the tree starts to store its energy and nutrients into its roots instead of in the leaves, and the green chlorophyll diminishes. Anthocyanins, water soluble pigments, appear to help prevent sun damage during the energy transfer. Leaves become bright red when the chlorophyll completely fades away.

The sap of the sugar maple is the principal source of maple syrup and sugar. To make 1 litre of syrup, you need 40 litres of sap.

There are 8 species of native maples in Ontario plus numerous non-native species.

The Sugar Maple Tree on the Niagara Escarpment

The Bruce Trail Conservancy is continually acquiring and protecting land along the Niagara Escarpment, including forested areas with rich soil that provides a perfect place for the Sugar Maple tree to grow. You will be able to see this tree almost anywhere along the Niagara Escarpment and the Bruce Trail. In fact Sugar Maple has been recorded on every property that the BTC owns or manages.

One of the Bruce Trail Heritage Trees is a Sugar Maple and can be seen in Caledon Hills by Orangeville/Mono on Map 18 of the Bruce Trail Reference Guide on the Glacier Valley Side Trail. This specific tree is about 201 years old (this means that it sprouted before the maple leaf was featured on the Canadian Flag), with a diameter of 102 centimeters.

