

Sugar Maple

Acer saccharum

Long-lived sugar maple is famously the main source of maple syrup, as the sugars in its sap are more concentrated than in other maple species. Its leaves have five points, and turn red, orange, or yellow in the fall. Its seeds (called “samaras”) are eaten by songbirds, squirrels, turkeys, and other game birds. Rabbits and deer browse on the seedlings and young branches. Sugar maple wood is hard and strong, used commercially for flooring, furniture, and firewood under the name of hard or rock maple.

Height: 70’ - 100’

Sugar maple is slow-growing, and after reaching several feet in height, can remain stagnant for many years (possibly up to 120) until it gets enough sunlight to grow tall.

Planting environment:

Soil: Sandy, loamy, or silt loam soils.

Soil moisture: Moist soils with good drainage; not flooded or dry

Sunlight: Full sun to full shade (between <4 and >6 hours per day).

In forests, sugar maples usually produce enough seeds that it’s not necessary to plant. If planting, however, space seedlings at least 10’ – 15’ apart, depending on if you plan to thin them later. Seedlings are very tolerant of shade but will need light to grow taller.

Maintenance:

Clear thick brush or vegetation to encourage growth. Monitor for cracks or splits from winter ice formation, and consider pruning forked branches.

Lifespan: up to 300 or 400 years

Top diseases/pests:

1. Verticillium wilt
2. Ice/wind damage

