



***Acer rubrum* L.**

Red maple, swamp maple

Aceraceae (Maple Family)

Blooming season: March-May

Plant:

Michigan Big Tree record: 223" girth at 4.5' high;
117' height, St. Clair County.

Medium sized tree: 15-21 m tall; 50-80 cm
diameter.

Shallow root system.

Mature trees have flaky or smooth bark.

Twigs reddish, dotted with noticeable lenticels.

Wood hard, not particularly strong.

Easily sprouts from cut burned trees.



Leaves:

Opposite, deciduous.

Usually 3 lobes, sometimes 5; not deeply indented.

Lobes coarsely toothed.

Newly opened leaves are red, turning bright green above, pale green below.

Fall color: red.

Petioles consistently red.

Flower:

Monoecious, but sometimes has perfect flowers on same tree.

Flowers open before leaves, in small lateral clusters.

Female flowers: red, 0.5 cm, 4-5 petals, 4-5 sepals.

Male flowers: orange, 0.5 cm, 5-8 stamens.

Fruit:

Samara (winged seed) in pairs, usually connected at less than a right angle.

Ripens May-June.

Smooth, 2 cm long, red when immature, brown when ripe.



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Can be confused with: Silver maple, *Acer saccharinum*, which has leaves more deeply lobed, light green above, silvery white below, with samaras less regularly shaped and flowers yellowish green.

Geographic range:

Type specimen location:

State: Throughout.

Regional: Eastern U.S., having the widest distribution of maples there; reaches its greatest size in the Ohio River basin.

Habitat:

Local: Throughout, but more frequent in Creek Bed and North-facing Slope Habitats.

Regional: Best growth in somewhat wet lowlands, but does reasonably well on dryer soils. In the more northern areas it is often found in drier and sandier conditions.

Common local companions:

Depending on habitat, but here it is witch-hazel. Other habitats it may be beech, ash, elm, and birch.

Usages:

Human: Medicinal uses made of this tree by Native Americans included using the bark for dysentery and cramp remedies, and the inner bark for preparing an eyewash. For food purposes they used this tree, as well as the sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), to obtain maple syrup and sugar, and are reported to have used the inner bark as a bread ingredient. They taught the colonials to make a purple dye from rotten wood, and a blue dye from the bark; the colonists varied the mordant to obtain black, brown and green colors. Another use taught was that of making a decoction to deodorize animal traps.

Other animal: Young sprouts are a favorite food of white-tailed deer. The seeds are eaten by squirrels and chipmunks, often being stored for later eating.

Why is it called *that*? *Acer* is Latin for sharp, perhaps in reference to the appearance of the leaves; *rubrum* is Latin for red, referring to its flowers, new leaves, petioles, and leaves in the fall. Maple is the Anglo-Saxon word for maple tree.