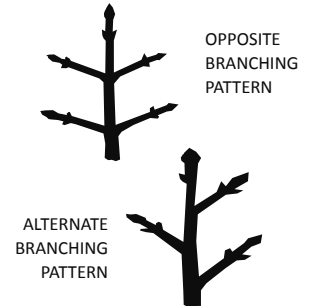


TREE OF THE MONTH

Silver Maple • *Acer saccharum*

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS Silver maples are native to eastern North America. Maple trees, along with dogwoods, ashes, and non-native horse chestnuts, have an opposite branching pattern. Maple twigs are notable for their often reddish buds and cluster of three terminal buds (at the end of each twig). When planted in a yard or open field, silver maples grow in a beautiful, open habit with a majestic curved crown. Their bark is smooth gray to brown on twigs and branches. The twigs often have an unpleasant smell when crushed. On mature trees, silver maple bark is gray and shaggy.



SPRING CROP

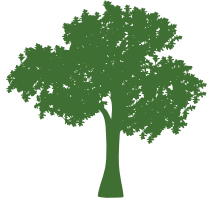
Like all maples, fertilized silver maple flowers mature into little nuts with two wings which are called samara. Silver maple and its cousin red maple (*Acer rubrum*) are the only maples which produce their fruit crop in the spring instead of the fall.



EARLY BLOOMERS In the spring, silver maples are one of the first trees to flower – sometimes as early as February. Silver maples' early-produced pollen may be important to the biology of bees and other pollen-dependent insects. Most silver maples are either male or female but there are some exceptions to this rule where some trees may just have a majority of one sex over the other and some flowers may be bisexual. The scientific term for this kind of plant is polygamo-dioecious. Dioecious comes from the Greek meaning “two houses” (two sexes).

LEAVES Silver maples' common name comes from the silvery underside of their leaves, which contrasts to the shiny green topsides. The leaves are similar in shape to the 'typical' maple leaf except that the lobes are more deeply cut and angular.





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ENVIRONMENT Silver maples like to grow along river banks and in floodplains. They are happiest in the alluvial (floodplain) soil that drains well and is full of nutrients. Silver maples don't mind "having their feet wet" – seedlings have been documented surviving growing seasons that have 60 days of continuously saturated soil.

ECOSYSTEM Many animals rely on silver maples for food. Birds, including grosbeaks, finches, turkeys, and ducks, eat the nuts. Squirrels eat the buds in late winter when other food sources have been exhausted. Because of their preference for alluvial sites, silver maple bark is important for beavers and rabbits like their leaves.

COMMON NAMES silver maple, river maple, silverleaf maple, swamp maple, white maple, soft maple, water maple

Benefits of Urban Trees
Research has linked the presence of urban trees to...

The Nature Conservancy

- REDUCING RATES** of cardiac disease, strokes, and asthma due to improved air quality
- PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY** including habitat for migrating birds and pollinators
- REDUCING OBESITY LEVELS** by increasing physical activity including walking and cycling
- MANAGING STORMWATER,** keeping pollutants out of waterways, and reducing urban flooding
- INCREASING** neighborhood property values
- REDUCING STRESS** by helping interrupt thought patterns that lead to anxiety and depression
- FILTERING** up to a third of fine particle pollutants within 300 yards of a tree
- COOLING** city streets by 2-4° F, reducing deaths from heat and cutting energy use