

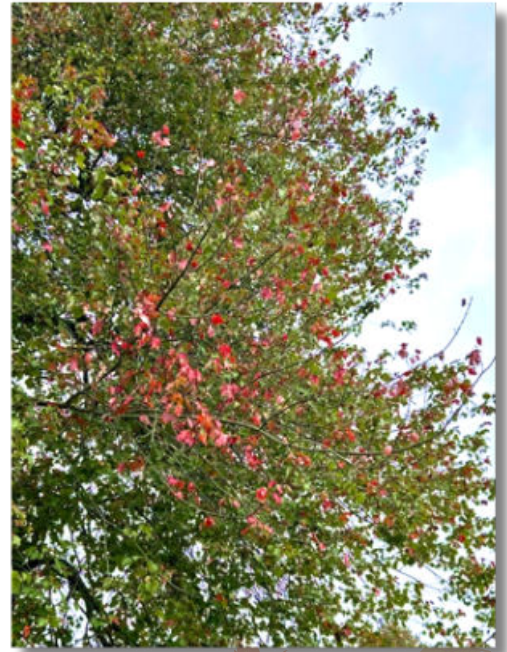
October Tree of the Month

Red Maple (*Acer Rebrum*)

Location 15 (ID 34)

Few trees announce the arrival of autumn as dramatically as the Red Maple. Native to much of eastern and central North America, it is one of the most common and recognizable trees in our region. Its brilliant fall color—from yellow and orange to vivid scarlet—makes it a favorite of anyone who enjoys the changing seasons.

Red Maple is an extremely adaptable tree, growing in various soils and in wet, moist or surprisingly dry locations. It is seen in forests, wetlands, fields, and residential settings. The tree grows from 90-120 feet tall with a span of roughly 50 feet. Its leaves are palmate with 3-5 lobes and serrated edges. The trunk is gray, darkening and developing ridges and furrows with age. The wood is considered a tonewood—it carries sound waves well—and is used in making musical instruments, in addition to furniture. It can provide sap for maple syrup, although Sugar Maples are favored for their longer sap-producing season.



The tree's name doesn't come only from its fall foliage. Its flowers, petioles, twigs, and seeds are all red to varying degrees. Red Maples have red flowers in early spring, reddish seeds, and often reddish twigs and leaf stalks. The seeds are contained in winged fruits, called samaras, or perhaps you called them “helicopters” or “whirlybirds,” and played with them as children. The shape allows them to spin and be carried by the wind, inspiring the U.S. Army to develop an airdrop supply carrier based on the design.

Red Maple feeds and shelters birds and small mammals, too. It is easy to see why this tree is so well loved. While we have 19 numbered specimens of Red Maple on our grounds today, we know that Pearl Buck, who was very involved in the landscaping of her property, purchased 7 between 1937 and 1939; this beautiful tree by our barn could be one of them