

Acer saccharinum - Silver Maple (*Aceraceae*)

Acer saccharinum is a common native shade tree in the north and eastern part of the U.S. Silver Maple is valued for its fast growth, quick establishment, and stress tolerance, which is unfortunately accompanied by weak wood and susceptibility to breakage in storms.

Form



- tolerates compacted soil and does well under heat and humidity
- abundantly available in B&B or bare root

Foliage

- opposite arrangement; 5-lobed and deeply sinuate, with the basal 2 usually smaller than the upper 3, each of the 5 lobes sharply and deeply incised but not serrated; palmate venation
- medium green upper sides and silvery undersides; a long petiole and truncate base makes the leaf flutter in the wind for a bicolor effect; blade about 5" long and wide
- autumn color –yellowish-green; poor for a Maple



Flowers

- globular clusters of inflorescences from Jan. through Mar. (long before the foliage), red or yellow; the first large common tree to bloom in spring
- flowers often frozen on the tree and resulting in poor fruit set in northern climates

FEATURES

- large tree; to 60' tall x 40' wide
- upright oval in youth, developing several main branches with age
- rapid growth rate

Culture

- full sun
- urban tolerant; prefers moist, slightly acid soils but will tolerate dry or wet neutral sites

Fruit

- 2 joined samaras per stalk, having semi-divergent wings, in pendulous clusters from the stems, maturing to yellow-brown in Apr.-May and germinating immediately

Twigs

- brown-red, with red buds in winter

Trunk

- light brown to light gray branches becoming gray-silver trunks, fissuring in youth

USAGE

Function

- shade tree

Texture

- medium in foliage and bold when bare

Assets

- rapid vigorous establishment and quick shade
- exfoliating strips of gray-silver bark with age
- wet site or dry site tolerant; urban tolerant; poor soil tolerant

Liabilities

- shallow root system surfaces with age
- Verticillium wilt susceptibility
- poor autumn color
- invasive via seedling spread
- weak wood is prone to storm damage
- twig litter beneath older trees due to self-shading intolerance
- trunk rot

NOTE: Some municipalities have banned the planting of Silver Maples

on public properties

Habitats

- Zones 3 to 9
- Native to the Eastern & Central U.S.

SELECTIONS

Alternates

- large shade trees; trees with rapid growth under adverse conditions (often used as a shade tree for new homes): *Fraxinus pennsylvanica*, *Gleditsia triacanthos* var. *inermis*, etc.

Cultivars - Variants - Related species

several cultivars selected for better branching, upright or rounded habit, or cutleaf forms

- Acer saccharinum* 'Silver Queen' - a vigorous growing selection, propagated by cuttings (own root), 50' x 40', upright oval shape, golden yellow autumn color

- *Acer saccharinum* 'Skinner' - a cutleaf form having a more upright, horizontal branching habit than other cutleaf varieties. Interesting specimen tree.

