Sassafras albidum - Sassafras (Lauraceae)

*Sassafras albidum* is an attractive native American tree known for spectacular autumn color and "mitten" leaves. Sassafras can naturalize in a landscaped area.

**FEATURES**

**Form**
- deciduous tree
- medium size (up to 30-60' tall x 25-40' wide)
- pyramidal in youth, becoming oval in maturity but with an irregular silhouette; tends to sucker
- moderate growth rate, but long-lived

**Culture**
- full sun to partial shade
- performs best in neutral to slightly acidic soils that are deep and fertile, but tolerates a wide range of soil conditions including wet soils and some moderately dry soils
- rare availability as B&B or container
- difficult to transplant because of coarse root system
- susceptible to attack by pests and diseases, especially if in a stressful environment

**Foliage**
- simple
- alternate
- elliptic to oval
- may be lobed (2-3 lobes, in the shape of a "mitten")
- smooth margins
- 2-4" long
- fragrant when crushed; smell somewhat of orange or vanilla
- bright green above, blue-green below in summer
- autumn color can be spectacular: orange, red or yellow; especially if plant is in full sun

**Flowers**
- inconspicuous flowers before the foliage
- in spring
- yellow
- terminal panicles

**Fruits**
- fleshy, 0.5" round berries
- deep blue
- quickly consumed by wildlife

**Twigs**
- green
- medium thickness

**Trunk**
- can be trained to grow with multiple trunks
- gray
- fissured

**USAGE**

**Function**
- specimen or shade tree for excellent autumn color
- street tree and parking lot islands
- appropriate in "naturalistic landscapes"

**Texture**
- medium in foliage and when bare

**Assets**
- spectacular autumn color, if grown in full sun

**Liabilities**
- susceptible to various insects (Japanese beetle, promethea moth, sassafras weevil, and scales)
- affected by some diseases (cankers, mildew, leaf spots, wilt, root rot)
- recovers slowly from transplant

**Habitat**
- Zones 5 to 8
- Native to Eastern U.S. (west to Michigan and Texas, south to Georgia, Alabama)

**SELECTIONS**

**Alternates**
- trees with spectacular autumn color (*Acer rubrum, Liquidambar styraciflua, Nyssa sylvatica*, etc.)

**Cultivars - Variants - Related species**
- straight species is the only form available

**Note:** roots are used as a traditional medicine and can be extracted or seeped to prepare a tea or fermented to produce a root beer