

## Red Maple *Acer rubrum*

Red Maple, Drummond Maple, Trident Maple, Swamp Maple, Water Maple, Scarlet Maple, Soft Maple.

Regardless of what it's called, the tree displays red striking coloring during all seasons of the year. In Corkscrew, it is the second largest native tree, topped only by the Bald Cypress.

It has the distinction of having the greatest north to south distribution of all trees on the east coast. It's found from Hudson Bay to the Everglades. Red Maple can probably thrive on a wider range of soil types, textures, moisture, pH, and elevation than any other forest species in North America. Its western range is limited only by the dry climate of the prairie states.

Of all of the maples, it has the widest tolerance to climatic conditions. It grows on diverse sites, from dry ridges and southwest slopes to peat bogs and swamps. Although it develops best on moderately well-drained, moist sites at low to intermediate elevations, it is common in mountainous country on the drier ridges and on south and west exposures of upper slopes. It is also common in slow-draining flats and depressions, and along small sluggish streams. In the deep south, it is almost exclusively a swamp species.

Red Maple shows an early tendency to develop root system characteristics according to soil conditions, enabling it to grow on the greatly different sites. On wet sites, red maple seedlings produce short taproots with long, well-developed laterals. On dry sites, they develop long taproots with much shorter laterals.

Red Maple seedlings were very tolerant of flooding, showing no sign of stem or leaf damage after 60 days of flooding. This capacity to withstand conditions of wetness or dryness enables survival and growth on the wide variety of conditions where it occurs.

However, Red Maple is very sensitive to fire injury, and even large trees can die back in a fire of moderate intensity. The fire-killed trees sprout vigorously, so Red Maple may become a



more important stand component after a fire than before one.

It some times has relatively weak wood and thus can be subject to storm and ice damage. Many of the large maples in Corkscrew are the first to go over in tropical storms and hurricanes.

Red Maple is one of the first trees to flower in the spring, generally several weeks before vegetative bud break. The flowers are small, with slender stalks, red or rarely yellowish, with petals. Trees can flower and bear seed at an early age; 4-year-old trees have produced seed. Flowering occurs on all branches in the well-lit upper portion of the crown. Characteristically, the nonflowering branches are slow growing and lack vigor.

The species is polygamo-dioecious. Thus, some trees are entirely male, producing no seeds; some are entirely female; and some are monoecious, bearing both male and female flowers.

On monoecious trees, functioning male and female flowers usually are separated on different branches. Sex of the flower is not a function of tree vigor. The species shows a tendency toward dioeciousness rather than toward dichogamy.

A seed crop occurs almost every year, and on an average, a good to bumper crop occurs once in every two years. Red Maple is generally very fruitful. The fruit, a double samara, ripens from April to June before leaf development is complete. After ripening, seeds are dispersed for a one to two week period during April through July. The seed does not require pregermination treatment and can germinate immediately after ripening.

Red Maple has many useful and beneficial aspects. It is prized as an ornamental shade tree because of its rapid growth.

Although the hard maples, sugar and black maple, are principally used for syrup production, Red Maple is also suitable. When sap and syrup from Sugar Maple were compared with those of Red, Silver, and Norway Maple, they were found to be equal in sweetness, flavor, and quality. Pioneers once made ink and cinnamon-brown and black dyes from an extract of the Red Maple bark, and it is also a highly desirable wildlife browse food. White-tailed Deer especially use the current season's growth as an important source of winter food.