Acer barbatum
Florida Maple

INTRODUCTION

The Florida Maple (Acer saccharum var. floridum) -- formerly Acer barbatum -- is no longer considered to be a separate species (Fig. 1). The deciduous Florida Maple reaches 50 to 60 feet in height but is most often seen at 20 to 30 feet. Displaying muted yellow or orange fall leaf color, Florida Maple is ideal for use as a specimen, park or street tree, or for use in woodland areas. The round to oval growth habit makes it an ideal shade or street tree. The edges of the leaves turn under slightly giving them a distinct appearance. The trunk on older specimens resembles that on the Northern Sugar Maple, which is an attractive gray with longitudinal ribs.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: Acer barbatum
Pronunciation: AY-ser bar-BAY-tum
Common name(s): Florida Maple, Southern Sugar Maple
Family: Aceraceae
USDA hardiness zones: 6B through 9A (Fig. 2)
Origin: native to North America
Uses: Bonsai; wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); medium-sized tree lawns (4-6 feet wide); recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; shade tree; residential street tree
Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

DESCRIPTION

Height: 50 to 60 feet
Spread: 25 to 40 feet
Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms
Crown shape: oval; round
Crown density: moderate

Figure 1. Middle-aged Florida Maple.
**Acer barbatum -- Florida Maple**

**Figure 2.** Shaded area represents potential planting range.

**Growth rate:** medium  
**Texture:** medium

**Foliage**

- **Leaf arrangement:** opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)  
- **Leaf type:** simple  
- **Leaf margin:** lobed; entire; undulate  
- **Leaf shape:** star-shaped  
- **Leaf venation:** palmate  
- **Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous  
- **Leaf blade length:** 2 to 4 inches  
- **Leaf color:** green  
- **Fall color:** orange; yellow  
- **Fall characteristic:** showy

**Flower**

- **Flower color:** red  
- **Flower characteristics:** inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

**Fruit**

- **Fruit shape:** oval  
- **Fruit length:** 1 to 3 inches  
- **Fruit covering:** dry or hard  
- **Fruit color:** brown; green  
- **Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

**Trunk and Branches**

- **Trunk/bark/branches:** grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns  
- **Pruning requirement:** needs little pruning to develop a strong structure  
- **Breakage:** resistant  
- **Current year twig color:** brown  
- **Current year twig thickness:** medium

**Culture**

- **Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; acidic; occasionally wet; well-drained
Drought tolerance: high
Aerosol salt tolerance: none

Other
Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem
Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers
Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible
Pest resistance: no pests are normally seen on the tree

USE AND MANAGEMENT
Growing in full sun or partial shade, Florida Maple will tolerate a wide variety of soil types but is not salt-tolerant. Established trees look better when given some irrigation during dry weather. While leaves will eventually fall, many remain in the central portion of the canopy for much of the winter giving the tree a somewhat unkempt appearance. The limbs of Maple are strong and not susceptible to wind damage. Roots are often shallow and reach the surface at an early age, even in sandy soil. Plant in an area where grass below it will not need to be mowed so the roots will not be damaged by the mower.

Available cultivars include: ‘Endowment Columnar’, columnar form, red and yellow fall color; ‘Goldspire’, dense, compact, pyramidal form, gold fall color; ‘Majesty’, ovate form, resistant to frost cracking and sun scald, red-orange fall color; and ‘Sweet Shadow Cutleaf’, unusual vase-shaped growth form and variable yellow-orange fall color.

Propagation is by seeds or cuttings.

Pests
Cottony Maple scale, borers, aphids, and gall mites may be problems for Florida Maple.

Diseases
Florida Maple can be susceptible to a wilt disease.