Acer grandidentatum
Bigtooth Maple

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson

INTRODUCTION

This North American native reaches 50 feet in height with a broad, spreading canopy and grayish-brown bark which may be either smooth or scaly (Fig. 1). The 2 to 5-inch-diameter, lustrous, dark green, lobed leaves which have a pale underside are noted for their striking brilliance in fall, when they change into beautiful shades of red, orange, and yellow before dropping. The insignificant, hairy, yellow flowers appear among the leaves in late spring and are followed by the production of one-inch-long, winged seeds.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: Acer grandidentatum
Pronunciation: AY-ser gran-dih-den-TAY-tum
Common name(s): Bigtooth Maple, Rocky Mountain Sugar Maple, Canyon Maple
Family: Aceraceae
USDA hardiness zones: 5 through 8 (Fig. 2)
Origin: native to North America
Uses: large parking lot islands (>200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); reclamation plant; shade tree; specimen; residential street tree
Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

DESCRIPTION

Height: 40 to 50 feet
Spread: 25 to 35 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette
Crown shape: round

Figure 1. Mature Bigtooth Maple.

Crown density: moderate
Growth rate: medium
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: lobed; dentate

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-16, a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Publication date: November 1993.

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**Leaf shape:** star-shaped

**Leaf venation:** palmate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches

**Leaf color:** green

**Fall color:** orange; red; yellow

**Fall characteristic:** showy

**Flower**

**Flower color:** yellow

**Flower characteristics:** inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** elongated

**Fruit length:** .5 to 1 inch

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard

**Fruit color:** green

**Fruit characteristics:** attracts birds; inconspicuous and not showy; no significant litter problem

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** droop as the tree grows, and will require pruning for vehicular or pedestrian clearance beneath the canopy; not particularly showy; should be grown with a single leader; no thorns

**Pruning requirement:** requires pruning to develop strong structure

**Breakage:** resistant

**Current year twig color:** brown; reddish

**Current year twig thickness:** medium; thin

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun

**Soil tolerances:** clay; loam; sand; acidic; alkaline; well-drained

**Drought tolerance:** moderate

**Aerosol salt tolerance:** none

**Soil salt tolerance:** poor
Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more
Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time
Ozone sensitivity: tolerant
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

This Maple may need some training to develop a dominant central leader. Once selected, this leader should more or less stay dominant. This can make Bigtooth Maple a good candidate for planting along streets in an area with plenty of soil space for root expansion.

Bigtooth Maple will grow in full sun or partial shade and is found most often in its natural habitat in moist, well-drained soils. It tolerates limestone soils well. Plants in the wild grown in open areas have withstood long periods of drought.

Pests

No pests are of major concern.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern.