Acer pseudoplatanus
Sycamore Maple¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

INTRODUCTION

This large deciduous tree is normally seen at 40 to 60 feet in height although Sycamore Maple is capable of reaching over 100 feet in height (Fig. 1). The spreading branches form an oval or rounded canopy and the dark green, three to seven-inch-diameter, lobed leaves do not ordinarily become showy in the fall, changing only to a muted yellow before dropping, but this will vary. The gray to reddish-brown, scaly bark flakes off in small scales to reveal the showy, orange, inner bark. The green, springtime flowers appear in three to six-inch-long hanging panicles among the leaves in late spring and are followed by one to two-inch-long, winged seeds.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: Acer pseudoplatanus
Pronunciation: AY-ser soo-doe-PLAT-uh-nus
Common name(s): Sycamore Maple, Planetree Maple
Family: Aceraceae
USDA hardiness zones: 5 through 7 (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: large parking lot islands (> 200 square feet in size); wide tree lawns (>6 feet wide); shade tree; sidewalk cutout (tree pit)
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree

DESCRIPTION

Height: 60 to 70 feet
Spread: 40 to 60 feet
Crown uniformity: symmetrical canopy with a regular (or smooth) outline, and individuals have more or less identical crown forms
Crown shape: round; spreading
Crown density: moderate
Growth rate: fast
Texture: coarse

1. This document is adapted from Fact Sheet ST-40, 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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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: lobed; serrate
Leaf shape: ovate
Leaf venation: palmate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; showy

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; gray
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; alkaline; well-drained
Drought tolerance: moderate
Aerosol salt tolerance: high
Soil salt tolerance: good

Flower

Flower color: green
Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated
Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches
Fruit covering: dry or hard
Fruit color: green
Other

**Roots:** surface roots are usually not a problem  
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**Outstanding tree:** not particularly outstanding  
**Invasive potential:** No entries found.  
**Ozone sensitivity:** tolerant  
**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** susceptible  
**Pest resistance:** very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect tree health or aesthetics

**Pests**

No pests are of major concern.

**Diseases**

Sycamore Maple is susceptible to trunk and branch cankers.

**USE AND MANAGEMENT**

This is a large tree which requires space to spread. Not for the small landscape, its large, falling leaves and early defoliation in the fall can create a challenge for even the most enthusiastic gardener. Many bags of leaves will be raked from beneath this handsome tree. This tree may be best saved for the park or other large open-space planting site since its coarse texture blends poorly with residential and many commercial landscapes.

Sycamore Maple grows in full sun or partial shade on almost any well-drained soil, acid or alkaline. Sycamore Maple is quite adaptable to various soils and is also highly salt-tolerant. Little pruning is needed to develop a good trunk and branch structure.