

# School-to-Nature



## Sugar Maple Tree

The Sugar Maple is the Wisconsin state tree, by a legislature vote on June 4, 1949. It has also been called hard maple or rock maple. They are common in our area, on Conservancy properties as well as in many home landscapes. Sugar Maples are prized for their brilliant red, orange, and yellow colors in autumn.

The Sugar Maple grows 70-100 feet tall, can be 2-3 feet in diameter, and can live about 100 years. These trees are known for their round shape, dense leaf growth, and for the shape of the leaf. It is called a **palmate** leaf because it is like a hand shape, spread out. Compare your own hand to the photo above.

This tree makes tiny bell-shaped flowers in spring, in reddish or greenish shades. The flowers are food for bees. Two weeks to 6 months later, “winged” seeds appear, often called helicopters or whirlybirds because of the way they twirl when falling to the ground.

Sugar maples are the key to the maple syrup industry. Sap is collected by “tapping” the tree’s trunk and hanging a bucket to collect the sap. It takes 40 gallons of sap to make 1 gallon of maple syrup, because the sap must be slowly boiled to evaporate the liquid. Maple wood has been used for bowling pins, bowling lanes, pool cue shafts, butcher blocks, baseball bats, hunting bows, the backs of stringed instruments, and guitar necks. The wood is dense and heavy, and makes excellent firewood as well.

The maple leaf is the symbol on the Canadian flag.



December 2021 BH / DL