**Acer barbatum: Florida Maple\(^1\)**

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### Introduction

The Florida Maple (*Acer saccharum* var. *floridum*)—formerly *Acer barbatum*—is no longer considered to be a separate species. 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.

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### 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  
**Invasive potential**: little invasive potential  
**Uses**: highway median; shade; street without sidewalk; deck or patio; tree lawn 4–6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft. wide; Bonsai  
**Availability**: not native to North America

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**Figure 1. Middle-aged *Acer barbatum*: Florida maple**  
Credits: Ed Gilman  

**Figure 2. Range**
Description
Height: 50 to 60 feet
Spread: 25 to 40 feet
Crown uniformity: symmetrical
Crown shape: round, oval
Crown density: moderate
Growth rate: moderate
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: not showy

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; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: branches don’t droop; showy; typically one trunk; thorns

Pruning requirement: little required
Breakage: resistant
Current year twig color: brown
Current year twig thickness: medium
Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture
Light requirement: full sun, partial sun, or partial shade
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; acidic; occasionally wet; well-drained
Drought tolerance: high
Aerosol salt tolerance: none

Other
Roots: not a problem
Winter interest: yes
Outstanding tree: no
Ozone sensitivity: unknown
Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible
Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

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.