

Acer rubrum 'October Glory': 'October Glory' Red Maple¹

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Introduction

This cultivar of red maple has an oval to rounded shape and is a fast grower with strong wood, reaching a height of 40 to 50 feet. It and 'Red Sunset' are the most popular red maples in cultivation, probably due to their dependable fall color and vigorous growth. Unless irrigated or on a wet site, it is best used north of USDA hardiness zone 9. Trees are often seen shorter in the southern part of its range unless growing next to a stream or on a wet site. This tree is much preferred over red maple, silver maple, or boxelder when a fast growing maple is needed. The newly emerging leaves and red flowers and fruits signal that spring has come. They appear in December and January in Florida, later in the northern part of its range. The seeds of red maple are quite popular with squirrels and birds. This tree is sometimes confused with red-leaved cultivars of Norway maple.

General Information

Scientific name: *Acer rubrum*

Pronunciation: AY-ser ROO-brum

Common name(s): 'October Glory' red maple

Family: *Aceraceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 5A through 8B (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: reclamation; specimen; Bonsai; highway median; screen; shade; street without sidewalk; deck or patio; tree lawn 4–6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft. wide

Availability: not native to North America

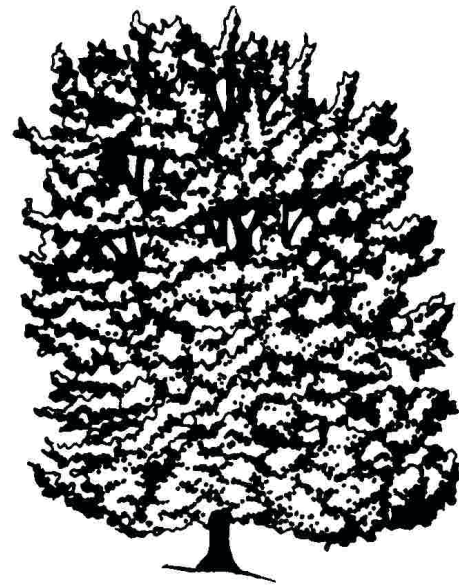


Figure 1. Mature *Acer rubrum* 'October Glory': 'October Glory' Red Maple

Description

Height: 40 to 50 feet

Spread: 25 to 35 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: oval, round

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Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium



Figure 2. Range

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: incised, serrate, lobed

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: palmate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: yellow, orange, red

Fall characteristic: showy

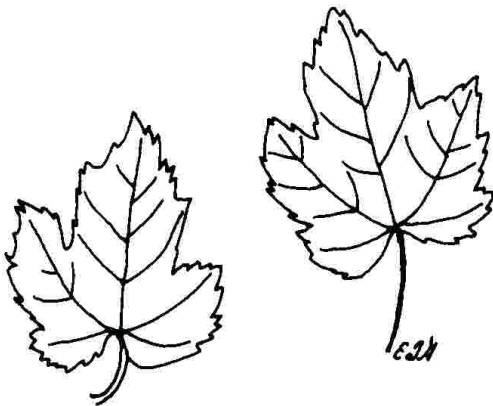


Figure 3. Foliage

Flower

Flower color: red

Flower characteristics: showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: red

Fruit characteristics: attracts squirrels/mammals; showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically one trunk; thorns

Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: gray, reddish

Current year twig thickness: medium

Wood specific gravity: 0.54

Culture

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade

Soil tolerances: sand; loam; clay; acidic; well-drained; extended flooding

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: low

Other

Roots: can form large surface roots

Winter interest: yes

Outstanding tree: yes

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: resistant to pests/diseases

Use and Management

The outstanding ornamental characteristic of 'October Glory' is bright red to orange fall color (sometimes on the same tree) lasting several weeks. It puts on one of the most brilliant displays of any tree late in the fall.

The tree makes the best growth in wet places and has no other particular soil preference, except chlorosis may develop on alkaline soil where it also grows poorly. It is well suited as a street tree in northern and mid-south climates in residential and other suburban areas, but the bark is thin and easily damaged by mowers. Irrigation is often needed to support street tree plantings in well-drained soil in the south. Roots can raise sidewalks as silver maples can, but they have a less aggressive root system and so they make a good street tree. Surface roots beneath the canopy can make mowing difficult.

Red maple is easily transplanted and usually develops surface roots in soil ranging from well-drained sand to clay. It is not especially drought-tolerant, particularly in the southern part of the range, but selected individual trees can

be found growing on dry sites. This trait shows the wide range of genetic diversity in the species. Branches often grow upright through the crown, forming poor attachments to the trunk. These should be removed in the nursery or after planting in the landscape to help prevent branch failure in older trees during storms. Select branches with a wide angle from the trunk and prevent branches from growing larger than half the diameter of the trunk.

A number of other cultivars are listed. Due to graft-incompatibility problems that cause the tree to break apart, preference should be given to cultivars produced on their own roots. In the northern and southern end of the range, choose cultivars with regional adaptation. The cultivars are 'Armstrong'—upright growth habit, almost columnar, somewhat prone to splitting branches due to tight crotches, 50 feet tall; 'Autumn Flame'—45 feet tall, round, above average fall color; 'Bowhall'—upright growth habit, branches form embedded bark, graft incompatibility on grafted trees; 'Gerling'—densely branched, broadly pyramidal, about 35 feet tall when mature; 'Red Sunset'—above average orange to red fall color, does well in the south in USDA hardiness zone 8, probably the best cultivar for the deep south, oval, 50 feet tall; 'Scanlon'—upright growth habit; 'Schlesinger'—good fall color, rapid growth rate; 'Tilford'—globe-shaped crown. Variety *drummondii* is well-suited for USDA hardiness zone 8.

Pests

Aphids infest maples, usually Norway maple, and may be numerous at times. High populations can cause leaf drop. Another sign of heavy aphid infestation is honey dew on lower leaves and objects beneath the tree. Aphids are controlled by spraying or they may be left alone. If not sprayed, predatory insects will bring the aphid population under control.

Scales are an occasional problem on maples. Perhaps the most common is cottony maple scale. The insect forms a cottony mass on the lower sides of branches. Scales are usually controlled with horticultural oil sprays. Scales may also be controlled with well-timed sprays to kill the crawlers.

If borers become a problem it is an indication the tree is not growing well. Controlling borers involves keeping trees healthy. Chemical controls of existing infestations are more difficult. Proper control involves identification of the borer infesting the tree then applying insecticides at the proper time.

Diseases

Girdling roots grow around the base of the trunk rather than growing away from it. As both root and trunk increase in size, the root chokes the trunk. Girdling roots are detected by examining the base of the trunk. The lack of trunk flare at ground level is a symptom. The portion of the trunk above a girdling root does not grow as rapidly as the rest so may be slightly depressed. The offending root may be on the surface or may be just below the sod. The tree crown shows premature fall coloration and death of parts of the tree in more serious cases. If large portions of the tree have died it may not be worth saving. Girdling roots are functional roots so when removed a portion of the tree may die. When the girdling root is large the treatment is as harmful as the problem. After root removal, follow-up treatment includes watering during dry weather. The best treatment for girdling roots is prevention by removing or cutting circling roots at planting or as soon as they are detected on young trees.

Scorch may occur during periods of high temperatures accompanied by wind. Trees with diseased or inadequate root systems will also show scorching. When trees do not get enough water they scorch. Scorch symptoms are light brown or tan dead areas between leaf veins. The symptoms are on all parts of the tree or only on the side exposed to sun and wind. Scorching due to dry soil may be overcome by watering. If scorching is due to an inadequate or diseased root system, watering may have no effect.

Nutrient deficiency symptoms are yellow or yellowish-green leaves with darker green veins. The most commonly deficient nutrient on maple is manganese. Implanting capsules containing a manganese source in the trunk will alleviate the symptoms. Test soil samples to determine if the soil pH is too high for best manganese availability. Plants exposed to weed killers may also show similar symptoms.

Tar spot and a variety of leaf spots cause some concern among homeowners but are rarely serious enough for control.