

***Acer floridanum*: Florida Maple¹**

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Introduction

Florida maple is native to Florida and naturally occurs primarily in the panhandle, with small isolated populations in Central Florida. Some authorities treat Florida maple as a subspecies of sugar maple and call it *Acer saccharum* ssp. *Floridanum*, while other authorities use *Acer barbatum* or *Acer barbatum* ssp. *Floridanum* to refer to Florida maple. The deciduous Florida maple (*Acer floridanum*) 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 suitable 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.

General Information

Scientific name: *Acer floridanum*

Pronunciation: AY-ser flor-i-da-num

Common name(s): Florida maple, southern sugar maple

Family: sapindaceae

USDA hardiness zones: 6B through 9A (Figure 2)

Origin: native to southeastern United States

UF/IFAS Invasive Assessment Status: native



Figure 1. Full Form - *Acer floridanum*: Florida maple

Credits: Gitta Hasing, UF/IFAS

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



Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 20 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
Leaf type: Simple
Leaf margin: lobed, entire, undulate
Leaf shape: star-shaped
Leaf venation: palmate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaf blade length: 1 ½ to 3 ½ inches
Leaf color: green on top, paler green underneath
Fall color: orange, yellow
Fall characteristic: showy



Figure 3. Leaf - *Acer floridanum*: Florida maple
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Flower

Flower color: yellow green
Flower characteristics: not showy; small and emerges in clusters on stalks
Flowering: early spring, with new leaves

Fruit

Fruit shape: rounded, 2-winged samara
Fruit length: ½ to 1 ½ inches
Fruit covering: dry or hard
Fruit color: brown, green
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem
Fruiting: mid summer



Figure 4. Fruit, Young - *Acer floridanum*: Florida maple
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Figure 5. Fruit, Mature - *Acer floridanum*: Florida maple
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Trunk and Branches

Trunk/branches: branches don't droop; showy; typically one trunk; no thorns

Bark: light gray and smooth, becoming irregularly ridged and breaking into plates with age

Pruning requirement: strongest branch architecture develops when pruned to one dominant leader

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: medium

Wood specific gravity: unknown



Figure 6. Bark - *Acer floridanum*: Florida maple
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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: nNone

Other

Roots: can develop shallow roots

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

Reference

Koeser, A. K., Hasing, G., Friedman, M. H., and Irving, R. B. 2015. Trees: North & Central Florida. University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.