

Black Maple

Acer nigrum Michx

Habitat: The Black maple prefers moist sites such as flood plains and bottom lands. It is tolerant of shade and will live in the under storey of mixed hardwood forests until there is an opening in the forest canopy. It is native to northeastern America. The Black maple extends along the deciduous forest region from Ottawa to Montreal Island. In the United States, it ranges from Vermont, southwest to Tennessee and north to Minnesota.



Leaves: The lateral lobes of the leaves are separated by shallow notches from the tapered centre lobe. The surface is dark green and the edges have a few irregular and indistinct teeth. There are normally three lobes of a dark green colour. The undersurface of the leaf is yellowish in colour and covered in a soft velvety hair. The stalks measure from 6 - 10 cm in length. The leaves are flimsy at the end of the lobes and droop from their stalks. In autumn, the leaves turn yellow.

Buds: The lateral and terminal buds are encased with hairy brown scales. The buds are cone shaped and pointed at the end.



Fruits and Seeds: The keys are approximately 2.5 - 3 cm long with parallel or slightly angled wings. They are bright green and rounded and extend from hairy stalks which are about the same length as the wings. In the autumn, the keys turn to a light brown colour and may separate when they shed leaving the stalk on the tree.



Flowers: The flowers are a pale yellowish-green and hang in tassel-like clusters from stalks 18 to 50 mm long. Sometimes both the male and female flowers appear on the same tree. They are small and are without petals. The flowers appear at the same time as the leaves.



Bark: The bark of a young Black maple is marked with vertical ridges. These ridges deepen and become scaly as the tree matures. The furrowed bark is grey in colour and the twigs are a dull reddish brown and hairy.

Wood: The wood is valuable commercially and is commonly sold as Sugar maple. It is used for furniture production, flooring, tools, plywood and veneer. Light brown in colour, it is hard and strong.

Size and Form: The Black maple is similar to the Sugar maple in size and form. It grows up to 24 m in height and the diameter averages 0.6 m. The crown of the tree is dense and rounded.

Quick Recognition: The leaves of the Black maple are three lobed, with a hairy undersurface. The ends curl downwards which makes the tree look wilted or the leaves look like a claw. It is a large tree with ridges, scaly bark.



Notes: It is more abundant in the United States than in Canada. The sap, like that of the Sugar maple is used for the production of Maple syrup products.