

# Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) Highlight: Sugar Maple



*Sugar maple branch – (image credit adobe)*

Other common names: Hard Maple and Black Maple — Latin Name: *Acer saccharum* — Family: Aceraceae (maples)



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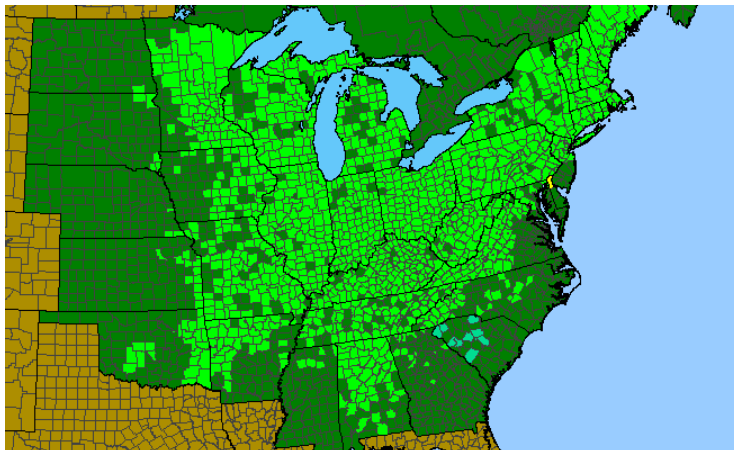
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## Range:

Maple species are common throughout much of eastern North America. Sugar maples are a major member of northern hardwood forests. Although Missouri's forests are often dominated by oak and hickory species, maples are still an important component of many woodland communities.



*Kartesz, J.T., The Biota of North America Program (BONAP). 2015. North American Plant Atlas. (<http://bonap.net/napa>). Chapel Hill, N.C. [maps generated from Kartesz, J.T. 2015. Floristic Synthesis of North America, Version 1.0. Biota of North America Program (BONAP). (in press)].*

## Description:

Sugar maples are medium to large trees that grow to about 100 feet tall. Leaves are typically 5-lobed but can be 3-lobed. The lobes can be pointed, toothless, or irregularly toothed. Missouri has four subspecies of the Sugar Maple out of the many found throughout North America. In the fall, the leaves turn brilliant shades of yellow, orange, or red, making it one of the favorite trees for fall color. The bark on young trees is smooth and grey but turns darker and grooved as trees mature. Sugar maples are the primary species for making maple syrup.

## Propagation:

Sugar Maple primarily reproduces via seed. Once trees are matured, approximately 30–40 years old, they will begin fruiting and producing seeds. Sugar Maple can also resprout from cut stumps and limbs.

## Pests:

While a variety of pests may attack Sugar Maple trees, including leafhoppers, boxelder bugs, and gall mites, most do not cause serious damage to the tree.



*Image of buckets collecting sap at Baskett Research Center, Ashland, MO. Credit: Logan Jackson, Curators of the University of Missouri.*

## Harvest:

Sap flow begins in early spring when daily temperatures fluctuate above freezing during the day and below freezing at night. Trees are tapped by drilling a hole, angled upward, about two inches into the hardwood. A spile (wooden or metal peg) is tapped into the hole and either a bucket or bag is hung underneath to collect the dripping sap.





*Image of brilliant sugar maple leaves in the fall.*

*Photo Credit: Jim Rathert*

### Conservation status:

No concern.

### Market potential:

Maple syrup has a well-developed commercial market in the northern states and Canada. Here in Missouri, maple syrup has the potential to be a valuable specialty forest product as well as an enjoyable hobby. One pint of local syrup can be sold for nine dollars or more.

### References:

<https://mosyrup.com/>

<https://mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/field-guide/sugar-maple>

<https://mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/field-guide/maples>