

# SUGAR MAPLE

## *Acer saccharum* Marsh.

**OTHER COMMON NAMES:** Hard maple, Rock maple, Sugar-tree, Sweet maple:

**FORM:** May attain a height of 120 feet with a diameter of 5 feet; in the open trees have short trunks with rather stiff erect branches which often form a spreading, egg-shaped crown; in closed stands they have long, straight, clean trunks with round crowns.

**BARK:** On branches and trunks of young trees, smooth and light brown; on older trunks brown, deeply furrowed into long irregular plates or flakes.

**TWIGS:** Slender, shining reddish-brown to buff tinged with orange, smooth.

**LEAVES:** Opposite, simple, usually 5-lobed with a sparsely toothed margin, sinuses rounded at the base, leaves rounded or heart-shaped at the base; mature leaves thin, smooth, dark green above, paler and smooth below, 3-5 inches long, 4-5 inches in diameter.

**FLOWERS:** Appear with the leaves, in drooping corymbs from the terminal mixed buds and lateral flower buds; staminate and pistillate in the same or different clusters on the same or different trees; calyx hairy without, 5-lobed, corolla lacking.

**FRUIT:** Clustered, borne on drooping stalks with broad divergent wings 1/2-1 inch long; seeds bright red-brown, 1/4 inch long.

**WINTER BUDS:** Conical or oval, sharp-pointed, reddish-brown, rather downy, especially toward the tip; terminal bud about twice as large as the lateral buds.

**WOOD:** Heavy, hard, strong, close-grained, tough, heartwood light brown, tinged with red.

**USES:** Lumber, pulp, furniture, flooring, interior finish. Historical uses: Maple sugar and syrup.

**HABITAT:** Prefers rich, well-drained, rocky soils of slopes and ridges, thrives on sites underlaid with limestone.

**DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS:** Lobes of the leaves coarsely toothed; flowers appear with the leaves; fruit does not ripen until fall; winter buds conical, sharp-pointed; bark on old trunks broken into deep longitudinal furrows, the light gray surface separating into small plate-like scales.

**DISTRIBUTION IN ALABAMA:** Seems to be limited to the northern part of the state; reported from Colbert, Jackson, Madison, Morgan, Blount, Franklin, Cullman, Walker, Fayette, St. Clair, Jefferson, and Bibb Counties.

### EXPLANATION OF PLATE

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|---|--|
| 1. A branch with staminate flowers and pistillate flowers | 5. Vertical section of a pistillate flower |
| 2. A staminate flower                                     | 6. A fruiting branch                       |
| 3. Vertical section of a staminate flower                 | 7. Vertical section of a fruit             |
| A pistillate flower                                       | 8. Vertical section of a seed              |
|   | 9. An embryo                               |



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