

Acer saccharinum L.

Silver Maple

Aceraceae
Section *Rubra*

Named by Linnaeus in 1753
Introduced to Europe in 1725 by Sir Charles Wager
Specific epithet: *saccharinus*, with suger
[note: this species is different than *A. saccharum*, the Sugar Maple]
Native range: Eastern U.S. (to eastern edge of Nebraska)

Maxwell Arboretum Locations:
East of Creek, North (1)

Culture: full sun;
Silver Maples are very adaptable to soil and fertility, but they like it best in wet sites

A large, fast-growing tree, to 50' in NE × 2/3 width. Upright, oval-crowned

Flowers: significant and good
yellow-red
very early spring; the first maple to blossom

Leaves: green above, very pale (hence "silver") below
3-6" wide
pubescent when young
palmate, 5-lobed, each lobe doubly and deeply acuminate
fall color: yellow

Fruit: samara (schizocarp)
green > pale tan
wings: angle 80°- 90°
1.3-2.3"
ripe in late May-June (one of the few spring fruit ripening maples)

Bark: dark gray>brown, ridged and furrowed with age
Twig: has an odor when crushed, red>brown when young to gray in 2nd year
pith solid
Buds: leaf: 2 outer scales form a V-shaped notch, flower: round

Maintenance: minimal
Pruning: minimal, but keep ripped and broken branches pruned
Insect and Disease Problems: many, but the specimen in Maxwell does not have serious problems
Landscape Use: not recommended (see below)

Wildlife Use:
seeds: many birds, small mammals
early buds: squirrels
bark: beaver
browse: deer and rabbits
cavity nesting: wood duck and other birds, small mammals
nesting: baltimore orioles

Native Use: includes
Cherokee: infusion of bark for cramps; fiber for baskets
Ojibwe: bark infusion for dysentery, hives, eyewash, diuretic, gynecological aid, measles, dermatological sores; with hemlock and white oak bark, a rust remover
Mohegan: bark infusion for cough
Iroquois: bark dried and powdered for "bread"
sap used as a sweetener by Ojibwe, Dakota, Omaha, Ponca, Ho-Chunk, Iroquois



From: Afbeeldingen der fraaiste, meest uitheemsche boomen en heesters by Johan Carl Krauss. Amsterdam, Johannes Allart, 1802 [-1808]. Hand-coloured engraving (sheet 230 x 280 mm).



Paul Wray, Iowa State University, Bugwood.org

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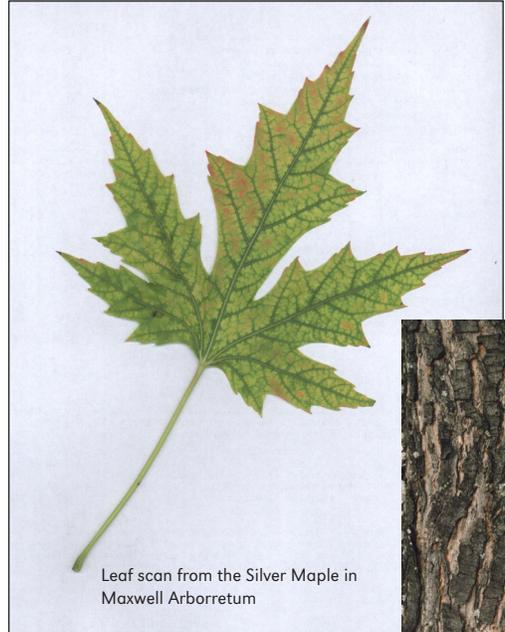
Notes:

Despite its use in Europe, praise by Donald Culross Peattie* and Raymond J. Pool ("very desirable as an ornamental"), Silver Maple has one of the worst reputations of any tree. It is a beautiful tree, but its notoriety as having weak easily broken branches and limbs, as well as roots that famously invade sewer lines has rightly placed it on the list of trees generally not recommended except for specific tough situations. From personal experience, however, I have never seen the arboretum's Silver Maple drop a limb or even smaller branches, and I believe the last time it was pruned was around 2001. Regarding roots on the other hand, my house is surrounded on three sides by neighbors' four Silver Maples, and every year we have to spend over three hundred dollars to snake and treat our sewer line. Their seeds also sprout EVERYWHERE on our property where they land; they don't even need soil. With their shimmering shaggy leaves, I love how Silver Maples look, and wouldn't mind if one remained, but having four is just too much and I curse them often.

*In Peattie's elegant and effusive prose, even the Silver Maple takes on a magnificence seldom attributed to it these days: "Fine old specimens...impart to every stream and bank where they grow, to every big red Hoosier barn and little white farmhouse, to all the village streets and the long straight roads where they have been planted, an air of dignity and lively grace, a combination rare in a tree as in a human." With a wonderful sarcastic wit, Peattie brushes aside those he views as the Silver Maple's unfair critics: "It may be that we should always listen to cautious and sensible people, and not allow ourselves to think too highly of a tree that will only live three times as long as we do." (*A Natural History of Trees of Eastern and Central North America*)



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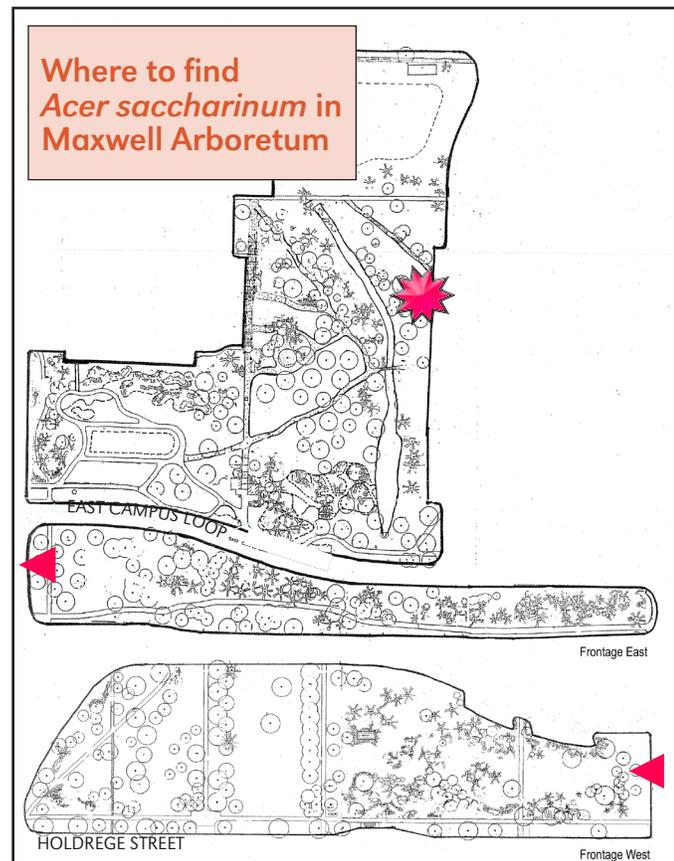


Leaf scan from the Silver Maple in Maxwell Arboretum



Bill Cook, Michigan State University Bugwood.org

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Where to find *Acer saccharinum* in Maxwell Arboretum

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