PLANT FACT SHEET

# *Acer saccharum* Marshall

**GENUS** *Acer* **FAMILY** Sapindaceae

**COMMON NAMES** Sugar maple, Hard Maple

## EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

**Edible parts:** Sap, Seeds

The sweet sap is eaten.
The seeds have also been eaten but contain poisonous substances.

## DESCRIPTION

A deciduous broad leafed tree. It grows 40 m high and spreads 10 m across. The stem is stout. It has grey bark. There are lines running up the bark on the trunk. Branches from low down. The leaves are dark green on top and silvery on the under side. The leaves are divided like the fingers on a hand. There are 5 leaf lobes with teeth like edges to the leaf. The leaves are 8-18 cm long. The leaves turn bright orange, red or yellow in the autumn. The flowers are greenish-yellow. They occur in branched stalks with a flat top. These stick upwards. The seeds occur in central containers with wings at a slight angle. There are many cultivated varieties.

## HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. A plant native to north America. It requires light fertile soils. It needs a protected position and can stand shade when young but full sun when mature. It is frost resistant but drought tender. It cannot tolerate coastal locations. It cannot tolerate pollution. It suits hardiness zones 4-8. Arboretum Tasmania. National Arboretum Canberra.

## PRODUCTION

### Cultivation

It is grown from ripened seed. The seed need to be in the seed bed and left undisturbed for 4 years. Trees produce shoots near the base when the tree is cut down and if covered with soil these quickly develop roots. Trees should be 8 m apart.

### Harvesting and Seed Production

Yields of 80 to 180 litres of sap can be produced in a season from one tree. The sap can be concentrated by boiling or by leaving it out in the frost and removing the ice which forms on top. Sap flow occurs from the end of spring until buds swell. A good sap flow requires freezing nights and sunny days. A hollow metal tube 11 mm across is driven slightly upwards and 5-8 cm into the trunk. It is often slow growing for the first 10 years. About 40 litres of sap produce one litre of syrup.

## NOTES

There are about 120-150 Acer species.

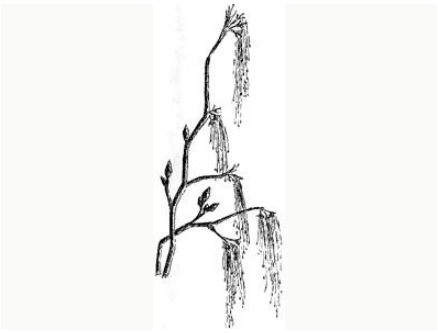
## PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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