

Acer barbatum (saccharum) var. caddo: Caddo Florida Maple¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

Introduction

The Florida maple—*Acer barbatum* (*Acer saccharum* var. *floridum*)—is considered by some taxonomists to be a separate species. The correct taxonomic nomenclature appears to depend on which botanist, horticulturist, etc., you rely upon as your “expert.” It reaches 50 to 60 feet in height but is often smaller. Displaying muted yellow or orange fall leaf color, Florida maple is ideal for use as a specimen or park tree, or for use in woodland areas and is much preferred over sugar maple in USDA hardiness zones 8b through 9. The edges of the leaves turn under slightly giving them a distinct appearance. The trunk on older specimens resembles that on the northern sugar maple, which is an attractive gray with longitudinal ribs. The round to oval growth habit makes it an ideal shade or street tree.

General Information

Scientific name: *Acer barbatum (saccharum) var. caddo*

Pronunciation: AY-ser bar-BAY-tum variety KAD-oh

Common name(s): Caddo Florida maple, Caddo southern sugar maple

Family: *Aceraceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 6B through 9B (Fig. 2)

Origin: native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: highway median; shade; street without sidewalk; deck or patio; tree lawn 4–6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft. wide; Bonsai

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree



Figure 1. Young *Acer barbatum (saccharum) var. caddo*: Caddo Florida Maple

Credits: Ed Gilman

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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; and Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville FL 32611.

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Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 50 to 60 feet

Spread: 20 to 35 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: oval, upright/erect

Crown density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: lobed, entire, undulate

Leaf shape: star-shaped

Leaf venation: palmate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: yellow

Fall characteristic: showy

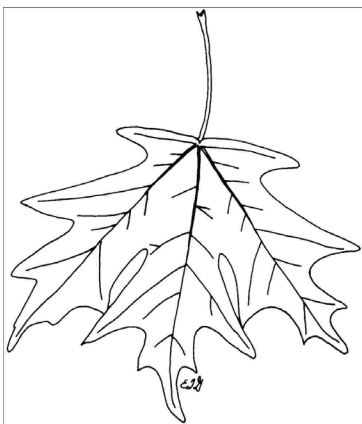


Figure 3. Foliage

Flower

Flower color: red

Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown, green

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches don't droop; showy; typically one trunk; thorns

Pruning requirement: little required

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: medium

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun, partial sun or partial shade

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: none

Other

Roots: not a problem

Winter interest: yes

Outstanding tree: no

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management

'Caddo' southern sugar maple is a hard-wooded tree with a moderate to slow growth rate. It grows about 1 foot each year in most soils but is sensitive to reflected heat, and to drought, turning the leaves brown (scorch) along their edges. Leaf scorch from dry soil is often evident in areas where the root system is restricted to a small soil area, such as a street tree planting. It is more drought-tolerant in open areas where the roots can proliferate into a large soil space.

The dense, well-branched crown creates dense shade, and along with many surface roots will prevent good lawn growth. Branches are usually well-attached to trunks resulting in a low branch failure rate. The tree transplants fairly easily but may develop girdling roots which can reduce growth, or in extreme cases kill the tree. Remove

roots which appear to be growing around the trunk as soon as they are recognized.

The limbs of sugar maple are usually strong and not susceptible to wind damage. The bark forms attractive bright gray plates which stand out especially during the winter. Roots are often shallow and reach the surface at an early age, even in sandy soil. Plant in an area where grass below it will not need to be mowed so the roots will not be damaged by the mower. A variety of birds use the tree for food, nesting and cover and the fruits are especially popular with squirrels.

Growing in full sun or shade, sugar maple will tolerate a wide variety of soil types (except compacted soil) but is not salt-tolerant. Established trees look better when given some irrigation during dry weather, particularly in the south. In the south, many leaves remain in the central portion of the canopy for much of the winter, giving the tree a somewhat unkempt appearance. Sugar maples are not recommended for the Dallas area, in many cases due to alkaline soils causing chlorosis. Sensitivity to compaction, heat, drought and road salt limit usage of Sugar maple for urban street plantings, but it is still recommended for parks and other areas away from roads where soil is loose and well-drained. *Acer nigrum*, a similar species, is more tolerant of heat and drought.

Propagation is by seeds or cuttings.

Pests

Cottony maple scale, borers, aphids, and gall mites may be problems for Florida maple.

Diseases

Florida maple can be susceptible to a wilt disease.