

Why Observe?

This is one of the species in our North American forests that provides brilliant autumn coloring. The sap from this plant is suitable for syrup production, though the tapping season is shorter than sugar maple because of its earlier flowering.

We will help the USA-NPN track the red maple “green wave”—flush of green accompanying leaf-out—over the course of the spring season, as well as the spread of seasonal color across the country in the autumn. Observations of these trees help decision-makers develop forecast models and early warning systems for public health administration regarding pollen forecasting and forest management.

Tips for Identification

Red maple is a deciduous tree growing 30 to 90 feet tall. Its tiny, usually red, male & female flowers mostly occur separately on the same tree but occasionally can occur on different trees.

Often it is found in swamps and on moist soils, but can also thrive in drier habitats. It occurs on moist soils along stream banks, and in swamps, moist to drier woodlands, and occasionally on dry rocky hillsides and sand dunes. It is moderately shade-tolerant.

Be aware there is variation from individual to individual within a species, so your plant may not look exactly like the one pictured. If you are uncertain whether or not a phenophase is occurring, report a “?” for its status until it becomes clear what you are observing after subsequent visits.



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Acer rubrum
red maple



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Breaking leaf buds

One or more breaking leaf buds are visible on the plant. A leaf bud is considered "breaking" once a green leaf tip is visible at the end of the bud, but before the first leaf from the bud has unfolded to expose the leaf stalk (petiole) or leaf base. For *Acer rubrum*, leaf tips may appear reddish.



[Kristin A Martin.](#)
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Leaves

One or more live, unfolded leaves are visible on the plant. A leaf is considered "unfolded" once its entire length has emerged from a breaking bud, stem node or growing stem tip, so that the leaf stalk (petiole) or leaf base is visible at its point of attachment to the stem. Do not include fully dried or dead leaves.



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Increasing leaf size

A majority of leaves on the plant have not yet reached their full size and are still growing larger. Do not include new leaves that continue to emerge at the ends of elongating stems throughout the growing season.



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Colored leaves

One or more leaves show some of their typical late-season color, or yellow or brown due to drought or other stresses. Do not include small spots of color due to minor leaf damage, or dieback on branches that have broken. Do not include fully dried or dead leaves that remain on the plant.



NH Garden Solutions

Flowers or flower buds

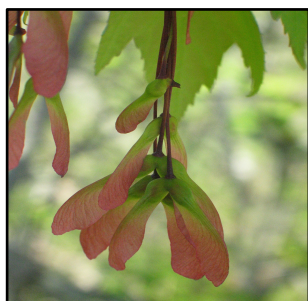
One or more fresh open or unopened flowers or flower buds are visible on the plant. Include flower buds or inflorescences that are swelling or expanding, but do not include those that are tightly closed and not actively growing (dormant). Also do not include wilted or dried flowers.



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Open flowers

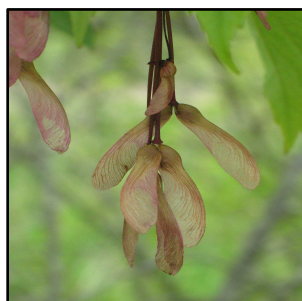
One or more open, fresh flowers are visible on the plant. Flowers are considered "open" when the reproductive parts (male stamens or female pistils) are visible between or within unfolded or open flower parts (petals, floral tubes or sepals). Do not include wilted or dried flowers.



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Fruits

One or more fruits are visible on the plant. For *Acer rubrum*, the fruit is two joined seeds in a "V" shape, each seed having a wing, that changes from green or red to tan or brownish and drops from the plant.



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Ripe fruits

One or more ripe fruits are visible on the plant. For *Acer rubrum*, a fruit is considered ripe when it has turned tan or brownish and readily drops from the plant when touched.

Phenophases not pictured: Falling leaves, Pollen release, Recent fruit or seed drop