

Acer rubrum

[Synonyms : *Acer rubra*, *Acer sanguineum*, *Rufacer rubrum*]

RED MAPLE is a deciduous tree. Native to eastern North America it has small bright scarlet (occasionally yellow) flowers and leaves that turn brilliant red, yellow and orange in Autumn.

It is also known as *Acer rosso* (Italian), Canadian maple, Carolina red maple, Curled maple, Drummond maple, Drummond red maple, *Érable* (French), *Érable femelle* (French), *Érable rouge* (French), *Javor červený* (Czech), *Kirmizi isfendan ag* (Turkish), Maple, Meadow maple, Oregon maple, *Punavaahtera* (Finnish), *Rödlönn* (Swedish), *Rot-Ahorn* (German), *Roterahorn* (German), Scarlet maple, Scented maple, Shoe-peg maple, Silver maple, Soft maple, Southern soft maple, Swamp maple, Three-pointed-leaf maple, Three-toothed red maple, *Virginischerahorn* (German), Water maple, White maple, and Yellow maple; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of conjugal love, earthly happiness, reserve, and retirement.

Rubrum is derived from Latin *ruber* (red) with reference to the flowers.

Both the Algonkin and Abnaki North American Indian tribes used the sap as a sweetener (though not as sweet as that from sugar maple, *Acer saccharum*), and the Iroquois made bread with the dried, pounded and sifted bark.. (French Canadians came to make sugar and molasses from the sap, and they found that the yield was half that which can be obtained from the sugar maple.)

The Cherokee used the light brown wood for carving, and making cooking bowls, as well as for furniture and building material.

Red maple was also used for basketwork by several tribes including the Malecite, the Cherokee and the Micmac tribes. Hunters in the Potawatomi, the Iroquois and Seminole tribes used it in different ways. So that the scent of the previously trapped animal was removed both the Potawatomi and the Iroquois Indians boiled their traps in water impregnated with red maple bark, while the Seminole used the plant for their arrowheads. It was also used by the latter for making yokes for their oxen.

The red maple leaf was present in much of the flower, fruit and leaf designs associated with the Chippewa, especially in their beadwork. Authorities appear to express little surprise at this as it was a valuable part of the tribe's medicinal remedies and such plants were usually celebrated in this fashion. Today, the leaf is used as Canada's emblem and appears on her national flag and coat of arms. (It was also adopted as a tree emblem in 1964 by Rhode Island, the smallest state in the United States.)

The bark was once a source of medicines for North American Indian tribes (including the Potawatomi, the Iroquois, the Cherokee and the Chippewa) – and in due time for the early settlers as well who used it to treat sore eyes. It was also employed by the Cherokee for treating some female ailments, cramps, measles and dysentery, and the Seminole tribe turned to it for easing limb or back pains and for treating piles or sores.

Today this heavy, and tough (though not strong) timber is used commercially for making furniture, wooden ware, gunstocks and pulp.

Red maple, was introduced to Britain from North America in 1656 by the English gardener, John Tradescant the Younger (1608-1662) who, the year after his 1637 trip to Virginia,

succeeded his father as head gardener to Charles I. Since its introduction it has been cultivated there primarily for its beauty.
It is the birthday flower for 12th March.