

Acer spicatum

[Synonyms : *Acer montanum*]

MOUNTAIN MAPLE is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to north-eastern North America it has tiny, pale greenish-yellow flowers and leaves that turn scarlet and orange in Autumn. It is also known as *Axlönn* (Swedish), Dwarf maple, Goosefoot maple, *Javor klasnatý* (Czech), Low maple, Moose maple, Moosewood, Mountain maple bush, Spiked maple, *Tahkavaahtera* (Finnish), Water maple, and White maple.

Spicatum is derived from Latin *spica* (ear of corn, spike) meaning 'spiky, spiked or in spikes' with reference to the flower clusters.

Its leaves provided inspiration for not only the beadwork and appliqué designs of both the Potawatomi and Menominee North American Indians but also for the beadwork of some of the Chippewa tribe as well.

The Chippewa used mountain maple wood for making their arrows and for their gambling dice. The inner and outer bark were used variously by several local North American Indian tribes including the Micmac, the Chippewa, the Potawatomi and the Malecite as medicine for treating sore eyes. On the other hand the Tete-de-Boule and Algonkin tribes placed boiled root chip poultices on wounds and abscesses, and the Iroquois prescribed a decoction of bark and root as a remedy for internal haemorrhages as well as using the plant for treating some intestinal ailments.

Like that in vine maple (*Acer circinatum*) and other close relatives, although the sap contains less sugar than some, it is still considered to be worth tapping in the early Spring, particularly from the trunks of more northern trees that experience cold winters with the warmer summers of more southern areas. It is sometimes made into a soft drink and it is also concentrated to a syrup used to sweeten many foods.

As with other close relatives, the leaves were thought to have some preservative qualities and were wrapped around apples (*Malus*) and some root crops before storage.

Bark and foliage are enjoyed by moose and deer, the bark offers food for beavers and grouse eat buds.

European settlers in North America obtained a rose-tan dye from the bark and the wood was used as fuel.

Mountain maple has found favour on occasion as an ornamental plant. It has an extensive root system and has thus leant itself to cultivation on embankments in order to counter soil erosion.

It was introduced to Britain in 1750 for the then Duke of Argyll by the respected American botanist, John Bartram (1699-1777).