



Red Maple

(*Acer rubrum* L.)

Also called “Swamp Maple” or “Soft Maple”

Location: The red maple is widely distributed throughout North Carolina.

Bark: The bark is smooth and light gray on young trunks. On old trunks, the bark is thick, dark gray and separated by vertical ridges into large, plate-like scales.

Leaves: The leaves are 3- to 5-lobed and have coarsely toothed margins. The leaves are 2 to 6 inches long and are somewhat broader than long. They turn brilliant scarlet, orange or bright yellow in autumn.

Flowers: The flowers grow in short-stemmed clusters in springtime, before the leaves appear.

Fruit: The fruit is paired, winged, reddish and V-shaped. It ripens in the late spring or early summer on drooping stems that are 3 to 4 inches long. The fruit, along with the buds, are a primary food source for gray squirrels in late winter and early spring.

Wood Type: Hardwood. The wood is light cream colored, is heavy, close-grained and rather weak.

Mature Height: 40 to 70 feet high (can reach 115 feet)

Mature Diameter: 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 feet (can reach 6 feet)

Uses: Furniture manufacturing, turnery (turning on a lathe) and woodenware and as pulpwood.

Reference: Holmes, J. S., & Holmes, J. S. (2015). *Common forest trees of North Carolina: A pocket manual*. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Forest Service.