

## The majestic maple: mid-America's choice



Because of its traits, silver maple is one of the poorest choices for a street tree. Excessive pruning—to avoid power lines—causes heart rot.



Silver maples can grow to heights of 80 feet or more.

by Kenneth J. Schoon, Ph.D.  
Indiana University Northwest

■ The dependable maple tree has become the most popular tree in the midwestern portion of the U.S., according to statistics from the Midwest Urban Tree Index.

Maples have a number of characteristics which contribute to their popularity: attractive shape, dense shade, fall color and (especially in the case of the

silver maple) rapid growth.

The Index classified communities into three categories: urban centers with populations greater than 150,000; suburban communities adjacent to urban centers; and small cities of fewer than 65,000 persons.

The silver maple is not only the most popular shade tree in urban mid-America, it is nearly three times as common as the second-  
*continued on page 58*



The maple comprises more than 40 percent of all trees on urban public lands in the Midwest.



If planted at a spacing of 30 feet, the maple will run out of elbow room long before it reaches its potential spread.



continued from page 48

place sugar maple. In 20 of 27 communities surveyed in the Index, the silver maple was the most common tree, and in five more communities it ranked second. In 25 of the communities, at least one species of tree comprises more than 15 percent of total trees. In 20 of the communities, it is the silver maple.

Other trees that exceed 15 percent in individual communities are: sugar maple, American elm, green ash, Norway maple, Siberian elm and callery pear.

As late as 1965, Donald Wyman (in "Trees for American Gardens") described the American elm as the most popular shade tree in North America.

But as Dutch elm disease ravaged parts of the country, elms have largely been replaced by maples and ash trees. The American elm's abundance in a few midwestern communities today, such as Oak Park and Evanston (Ill.) is largely the result of aggressive maintenance programs.

Each urban center in the Index lists silver maple as its most common. Urban centers, though, contain many trees seldom planted today: Siberian elm, sycamore, mulberry, cottonwood, catalpa, boxelder and ailanthus.

Ornamental trees have become very popular in the suburbs. While crab apple trees are now found throughout all midwestern regions, suburban communities

have the largest concentration of other small ornamental fruit trees like the fruitless callery pear. In Munster, Ind., for example, 78 new "Bradford" callery pears were planted in 1991.

LaPorte, Ind., known as the "Maple City," uses a figure of a maple tree in its city seal. Seventy-eight percent of the city's street trees are maples, most of them sugar maples.

Northern or southern, newer or older communities, urban, suburban or small city, it is the maple that comprises more than 40 percent of all trees on urban public lands in the Midwest.

--Photographs courtesy of Holden Arboretum, Mentor, Ohio.

## MOST COMMON URBAN TREES

<u>Urban centers</u>	<u>Suburban communities</u>	<u>Small cities</u>
1. Silver maple	Silver maple	Silver maple
2. Norway maple	Norway maple	Sugar maple
3. Green ash	Green ash	Red maple
4. American elm	Honeylocust	Norway maple
5. Sugar maple	Sugar maple	Green ash
6. White ash	American elm	White ash
7. Hackberry	White oak	American sycamore
8. Siberian elm	Siberian elm	Siberian elm
9. Honeylocust	Red maple	Honeylocust
10. Red maple	Pear	Pin oak
11. Crabapple	Crabapple	Little-leaf linden
12. Pin oak	Northern red oak	Tulip tree
13. Little-leaf linden	Boxelder	Sweetgum
14. American sycamore	Eastern cottonwood	Northern red oak
15. Mulberry	White ash	Crabapple
16. Eastern cottonwood	Pin oak	Hackberry
17. Eastern white pine	American basswood	Redbud
18. American basswood	American sycamore	American elm
19. Northern catalpa	Little-leaf linden	Northern catalpa
20. Colorado blue spruce	Black locust	Pear

Source: Midwest Urban Tree Index