

# Invasive Plants in Pennsylvania

## Sycamore Maple

*Acer pseudoplatanus* L.



Photo: Gil Wojciech, Polish Forest Research Institute, [www.invasive.org](http://www.invasive.org)



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### Description:

This deciduous tree can reach up to 100 feet in height. The bark has irregular scales and regularly flakes off. The three to six inch wide palmate leaves have a leathery texture that is unlike most maples. Leaves have five lobes and are dark green above and lighter green below. Leaf margins are coarsely toothed but do not have sharp tips.

Small, yellowish-green flowers appear in May. Fruits are roughly an inch long and have broad samaras (wings) that are at angles of 60 to 90 degrees from each other.

### Habitat:

This tree grows well in disturbed sites like abandoned fields, roadsides, vacant lots and yards. It also frequently colonizes early successional forest edges. It is shade intolerant but tolerant of pollution, salt and soil extremes. It does very well in coastal habitats.

### Background:

Sycamore maple is native to Europe and western Asia. It was brought to New England and the Mid-Atlantic region in the 1870s for horticultural purposes, where it was used as a street and park tree.

### Range:

This tree is found from Maine to Michigan and south to North Carolina.

### Biology and Spread:

The abundant winged seeds are spread by the wind.

### Ecological Threat:

Each tree can produce a large number of young, giving rise to dense stands of trees that may crowd out native species.

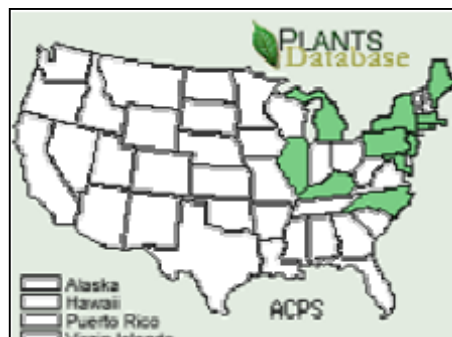


Image courtesy of [USDA PLANTS database](http://USDA PLANTS database)



Photo: Leslie Mehrhoff, U. of Connecticut, IPANE

## How to Control this Species:

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Specific management information for this species is not available; however, control options for Norway maple may work for this species.

### Manual and Mechanical

Seedlings are easy to pull when the soil is moist. For larger plants, dig them out, making sure to get all the roots. Cut down large trees and grind out the stump, or clip off re-growth. Girdle the tree by cutting through the bark and growing layer (cambium) all around the trunk. Girdling is most effective in spring.

## Look-A-Likes:

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Sycamore maple resembles our native red maple (*Acer rubrum*) and sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), along with the invasive Norway maple (*Acer platanoides* L.). The dark green, wavy leaves and flaking bark are the most distinct characteristics of sycamore maple.



Photo: Rob Routledge, Sault College, [www.forestryimages.org](http://www.forestryimages.org)

### Chemical

Invasive maples can be controlled effectively by using an herbicide such as glyphosate or triclopyr. Trees up to four inches in diameter can be controlled by applying triclopyr mixed with a horticultural oil to the bark, a foot from the base of the trunk. This can be done in early spring or from June 1 to September 30. The cut stump method may also be used – cut the tree and immediately apply herbicide around the outer ring of the stump.

## References:

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*Invasive Exotic Plant Tutorial for Natural Lands Managers:* [http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/invasivetutorial/sycamore\\_maple.htm](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/invasivetutorial/sycamore_maple.htm)

U.S. Forest Service Weed of the Week: [http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/invasive\\_plants/weeds/sycamore\\_maple.pdf](http://www.na.fs.fed.us/fhp/invasive_plants/weeds/sycamore_maple.pdf)

## For More Information:

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*Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas:* <http://www.invasive.org/eastern/midatlantic/acpl.html>

*Invasive Plants Field and Reference Guide, U.S. Forest Service:* [http://na.fs.fed.us/pubs/misc/ip/ip\\_field\\_guide.pdf](http://na.fs.fed.us/pubs/misc/ip/ip_field_guide.pdf)

*Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health:* [www.invasive.org](http://www.invasive.org)

## Native Alternatives:

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There are many native trees that make great alternatives. Sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), American basswood (*Tilia americana*), red oak (*Quercus rubra*), white ash (*Fraxinus americana*) and tuliptree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) are just a few examples.



Photo: Bill Cook, Michigan State U., [www.forestryimages.org](http://www.forestryimages.org)