

RED MAPLE

Acer rubrum L.

Red, soft, or swamp maple occurs throughout the state. It is a rapid grower and the most abundant of the maples. It is typically found in swamps, and poorly drained sites, but also occurs elsewhere. The red maple is a medium sized, slender tree that becomes 50-60 feet high, and 1-2 feet in diameter. The branches are upright, forming a somewhat narrow head. Usually the trunk is not divided. The **bark** on young trees is smooth and light gray. On old trunks, it is dark-gray, ridged and broken into plate-like scales. The **leaves** are opposite, 3-5 lobed, margins irregularly double-toothed, 3-5 inches long, upper surface light green; lower surface is



white. The sides of the terminal lobe converge toward the tip, and the notches between lobes are V-shaped. In the fall, they turn scarlet and orange. The **flowers** are produced in clusters on stalks before leaf buds open. Males are yellowish-red while females are bright scarlet. The **fruit** is winged, ripens in the spring or early summer, and germinates as soon as it falls. Wings are only slightly divergent, about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long. The seed body lacks a depression. The **twigs** are straight, stiff, do not have a rank odor when broken, and are red in color on both surfaces. Buds are red and often clustered.

The **wood** is close-grained, heavy, moderately strong, and easily worked, not durable although it will take a good polish. It is used mainly for pulp, but

also for pallets, furniture stock, canoe paddles, and turnery products. As sugar maple becomes more expensive, more mills are using red maple.