



Acer griseum Paperbark Maple¹

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INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the most beautiful maple, Paperbark Maple has trifoliate leaves and wonderfully orange to bronze, peeling, papery bark which provides year round interest (Fig. 1). The bark begins peeling on the sculptured trunk and on 2 or 3-year-old branches. It may be cinnamon brown or orange but is usually a dark reddish-brown, looking particularly striking in the snow. Even small branches display exfoliating bark making this a true specimen tree, even at a young age. Most specimens are seen with multiple trunks which branch close to the ground, but proper training when young can create a single trunk. Paperbark maple has vibrant, scarlet, autumn foliage.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: *Acer griseum*

Pronunciation: AY-ser GRISS-ee-um

Common name(s): Paperbark Maple

Family: *Aceraceae*

USDA hardiness zones: 4 through 7 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: Bonsai; container or above-ground planter; recommended for buffer strips around parking lots or for median strip plantings in the highway; near a deck or patio; specimen

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

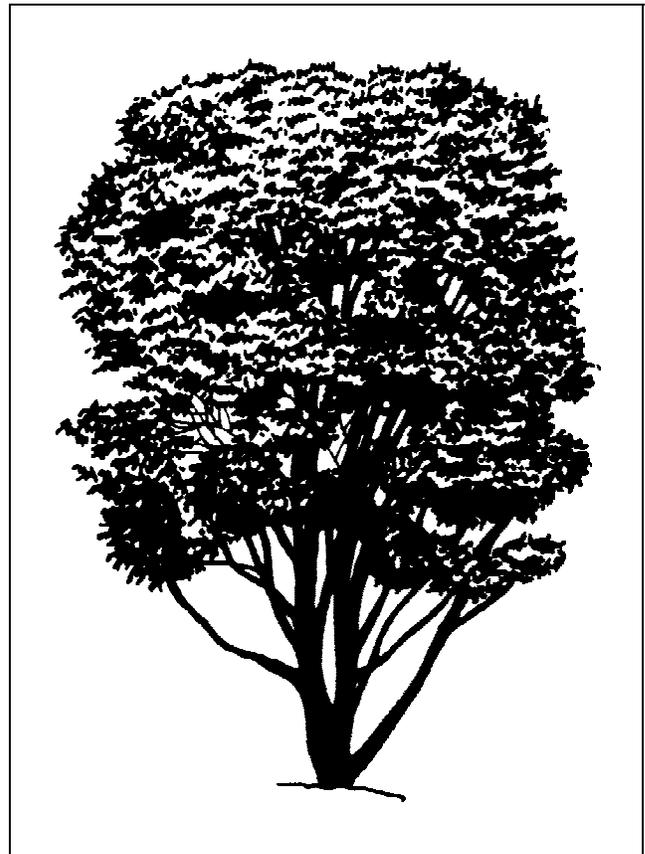


Figure 1. Middle-aged Paperbark Maple.

DESCRIPTION

Height: 15 to 25 feet

Spread: 15 to 25 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette

Crown shape: oval; upright; vase shape

Crown density: open

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Growth rate: slow

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: odd pinnately compound; trifoliate

Leaflet margin: serrate

Leaflet shape: elliptic (oval); ovate

Leaflet venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaflet blade length: 4 to 8 inches; 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: red

Fall characteristic: showy

Flower

Flower color: green

Flower characteristics: inconspicuous and not showy; spring flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated; oval

Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; no significant litter problem; showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; tree wants to grow with several trunks but can be trained to grow with a single trunk; very showy trunk; no thorns

Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: brown

Current year twig thickness: medium; thin

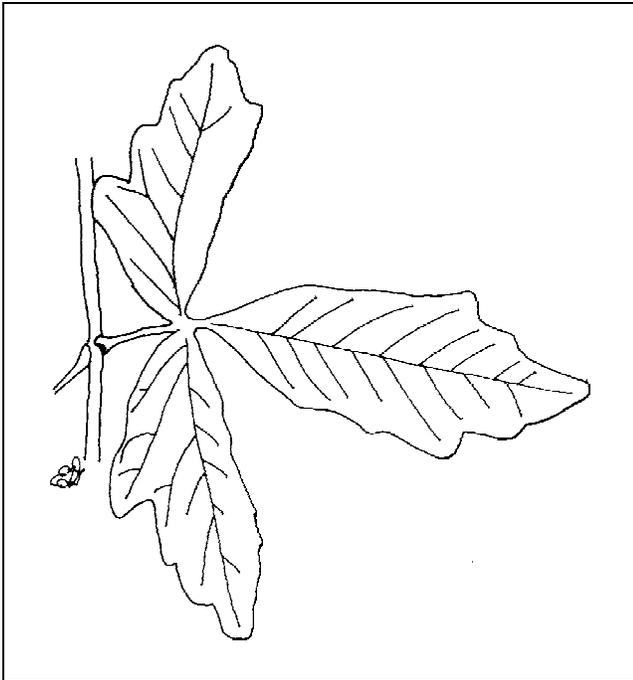


Figure 3. Foliage of Paperbark Maple.

The tree is hardy, grows very slowly to 25 or 30 feet tall, but, unfortunately, is difficult and expensive to propagate. It does not tolerate extended drought or other environmental stresses in the south or in poor soil (moderate drought-tolerance in sandy loam) but will grow in sun or shade. Leaves will scorch during dry summers unless provided with some irrigation. Probably best in partial shade if planted in the south. The beauty of this tree makes up for the extra effort required to grow it. If this plant could be easily propagated it would be widely used because the price of the plant would drop to levels acceptable to most people.

Pests and Diseases

Probably has similar pest and disease problems as other maples.

Culture

Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun;
tree grows in the shade; tree grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline;
acidic; well-drained

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem

Winter interest: tree has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding tree: tree has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: susceptible

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT

The multi-stemmed habit, unusual leaves, and wonderful bark makes this a prime candidate for specimen planting in any commercial, institutional, or residential landscape. If you can find it, plant it by a patio or other prime location and light it from below for nighttime enjoyment.