

Catch 22

Norway Maple

*Once they came on a maple in a glade,
Standing alone with smooth arms lifted up,
And every leaf of foliage she'd worn
Laid scarlet and pale pink about her feet.* Robert Frost, *Maple*

The Norway maple was brought to America by the famous botanist of Philadelphia, John Bartram (March 23, 1699 – September 22, 1777).

Carl Linnaeus stated that Mr. Bartram was the “greatest natural botanist in the world”, and he is sometimes described as “the father of America botany”.

His 8-acre botanic garden, Bartram’s Garden in Philadelphia is frequently cited as the first true botanic collection in North America. He was one of the co-founders, with Benjamin Franklin, of the American Philosophical Society in 1743.

Mr. Bartram traveled the American colonies extensively collecting plants and devoted a small area of his farm to growing plants he found of interest; later he made contact with European botanists and gardeners interested in North American plants and developed his hobby into a thriving business.

Most of Bartram’s many plant discoveries were named by botanists in Europe. He is best known today for the discovery and introduction of a wide range of North American flowering trees and shrubs, including rhododendron, magnolia species and the Norway maple.□

Acer Platanoides, Norway maple, is native to eastern and central Europe and western Asia. The Norway maple is frequently confused with the sugar maple but can be distinguished by its white sap in the leaf petiole versus the clear sap of the sugar maple.

The sugar maple also usually has a brighter orange autumnal color versus the usually yellow color of the Norway maple.

The Norway Maple’s leaf out in spring is also tied to photoperiod unlike most North American trees which leaf out based on air temperature. This allows the tree a competitive advantage in that it may leaf out well before native trees and shrubs which can be delayed by weather conditions.

The Norway is one of the few introduced species that can successfully invade and colonize a virgin forest. By comparison, in its native range, Norway maple is rarely a dominant species and instead occurs mostly as a scattered understory tree.

During the 1930s and 1940s when the streets of many cities lost their shade trees to Dutch Elm disease, Norway Maple was widely used as a replacement because of its fast growth and deep shade.

Gordian Knot

The Norway's assets are at the same time it's liability.

It is one of the first trees to leaf out and one of the last trees to shed. The large leaves create deep shade and discourages any underplanting. The Norway is a prodigious seeder and a prolific creator.

It has a beautiful, tall, straight trunk and tolerates poor, compacted soils and urban pollution and is generally free of serious diseases.

The Norway maple has many admirers for the very same reasons it is viewed by many as an invasive tree. The Norway has been banned for sale in New Hampshire and Massachusetts and the State of New York has classified this tree as invasive due, most probably, to the potential to overcrowd the Sugar Maple.

The Norway Maple – a paradox of nature.

Consider the facts; a tree that knows how to deal with adversity, and actually thrives, because it comes with everything adversity requires. Handles cold, indifferent soil, dry conditions, wet conditions, well anything... And yet, at the same time the Norway provides dense, thick and sheltering shade, beauty, and lastly character, lots of it.

All things being equal, one cannot help but admire the Norway's ambitious goal to increase scope and range, can one?

The Past lives on?

“Don't adventures ever have an end? I suppose not. Someone else always has to carry on the story.”

— J.R.R. Tolkien, The Fellowship of the Ring

The Old Woman and the Maple Tree Spirit

retold by Richard L. Dieterle

There lived an old woman by herself in an oval lodge at the outskirts of the village. She was always doing good for the people. If anyone needed anything from her, she would not fail to give it to them. She always fasted and made offerings of tobacco to the spirits.

Now the time had come when sap was collected from the maples, and she went out with her bucket to see what she might obtain. She went from one tree to another, yet she hardly collected anything. As she was walking along in the forest, she heard a voice. She looked around, but could see no one. Again the voice spoke to her, and she discovered that the voice had come from the trunk of a maple tree. "Grandmother, I take pity on you. Come back to me tomorrow and you will find on my trunk a ball of sap. Take this sap and rub it around the inside rim of your sap boiling kettle. However much sap you have put in, that much will expand to the place you have scored. And when you make maple syrup, if you can remember me with a small offering of tobacco, you will be blessed." Thus the Tree Spirit spoke to her. So the next day she retrieved a ball of sap from the tree, and did as the spirit had bidden. Indeed, no matter how little sap she put in the kettle, it would always boil up to the mark she had made on the rim. She never wanted for maple syrup. Thus, had she been blessed.

Despite an evaporating sense of what is real, or was once real, a few mysteries, some of the old magic and wonder still hold up; it can and may be the way we wish it was.

Some may not think of Maple as being magickal, particularly if they live in Europe or the UK. There are mainly two Maple genus' which are native and almost native in the UK and those are the *Acer Campestre* or Field Maple which is native to Britain, and the *Acer Platanooides*, or Norway Maple which is a naturalized tree in the UK. Both are quite different from the *Acer Sapindaceae* which is native to North American countries, US and Canada, and can produce the sap from which Maple syrup is made. If I'm correct in thinking, there are still around 127 other Maple species in the region. However, whether they all produce sap for syrup, I do not know.

Sticking to North America for a short bit [and to tempt your taste buds] the Native American symbolism of the Maple, *Acer Sapindaceae*, is that of offering, generosity, balance, promise, and practicality. The Maple tree was of importance to the Algonquian tribes of the north-western United States and western Canada, who developed the art of processing Maple sap into Maple sugar, Maple syrup, and taffy candy.

Maple trees hold the wisdom of balance, promise, love, longevity, money, and practical magick. Special for its sugar and syrup it represents success and abundance, most likely because the Native Americans used it in trade and could purchase goods with their syrup when no coin could be made or spared.

Maple has both feminine and masculine energy. Libra and Virgo consider this tree to be sacred. Associated with the elements of Spirit and Water. Planetary Associations: Moon, Jupiter.

The great horned owl is the sacred bird of this tree.

Magickal Properties: Some cultures primarily use Maple wands for spiritual healing. Maple is a traveller's wood. It enhances intellectual pursuits, acquiring knowledge, and communication. Spells concerning art, beauty, binding, and abundance should consider using this wood. The gypsies believe Maple brings gold and that eating the seeds draws love.

Maple reveals the options – even those that are hidden in plain sight – which lay before you. It enables you to make sound choices rather than rely on blind luck. – magickal maple tree

The years have erased the stories that live in the past, the history that isn't divulged; the deeds of a life, the hidden truths and old tales. They're locked in the past; the stories and deeds of the times of their time. Namesakes and signs, statues, place stones and family stories still live on and survive, perhaps urged on by the ghosts who may or may not linger in the past and our collective love and respect for the ones who came before us.

Fall(en) Leaves

By the twenty-fifth of September, the Red Maples generally are beginning to be ripe. Some large ones have been conspicuously changing for a week, and some single trees are now very brilliant. I notice a small one, half a mile off across a meadow, against the green wood-side there, a far brighter red than the blossoms of any tree in summer, and more conspicuous. I have observed this tree for several autumns invariably changing earlier than its fellows, just as one tree ripens its fruit earlier than another. It might serve to mark the season, perhaps. I should be sorry, if it were cut down. Henry D. Thoreau (1817-1862), *Autumnal Tints*

What more remarkable object can there be in the autumn landscape? Visible for miles, maple trees are the crowning glory of autumn. Fall in Wisconsin is achingly beautiful; the most jaded of armchair quarterbacks feels the pull of

nature, the quickening of the senses and the last, intense urge to ramble, to wander and sear our senses with the glowing brilliance which will, hopefully, sustain us through our next season. Wisconsin winter; mercury plummets, snowy, windy, dark grey swirling skies (frequently downright unpleasant comes to mind); the season of rest, the season of contemplation and recollection; devoid of colors, tints or hues other than soft browns and greys and simple black and whites.

“Where did you go to, if I may ask?’ said Thorin to Gandalf as they rode along.
To look ahead,’ said he.
And what brought you back in the nick of time?’
Looking behind,’ said he.”
— J.R.R. Tolkien, The Hobbit or There and Back Again

I think there are many that are in need of the long perspective trees can provide; they are the reminders that we are surrounded by living witnesses to years far beyond our memories. Primal spirits beneath the soil, angels singing in the winds; everywhere poems and prose marvel at these ideals of perfection and eternity, as if they, like trees, are a visible part of the scenery.

For your time is our time,
but our time is greater.
Our fate is your fate,
and we are all tied to nature. – Sue Schuit

TREES WE LOVE, 2020
HOY AUDUBON SOCIETY
NORWAY MAPLE (ACER PLATANOIDES)
APPROX. AGE 120 YEARS
DIAMETER AT BREAST HEIGHT: 46”
HEIGHT: 70’
PROUD STEWARD: ALEKS CUKIC, 5305 WIND POINT RD., RACINE