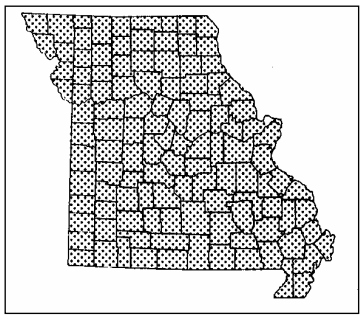
Hard (Sugar) Maple

Acer spp.

Grouped together here are all of the hard maples, such as sugar maple (*A. saccharum* Marsh.) Florida maple (*A. barbatum* Michx.), black maple (*A. nigrum* Michx. f.) and Norway maple (*A. paltanoides* L.). Name variations occur because of figure, so we have birdseye maple, curly maple and fiddleback maple. The hard maples are generally distributed throughout Missouri, usually on rich, deep, moist soils. It is frequently an understory tree. On better soils, it is associated with ash, white oak, red oak and basswood. On poorer sites, it will be found with oaks and hickories.

The sapwood of the hard maples is white with perhaps a reddish tinge and the heartwood is a uniform light reddish brown. The wider the sapwood, the more the lumber is prized. The bark is brownish or grayish furrowed into irregular ridges or scales. Growth rings are fairly distinct, though the wood is diffuse porous. There is a considerable amount of commercial-size maple in Missouri, but it generally has an unattractive black mineral streak and occasional gum pockets. Most hard maple used in Missouri is imported from other states. The lumber machines well and is hard, sands to a high polish, stains well and glues fairly easily. When dry, it is stable but tends to shrink and swell somewhat. It is not durable and tends to split along the rays.

The hard maples are perhaps more popular for their fall colors of red and yellow than for their lumber in Missouri. They are frequently planted in yards and along streets. Maple is used in furniture, cabinets, railroad ties, veneer (especially in figured form), shoe lasts, bowling pins, flooring, turned items, toys, athletic goods, musical instruments and some millwork. It is an excellent wood which has been overlooked as a shop wood because of the mineral streak, but has many uses. It is not common at the mills and what is sawn generally goes into low grade products such as pallets and blocking.

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