

# Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*)

## Nebraska Forest Service

The Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*) is one of the more popular trees in the nursery trade. It is easily transplanted and it has very few insect or disease enemies. It can, however, have problems with the sometimes-harsh climate in this area. The Norway maple is a common tree throughout much of Europe, including (not surprisingly) Norway. It is an important commercial species there just as sugar maple is here in North America. It is used for furniture, flooring and musical instruments. In fact, the Stradivarius violins are said to be made of Norway maple.



Norway maple has been planted extensively in much of the northern half of the United States and has become a staple for city planting. It can withstand poor soil conditions and has lent itself to a wide range of cultivars including Crimson King, Emerald Luster and Deborah just to name a few. The Crimson King is one of the most popular and is often mistakenly called red maple. Red maple (*Acer rubrum*) is an entirely different tree. The Latin name acer means pointed like a lance and plantanoides means “like a planetree” referring to the sycamore.



The leaves of Norway maple are marked by long pointed “teeth” and the leaf stem exudes a milky white sap when broken. The color is dark green on the upper surface and pale green below. Flowers appear in early spring and are yellow-green in color. Male and female are usually on different trees. The seed is a samara or winged seed and is often called a “helicopter” seed since it spirals to the ground when it comes loose. The buds are rounded and full. Some dendrology instructors will use the term “fat Norwegian” to help students separate the Norway maple from other maples, especially in the winter. No offense to Norwegians of course.



Norway maple is a medium to large tree here in Nebraska.

The national champion is just over nineteen feet in circumference and seventy feet tall located in Pennsylvania. There is a co-champ of about the same size in Ohio.

While the Norway maple is easy to plant and grow it does have its problems. The tree is very sensitive to the depth of planting and if it is planted too deep it will likely develop girdling roots and stem tissue may die back. Intense heat and reflective heat from buildings or roadways can also cause summer leaves to turn brown and have a scorched appearance. For this reason it is best to plant the tree in a larger space that does not have direct south or west exposure to the sun. And while Norway maple does tolerate poorer soils, heavy clay or poorly drained sites should be avoided. Of course, this is true with most species of trees.

Norway maple can make an excellent yard tree in the city or on the farm. It will provide dense shade for those hot afternoons. If you are of northern European descent then you may want to plant one to make you feel at home with your ancestors. Remember to find a place that is well drained and has at least some protection from the warm south winds. Be careful not to over-water since Norway maple does not tolerate low oxygen soils very well.