



The American sycamore is one of the largest hardwood trees found in the United States. It is a fast-growing species that can live more than 250 years.

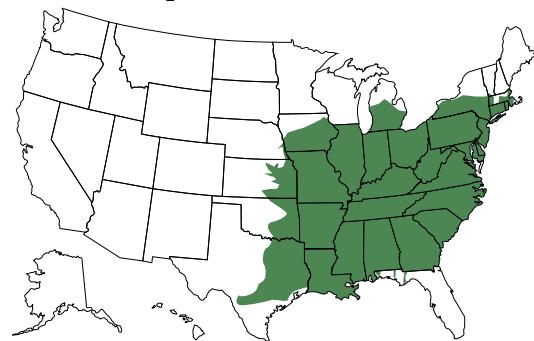
The American sycamore can be found as far west in the United States as Kansas.

This fact sheet aids in the identification of the American sycamore. It also provides uses and management strategies of the tree species. More information about the American sycamore is available through the USDA Forest Service.

Photo	Description
	<p>Leaf: Alternate, simple, large, broad leaves that grow usually between 4 and 8 inches. The leaf petioles are hollow. Palmate with three or five lobes. The top of the leaf is bright green, and the underside is pale green. Leaves turn brown in the fall.</p> <p>Photo: Rob Routledge, Sault College, <i>Bugwood.org</i></p>
	<p>Flower: Tiny and crowded in ball-shaped clusters.</p>
	<p>Fruit: Golf ball sized balls that hang from stalks. Dry and hairy in appearance. Some fruit persist through the winter with seeds dispersing in early spring.</p> <p>Photo: Rob Routledge, Sault College, <i>Bugwood.org</i></p>
	<p>Twig: Twigs are typically thin and green, and the outer twigs grow in a zig-zag pattern. The terminal bud is cone shaped and covered with a single scale. It is bright green in the spring and pinkish-brown in the winter.</p> <p>Photo: Robert Vidéki, Doronicum Kft., <i>Bugwood.org</i></p>

Photo	Description
	<p>Bark: The bark is distinctly colored brown and gray. The bark will flake and peel away, leaving behind a gray to bright white pattern. When cut, the wood will often appear pink.</p> <p>Photo: Karan A. Rawlins, University of Georgia, <i>Bugwood.org</i></p>
	<p>Form: The trunk is usually straight and typically ranges from 3 to 8 feet in diameter. With age, the crown will become irregularly shaped. Typically reaches heights of greater than 100 feet.</p> <p>Photo: Richard Webb, Self-employed horticulturist, <i>Bugwood.org</i></p>

Species Distribution



Uses and Products

Its wood is used commonly for toddler toys such as wooden blocks because it does not splinter easily. Native Americans made canoes from the wood. Historically, sycamore was used for rolling pins and butcher blocks because it does not splinter. Today, it is mostly used for wood pulp.

Wildlife

American sycamore does not provide much wild-life food value, but the tree has a tendency to develop hollows where branches have died.

Management

Because of its resistance to pollution, the American sycamore is often planted as an urban shade tree.

Pests and Potential Problems

The American sycamore is susceptible to anthracnose, which is caused by the *Apiognomonia veneta* fungus and can appear as either twig, bud, shoot, or leaf blight. Anthracnose can completely defoliate a tree if extended wet weather occurs as leaves are expanding in the spring.

Fun Facts

The American sycamore is often confused with the London planetree, which is an anthracnose-resistant hybrid of the American sycamore and European sycamore (*Platanus orientalis*). The London planetree is usually recommended for urban plantings because of its resistance to anthracnose. The fruit of the American sycamore grows solitary, while London planetree

fruit grows in bundles of two or three. The bark of a London planetree tends to flake and peel down the trunk, all the way to the ground, while the bark of an American sycamore flakes and peels closer to the crown.

Erosion Control

The American sycamore is often planted along streams to prevent soil erosion.

Agroforestry

Because of their rapid growth, sycamores are recommended for planting in streamside plantings (riparian buffers). Beaver do not feed readily on sycamore compared to other streamside species.

Silviculture

The American sycamore is a bottomland species and thrives in moist soils. It is often found on river bottoms and near lake shores.

Adaptation, Distribution, Habitat

The American sycamore is typically found in the eastern portion of the United States. Its elevation ranges from sea level to 3,200 feet.

Establishment

Sycamore are usually established by planting bare-root seedlings.

Environmental Concerns

The American sycamore is a readily adaptable species that poses little to no environmental concern. It is a thriving, but noninvasive, species.



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