

The fall of the Norway Maple

PART 2



rons. Amongst the nursery producers, as well, they are favored since they are quick and easy to grow.

Does this mean that the Norway Maple is the only suitable tree for such conditions (last column) as the urban environment? The simple answer is no; however, the conspiracy continues since the substitutes are a little more difficult to source and a little more difficult for the producer to grow. But with a little patience, excellent trees can be found that have none of the undesirable attributes of the Norway Maple but equal if not greater desirable characteristics that the garden Godfather has.

The Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*) our native that graces the flag (Although I think the leaf on the flag more closely resembles the Norway than the Sugar.) is not as popular as I think it should be. Several years ago, when the town was planting trees on the road allowance near my house, the Norway was the plant of choice. I immediately went to the town hall and was shown the list of 'Street Trees'. The Sugar Maple was not listed. Why? The Sugar Maple is not as salt tolerant as the Norway and hence it is seldom used in such circumstances such as road allowances. That said, my street is not very busy and the eight Sugar Maples that I planted at that time now thrive. Their majestic canopies have restored class and grace to this Victorian neighborhood, and I can garden under them;

beneath a Norway Maple is a horticultural desert.

The added bonus of mellifluous autumn colour and the few seedlings have endeared this tree in the neighborhood so much that the neighbors have begun planting them. In 80 years, this will be the neighborhood of choice because of the majestic tree canopy. Of course, it is the neighborhood of choice already.

Continued on page 3

Sources:

The following places have unusual trees in gardens settings and most are labeled.

THE GARDENS OF FANSHAWE COLLEGE, Around M, F, H and K buildings. Ask at the greenhouse on weekends.

SHERWOOD FOX ARBORETUM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO, throughout the main campus around the Student Union Building and Weldon Library.

RAYNER GARDENS at the corner of Springbank and Wonderland. Plantings east of the conservatory are significant with many unusual conifers planted in the perennial borders.

Garden Guru is a bi-weekly column, featuring advice from landscape designer Mike Pascoe - professor and program coordinator for the horticulture technician program at Fanshawe College - offering ideas, suggestions and information about creating the ideal green space.



MIKE PASCOE

I am not favored amongst industry peers when I discuss my opinions of the Norway Maple. For in their nurseries, row upon row of perfect trees wait for the tree spade and the ride home from the local garden centre. For city dwellers, these ever-popular trees are often in the top of their class since they thrive in urban envi-

NORWAY MAPLE

Continued from page 2

Maples are wonderful specimens, but not my first choice when I was developing the Cuddy Gardens in Strathroy. The first tree I planted there was the American Sweet gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*). If I could take only one tree with me to an island, I would consider this one of my top 100 choices. When

it comes to favorite trees, I may be a little indecisive.

The Sweet gum has Maple like leaves but has several other unique attributes. The bark after many years can become much ridged almost like the bark of the Cork Oak. This gives the tree an interesting winter profile, important in our long winters. The leaves, however, are the highlight. Shiny green throughout

the summer, they turn the most intense red in the autumn. At a distance, the tree appears aflame for the entire thing turns colour at once and this show persists for several weeks.

There is one minor drawback to growing the American Sweet gum. It is marginally hardy in the London area, so those who live further north will have to visit the tree in the warmer climates and protected areas of the city gardens.

Regardless there are many, many trees that are available but seldom used because they are not common. We are fortunate that in London there are many places to view wonderful specimens of trees. These labeled collections are growing all the time, and at this time of year they encourage us to seek relief in the sunshine, with notebook in hand and an eye toward spring planting.