



Collection Profile

The NAPCC Maple Collection at Cornell Plantation

Acer rubrum 'Embers'

Mary Hirshfeld

When the Cornell Plantations' F.R. Newman Arboretum was expanded in 1980, maples native to New York State and their cultivars were designated as one of the core collections to be developed in the new acreage. The overarching collections policy developed for the expansion area limited the collections to woody plants native to New York State. After 10 years of working with the policy, the staff asked that it be made more inclusive to encourage greater diversity within the collections. As a result, the curatorial staff and a collections advisory board of Cornell faculty revisited the natives-only collections policy and determined it to be too restrictive to meet the teaching and research needs of faculty interested in using the collections. The core collections of native oaks, maples, and conifers remained central to the revised policy, but guidelines were expanded to allow the inclusion of non-native species.

Since the revision of the arboretum collections policy, the maple collection

has expanded from the original 29 under the natives-only policy to encompass 91 taxa. This year the Cornell Plantations maple collection joined the ranks of NAPCC collections.

Acquisition has been guided by a maple collection policy that describes both curatorial and educational goals. The overarching aim of that policy is to ensure that at least one representative from each section and series within the genus *Acer* is displayed. This measure will provide good representation of the tremendous variation in size, habit, leaf shape, bark characteristics, and fall color within the genus. Ideally, we plan to house three to five of each species, all from different sources to ensure some degree of genetic diversity. Weedy species such as *A. negundo* and its many

cultivars with colored bark have been accommodated in our winter garden, where they are coppiced annually and thus rarely seed. *A. platanoides* is not represented because of its strongly invasive characteristics in our area.

A second goal is to mesh the collection with the research programs of interested faculty. Professor Nina Bassuk of the Department of Horticulture has been assessing small statured, rarely used maples for their potential use as street trees and studying their tolerance of sun and shade, poor drainage, and highly alkaline soils. Those that show promise in test plots are subsequently moved to the arboretum to be evaluated for winter hardiness and the quality of their ornamental characteristics. In addition to evaluating underused species, we plan to represent both species and cultivars known to perform well under urban conditions, as well as new introductions that show great potential. As intended by the overarching goal of representing the diversity of the genus, cultivar selection will represent the variation in form and fall color within each species. Because many cultivars are almost indistinguishable from one another, we will try to determine the best-performing selection within a specific category, such as columnar form or red fall color. This spring we will be adding new cultivars of *A. x freemanii*, *A. saccharum*, *A. rubrum*, and named hybrids of *griseum x maximowiczianum* such as 'Ginzam' (trademarked "Gingerbread") that display improved vigor and a faster growth rate.



Acer erianthum, above and *Acer saccharum* 'Sugar Cone' at right.





Acer triflorum



Acer griseum

The national maple inventory that Department of Horticulture graduate student Dan Otis recently completed has helped us determine where to concentrate future efforts in the acquisition of maples from documented wild sites. His listing of maple taxa currently missing from North American arboreta shows that few species in the section *Acer* are represented. This is a relatively

small section that our correspondingly small curatorial staff could reasonably locate, acquire, verify, document, and propagate for distribution. Additionally, most of the species it contains should be hardy in our region, so there is a good chance that we would be successful in growing them. This national survey was invaluable in providing us with a clear direction for strengthening the conserva-

tion value of our NAPCC maple collection. We can now focus our efforts on acquiring a specific and limited number of taxa within the section *Acer* from documented wild collection sites. **TPG**

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North American Branch of The Maple Society

At the close of the 2001 AABGA Annual Conference in Denver, a group of maple enthusiasts met to form the North American Branch of The Maple Society. This new group is intended to provide additional opportunities for individuals interested in maples to interact, share information, and jointly address challenges faced by growers and researchers of maples. Since its inception in 1991, the parent organization and most activities have been centered in southern England where the majority of the members reside. The newly created branch will work to include items of special interest about North American maples or horticultural concerns particular to our growing conditions in the quarterly newsletter. In addition to the joy of sharing tips and lore about maple, we plan to catalog, collect, and conserve maples (especially those

that are rare and/or endangered) in public collections; further clarify taxonomic questions; and other tasks made possible by bringing together the knowledge of many lovers of the genus. As a step toward facilitating the exchange of information about the group, a Society website (www.ubcbotanicalgarden.org/maplesociety) began in January 2002. One of the Society's first activities will be to join with the Eurasian Branch at an International Maple Symposium at Westonbirt Arboretum, October 2 to 5, in Tetbury, Gloucestershire, England. Attendance is not limited to members only.

For additional information about the symposium, email westonbirt@forestry.gsi.gov.uk. For information about membership in the North American Branch of the Maple Society, contact Dr. Susan Wiegrefe at swiegref@mortonarb.org.