Sugar Maple  
(*Acer saccharum*)

Alex X. Niemiera, Professor, School of Plant and Environmental Sciences, Virginia Tech

**Summary:**
- Foliage: Deciduous broadleaf  
- Height: 100 feet  
- Spread: 80 feet  
- Shape: Oval to round

Sugar maple is a medium/large shade tree with a no less than spectacular fall foliage display. There are many cultivars; cultivar characteristics include growth rate, form, and fall foliage color.

**Plant Needs:**
- Zone: 3 to 8  
- Moisture: Moist to dry  
- pH Range: 3.7 to 6.5  
- Light: Partial shade to full sun  
- Soil Type: Sandy, loam, or clay loam

**Functions:**
Suggested uses for this plant include shade or specimen tree.

**Planting Notes:**
Does best when planted in location where it will have ample room to spread.

**Care:**
Requires little care when planted in proper location (well-drained, fertile, moist soil away from polluted city conditions).

**Problems:**
Leaf scorch (in excessive droughts) and Verticillium wilt can be a problem. Susceptibility to gas and smoke damage makes sugar maple less suitable for city conditions than Norway and red maples.

**Alternatives:**
Consult local garden centers, historic or public gardens and arboreta regarding cultivars and related species that grow well in your area.

- **Cultivars of *Acer saccharum***:
  - BonfireTM is a fast-growing cultivar with bright orange/red fall foliage.  
  - `Globosum' -- a dwarf, globe-shaped form (10 by 10 feet after 20 years) `Columnare'-- an upright columnar form  
  - Green Mountain® -- tolerates heat and is scorch resistant.  
  - 'Legacy' is a fast-growing cultivar with a variable fall foliage color.
Comments:
The fire-red to yellow color of the sugar maple fall foliage is no less than spectacular. This species tends to have a solid symmetrical canopy which imparts a formal look. The sap of this tree can be boiled down to produce maple syrup and sugar. Mature sugar maples show a wide variation in form, but tend to have a broad, rounded head.

This material was developed by Carol Ness as part of the Interactive Design and Development Project funded by the Kellogg Foundation.