



Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

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Black Maple *Acer nigrum* Mich.

State Status: **None**
Federal Status: **None**

Description: Black Maple, also commonly known as Hard Maple and Rock Maple, reaches up to 40 meters (about 130 ft.) in height. It has a straight central trunk when growing in the forest and a widely spreading branch system when growing in the open. The bark on Black Maple trees is dark and thick, with narrow furrows. The leaves are deep green and, usually, densely pubescent beneath. Commonly, they have somewhat drooping sides. They are usually 3-lobed and rarely 5-lobed, with a few obtuse or rounded teeth. Black Maple's winged fruits (samaroid schizocarps) are similar to those of Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*), to which it is closely related and with which it hybridizes. Black Maple flowers from late May through early June.

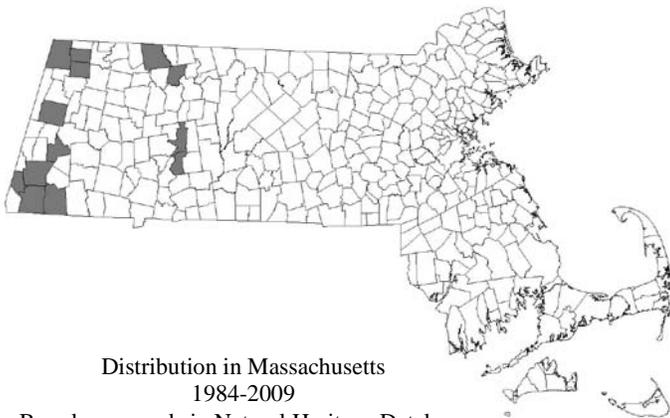
Range: The documented range of Black Maple extends from Quebec and New Hampshire to Minnesota, south to northern Georgia and northern Louisiana. The species is more common in the western portion of its range than in the east.



Holmgren, Noel H. 1998. The Illustrated Companion to Gleason and Cronquist's Manual. *The New York Botanical Garden*.

Habitat: Black Maple prefers rich, moist soil in association with alluvial hardwood forests. It does not grow in acidic soils. Black Maple is highly shade tolerant. All current sites in Massachusetts have mesic (moderately moist) soils, and most have either shade or filtered light conditions.

Among the specific habitats in Massachusetts are several floodplain forests, including one near a dolomitic limestone cobble; various types of forested rocky slopes and outcrops, including dolomitic cobbles, talus slopes and trap ledges; various rich wood communities, including ones near marble outcrops and on rocky slopes; and former floodplain forests, including a sunny hayfield. Species commonly found growing with Black Maple in Massachusetts include Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*), Basswood (*Tilia americana*), White and Green Ash (*Fraxinus americana* and *F. pennsylvanica*), Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*), American Elm (*Ulmus americana*), Bitternut Hickory (*Carya cordiformis*), Hop Hornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana*),



Distribution in Massachusetts
1984-2009

Based on records in Natural Heritage Database

various species of birch (*Betula*), Leatherwood (*Dirca palustris*), and Wild Leek (*Allium tricoccum*). Rare Massachusetts species found with black maple include Autumn Coralroot (*Corallorhiza odontorhiza*), Downy Wood-Mint (*Blephilia ciliata*), Yellow Oak (*Quercus muhlenbergii*), Climbing Fumitory (*Adlumia fungosa*) and Crooked-Stem Aster (*Symphyotrichum prenanthoides*).

Similar Species: Black Maple is sometimes considered to be a variety of the Sugar Maple (*A. saccharum*) and often occurs in the same habitats. Black Maple differs in its darker, more furrowed bark and darker, densely hairy, 3-lobed leaves with characteristically drooping sides.

Population Status: Black Maple is not listed as a rare species in Massachusetts. Occurrences are found only in western Massachusetts, where populations are generally small in number (one population has about 100 individuals, however). Black Maple is considered rare in Vermont, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Georgia, Arkansas, and Quebec.

Management Recommendations: Threats to Black Maple would include habitat destruction and logging.

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