



# BOX ELDER MAPLE (ACER NEGUNDO)

The box elder maple is native to and widely distributed in North America. This tree is usually found in forests, man-made habitats and floodplains. This tree stands out among other maples because it has compound leaves, meaning that there are two or more leaflets that make up a leaf. Most maple leaves are not compound on other maple species. As the leaves of this tree look similar to those of ash trees, the box elder maple is sometimes called by another common name: ash-leaved maple. The box elder maple is classified as a soft maple. Compared to other maple species in the area surrounding Huntington County, this tree is fast growing, short and somewhat messy in appearance. This tree species is native to Huntington County.



## Horticulture Tips

Box elder maples prefer full sun exposure to grow successfully, but they can also be tolerant to light shade environments. They also prefer medium water supply and moist soil. This tree is known for its fast growth in its youth and is a short-lived tree compared to similar deciduous tree species.

## Benefits

The box elder maple is used as a landscaping tree, windbreak tree, or a shade tree in yards or along residential streets. The wood of the box elder maple is often used to make wooden crates and boxes, which is where it derives the first part of its common name. The second part, “elder,” was given to this tree because its leaves are similar to those of elderberry trees. Because of its fast growth while it is maturing, the wood of this tree can be weak. The pink markings in the wood make it prized by wood turners to make bowls and cups. The sap can be used to make syrup, but it is typically not as sweet as sugar maple sap.

Insects like the box elder bug and the box elder aphid use the box elder maple as a source of food. This tree is also used by the purple finch and the pine grosbeak for a food source, and several warblers forage for insects that bore in the box elder maple. White-tailed deer and the American moose are known to eat the twigs and branches of this tree. Bat species like the evening bat and the hoary bat use it as a roosting site because box elder maples are cavity-prone in their older age.

## OTHER REFERENCES

**Go Botany Native Plant Trust:** <https://gobotany.nativeplanttrust.org/species/acer/negundo/>

**Illinois Wildflowers:** [https://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/trees/plants/box\\_elder.htm](https://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/trees/plants/box_elder.htm)

**Index of Trees — Purdue University of Fort Wayne:** <https://www.pfw.edu/microsites/native-trees/boxelder>

**Leopold, Donald J. Trees of the Central Hardwood Forests of North America: An Identification and Cultivation Guide.** Timber Press, 1998, pp. 72-74.

**Silvics of North America:** [https://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/misc/ag\\_654/volume\\_2/acer/negundo.htm](https://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/misc/ag_654/volume_2/acer/negundo.htm)

**Missouri Botanical Garden:** <https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=275364&isprofile=1&basic=acer%20negundo>

**Morton Arboretum Photo Copyrights:** <https://acorn.mortonarb.org/Detail/objects/40646>  
<https://acorn.mortonarb.org/Detail/objects/37783>

**Weeks, Sally S., et al. Native Trees of the Midwest: Identification, Wildlife Values, and Landscaping Use,** Purdue University Press, West Lafayette, IN, 2005, pp. 64-65.

Sourcing: [William S. Stickney], [Deborah J.G. Brown],  
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- **Family:** Sapindaceae
- **Type:** Deciduous
- **Average Height:** 30’ to 60’
- **Average Width:** 30’ to 50’
- **Native Range:** North America
- **Average Years to Maturity:** 20
- **Average Lifespan in Years:** 75
- **Street Tree Program Eligibility:** No
- **Bark Identification:** Light brown to gray, shallow fissures
- **Leaf Identification:** Compound with three to seven lobed leaflets (each 2” to 4” long) per leaf (typically 6” long)
- **Find it!** Look for “34A” on the [arboretum map](#).

