

***Acer macrophyllum*, Big Leaf Maple**

General Botanical Characteristics

Acer macrophyllum is a long-lived deciduous tree exhibiting a high degree of variation in size and form. Mature trees commonly attain heights of 50 feet to 70 feet with 1.5 feet diameter trunks. They can live 150 to 300 years or more. The root system is shallow but wide spreading. The leaves are generally 6 inches to 12 inches across and nearly as long. Leaf color is shiny dark green above but paler underneath. The leaves are palmately divided into five broad, coarsely toothed lobes. The greenish-yellow perfect or staminate flowers are arranged in a raceme at the end of twigs. The fruit is a fused, double-winged samara.



Seasonal Development

Flowering and leaf emergence occur simultaneously in late March or April. Fruit ripening generally occurs between September and October, and seed is dispersed from October through January. Leaf fall in western Oregon is mostly completed by the third week in October.

Distribution/Habitat

Big leaf maple occurs in the Pacific Coast region from just south of the Alaska Panhandle in British Columbia south through the western portions of Washington and Oregon to southern California.

Interesting Facts

- Big leaf maple is the only commercially exported maple of the Pacific coast region.
- Native Americans used the bark for making rope and carved bowls, utensils, and canoe paddles from the wood.

References

US Forest Service Shrub Database, December 2002,
<http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/index.html>

Photo from Department of Transportation, Environmental Affairs, December 2002,
<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/eesc/environmental/>