

PLANT HEALTH CARE REPORT



Norway Maple

Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*) is a medium- to large-sized shade tree found in many northern landscapes. Norway maple was introduced to the US from Europe and Asia and now grows across much of North America in plant hardiness zones 4 through 7. The original species is reported to be invasive in many areas—its copious, viable seed is dispersed by wind and can escape to bordering forests—and is banned in some US states. Consult local university extension resources before deciding to plant Norway maple. Some cultivars (e.g., ‘Crimson King’ and ‘Columnare’) produce fewer and less viable seed.



Acer platanoides ‘Crimson King’
Photo courtesy of [Wikimedia](#)

Norway maple will grow to a height of 50 to 90 feet in the landscape and has a rounded crown with a width that is typically two-thirds of its height. The crown is very dense, producing deep shade beneath the tree. Upright varieties, such as ‘Columnare’, are available for confined spaces. Spring leaves range from green to dark red with most varieties changing to dark green in the summer then yellow in the fall. When summer color is desirable, ‘Crimson King’ is renowned for its maroon leaves.



Acer platanoides ‘Columnare’
Photo credit: [Washington State University Clark County Extension](#)

The ability to grow in tough urban sites made Norway maple desirable as a replacement street tree

Continued on page 2

for American elm. It can withstand a diversity of site conditions, including restricted rooting area, such as between the street and sidewalk. Norway maple grows in a wide range of soil textures from sandy to moderately compacted clays. Norway maple can tolerate both acidic and slightly alkaline conditions (pH of 4.0 to 7.5). Tolerance to air pollution (e.g., ozone and sulfur dioxide) is very high. Growth is fastest in full sun; however, the tree will tolerate shade when it is young.

This species can tolerate cold but sudden drops in temperature will predispose Norway maple to infection by canker fungi and frost cracks. Other drawbacks of Norway maple include branches that break during storms and a very dense canopy and shallow root system that restricts grass or ground covers from growing under its crown. Norway maple is also prone to forming circling roots that become girdling roots, which grow into the stem eventually cutting off nutrient and water movement between the roots and crown.

Drought may lead to decline and occasionally, physiological leaf scorch, which appears as marginal browning during the summer. A 2–4” layer of mulch extending to the dripline offsets some of these problems by conserving soil moisture, preventing mower or string trimmer damage to the roots, and adding nutrients to the soil as it breaks down.

Norway maple is susceptible to a number of leaf spot diseases that may disfigure leaves and cause early

Monitoring and Treatment Considerations for Norway Maple

Winter

Monitor for scale, cankers, and twig borers; treat as needed. *Remove dead, dying, diseased, and broken branches. *Reduce or remove branches to allow light penetration and air movement. For young trees, install fencing to prevent deer browse.

Early spring

Expose and inspect root collar for problems. Add mulch as necessary. Sample soil for nutrient and pH levels.

Mid-spring

Apply fungicide treatment to suppress anthracnose and leaf spot if there is a history of this disease or excessive rain.

Late spring

Repeat fungicide treatment to suppress anthracnose and leaf spot as needed. Monitor for leaf-feeding and scale insects; treat as needed.

Early summer

Repeat fungicide treatment to suppress anthracnose and leaf spot as needed. Monitor for leaf-feeding and scale insects; treat as needed.

Mid to late summer

Monitor irrigation and soil moisture to minimize water stress and prevent root disease, especially on newly planted trees. Monitor for leaf-feeding insects; treat as needed. Inspect mulch levels and adjust as needed.

defoliation. Cankers, diseases of the bark, occur mainly after severe winters or extended droughts. They cause branch dieback and can kill the tree if they progress into the stem. Root and wilt diseases caused by *Verticillium*, *Phytophthora*, and *Armillaria* can cause dieback of the crown and eventual death.

Norway maple is susceptible to several important decay fungi that attack the wood. These fungi enter through improper pruning cuts and other injuries to the stem and branches. Decay can structurally weaken the wood, increasing the potential for tree failure.

Many insects and mites attack maples. Leaf-feeding caterpillars include spongy moth (*Lymantria dispar*), tent caterpillar (*Malacosoma distria*) and cankerworms. Aphids and scale can cause honeydew to drip onto surfaces below the tree. Fungi, collectively called sooty mold, grow in the honeydew and form a black coating on leaves and twigs. Twig borers or twig girdlers cause twig or leaf drop during the summer.

Sapsuckers, deer, and squirrels attack sugar maples to eat or drink the sweet sap. These wounds may girdle the stem or provide entry for canker fungi.

Fall

If sucking insects were problematic this past growing season, consider treating with an appropriately timed systemic product. Apply deer repellent treatment on young trees as needed.

*Fertilize, adjust pH, and amend soil according to soil analysis.

*Fertilization and pruning may be done during other seasons if necessary.
