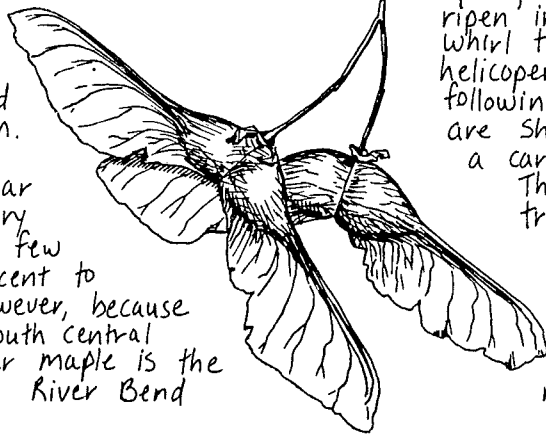
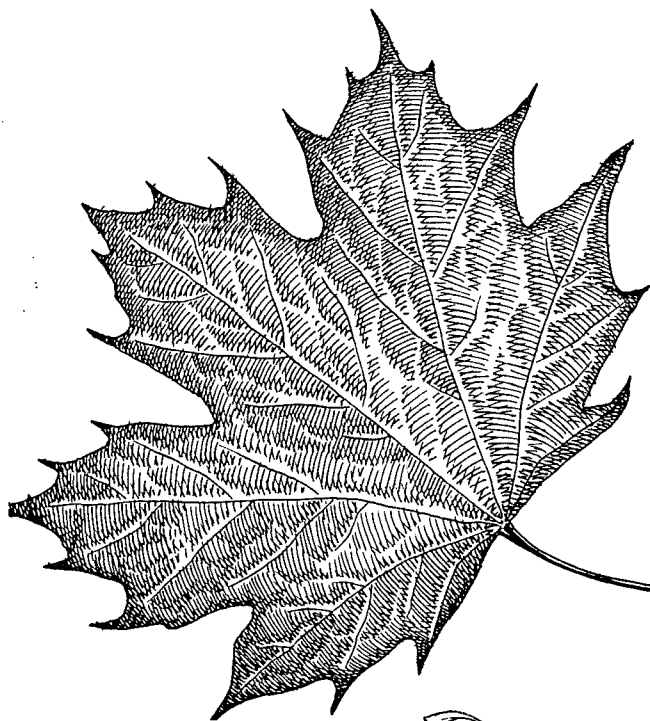
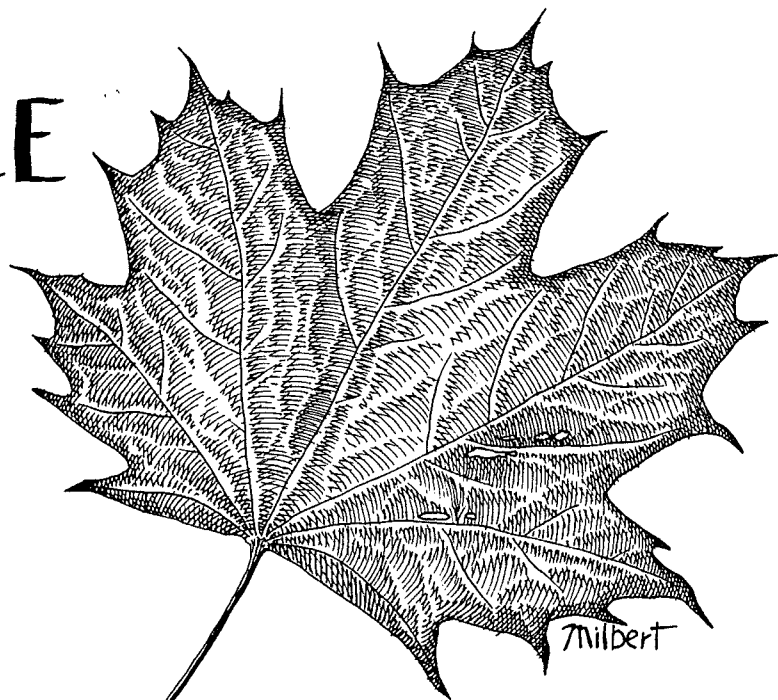


River Bend Naturalists Notebook

Presented by: RIVER BEND NATURE CENTER, Faribault, MN 55021

SUGAR MAPLE

Acer saccharum



grayish-brown bark. The branches of young trees are smooth and pale grey. Sometimes with whitish blotches. The leaves are 3-5 inches in diameter, usually palmately 5-lobed. The leaves are bright green above, pale below. Both the male and female greenish-yellow, long stemmed flowers are found on the same tree, but in separate clusters, appearing in early Spring. The double, large-winged seeds ripen in mid to late summer and whirl to the ground like small helicopters. They germinate the following Spring. The very small seedlings are shade-tolerant and often form a carpet on the forest floor. The Sugar Maple is a slow growing tree, reaching a height of 60-100 feet with a 2-3 foot diameter trunk. A mature tree reaches at least 200 to 300 years of age. They grow well from seeds, making for an attractive ornamental shade tree.

In Minnesota, the Sugar Maple furnishes virtually all the sap used in maple syrup production. The Black Sugar Maple, which is somewhat similar in appearance, has a very limited distribution in a few southeastern counties adjacent to Iowa and Wisconsin. However, because of its distribution in south central Minnesota, the Black Sugar maple is the chief syrup tree at the River Bend Nature Center.

The Sugar Maple, common to most Minnesota hardwood forest areas, has a rough, furrowed

- text by Orwin A. Rustad -