

Mountain Maple

A shrub with multiple stems, or occasionally as a small tree, mountain maple is common near mountain streams in the southern and central Rockies, usually on sites with extra moisture, at elevations from 5000 to 10500 feet (1500 to 3200 m). Maples may reach fifteen feet high (5 m). As a small tree the trunk diameter may grow to 6 inches (15 cm).

Mountain maple is a seral species, sprouting vigorously from roots following fire or logging. Since it can tolerate shade it often grows under the canopy of larger trees. Mule deer, elk, and moose eat the leaves and twigs, and it is one of the preferred winter foods of these animals.

Mountain maple has features typical of other maple trees: leaves with three or five sharp-pointed lobes, and paired winged maple seeds called samara. The winged seeds become bright red in spring before they are mature. The scientific name is *Acer glabrum* Torrey.

Identification

Leaves: 1 to 3 inches long (2.5 to 7.5 cm); doubly toothed; variable in form but with three or five sharp-pointed lobes; opposite. Sometimes in three leaflets rather than single lobed leaves. Fall leaf color bright red. Winter buds red.

Fruit: $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 inch long (18 to 25 mm) samara (winged maple seeds), diverging 90 degrees or less. Ripening in August and September., and dispersed September to February, with a few remaining through the winter.





Rocky Mountain Maple

Leaf stalks either green or bright red.

Bark: thin, smooth, red-brown.

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