

# Boxelder Maple

*Acer negundo* L.

## Taxonomic Classification

**Domain:** *Eukaryotes*

**Kingdom:** *Plantae*

**Phylum/Division:**  
*Anthophyta*

**Class:** *Dicotyledoneae*

**Order:** *Sapindales*

**Family:** *Sapindaceae*

**Genus:** *Acer*

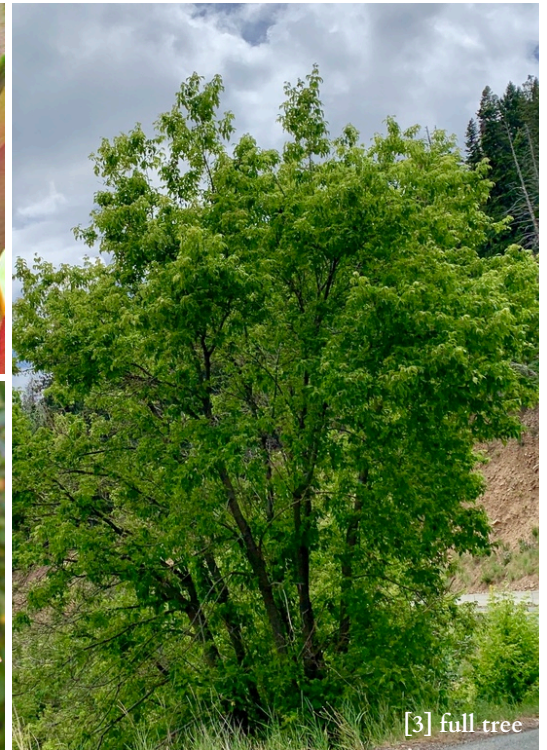
**Species:** *negundo*



[1] Fruit a Samara



[2] Compound Leaves



[3] full tree

[4]

## Botanical Description

Deciduous tree typically with a single strong woody stem, to 12 meters tall. Branches opposite (occurring directly opposite to each other). Leaves pinnately compound with up to 7 leaflets up to 10 cm long and 2.5 cm wide. Leaves may be slightly hairy or glabrate (smooth); margins (the edge of the leaf) coarsely toothed or lobed. Flowers small, not showy, bloom April to May before leaves appear, manifest in long drooping clusters, up to 25 cm long. Fruits double samaras, with wings up to 25 mm long and 10 mm wide, one wing slightly offset to the opposite side. [5]

## Identification Tips

*Acer negundo* is one of three common maples in Utah. All bear samara fruits. The boxelder maple can be identified by its compound leaves as the only maple without simple leaves.

## Fun Fact!

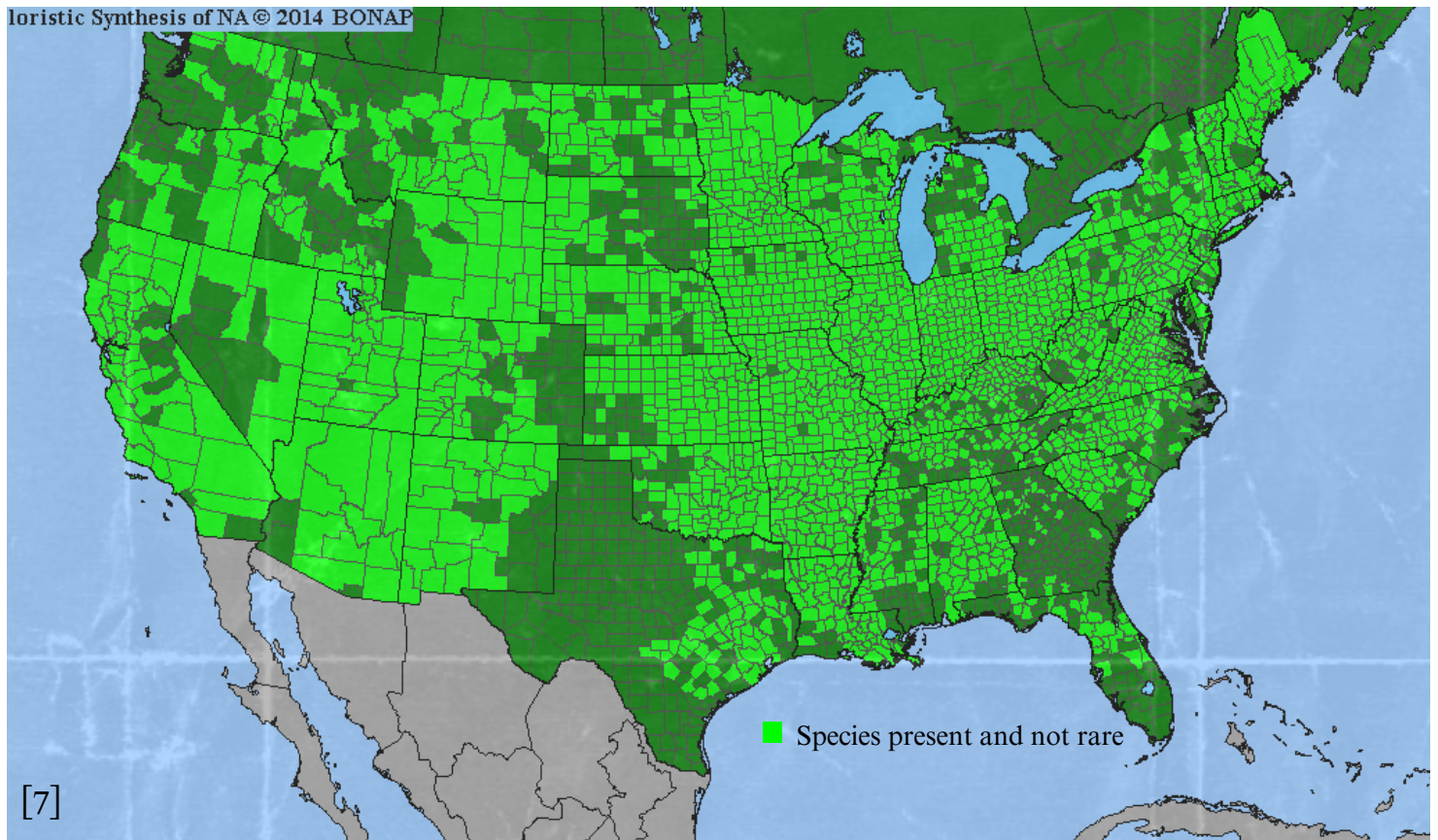
When the samara wings fall from the trees, they spin in circles. Thus, many people endearingly call them “helicopters”.

## Ethnobotanical and Other Uses

Early settlers and pioneers in Utah tapped boxelders to produce maple sugar. Today it is not a major commercial food source. [5]. The sugar has also been called “mountain molasses” by others.

“Native Americans used the cambium for food, boiled down the sap for syrup and candy, and made a tea from the inner bark to induce vomiting. The new branches were used to make charcoal for ceremonial painting.” [6]

## Habitat Range



## Conservation Status

On a global scale, the plant is considered secure [4].

## Plant Ecology

Boxelder presents as a tree along streams and rivers, but can assume a shrub-like habit on drier sites. Boxelder is commonly used for landscaping but is known as a “dirty tree”, because it sheds many samara fruits and is host to *Boisea trivittata*, the Boxelder Beetle.





## References:

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[https://explorer.natureserve.org/Taxon/ELEMENT\\_GLOBAL.2.157048/Acer\\_negundo](https://explorer.natureserve.org/Taxon/ELEMENT_GLOBAL.2.157048/Acer_negundo)
- [5] Buren, R. V. (2011). In *Woody Plants of Utah a field guide with identification keys to native and naturalized trees, shrubs, cacti, and vines* (pp. 434–435). essay, Utah State University Press.
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Information collated by Anne Robinson under the direction of Dr. Ashley N. Egan in collaboration with UVU's summer 2023 BOT 2050 and fall 2023 BOT 4300 classes and through the UVU Excelerate Program.

