LIQUIDAMBAR

Scientific Name: Liquidambar styraciflua

Form: Deciduous. Medium to large tree, growing anywhere from 33-50 feet in cultivation. The tree is a symmetrical shape.

Trunk: Average up to 2-3 feet in diameter. Tree may live to 400 years.

Foliage: Rich dark green, smooth, shiny, five-pointed star-shaped leaves which, in autumn, turn brilliant shades of purple, crimson red, orange and yellow, making it a popular ornamental tree.

Flower/Fruit: Spiked fruit composed of numerous capsules containing 1-2 small seeds.

Cultivars: Perennial shade tree. No significant pest problems.

Site Suitability: The species grows best in moist, acidic loam or clay soil.

Clearances: Suitable for parks at 8' to 12'. Good for street sides, medians and lawns.

Culture Considerations: Sun tolerant. Tolerates poor drainage, heat and damp soil.

Species Characteristics: Similar in appearance to the maple tree and commonly called the American Sweetgum, the liquidambar is named for its fragrant resin. Native to the warm and wet regions of Southeastern North America, Mexico and Central America, it is planted in the southwest for its spectacular autumn foliage. Liquidambar is a good choice as a windbreak tree because of its fast growth and tolerance of a wide variety of sites.

A Spanish naturalist, Hernandez, was the first European to discover the liquidambar or sweet gum tree in the early 16th century. It was given its botanical name because of its aromatic gum, which he described as 'liquid amber'. It was introduced to Britain in 1681.

The organizers of the September 11th Memorial in New York donated a grove of sweet gum trees to the Flight 93 Memorial in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.