ORNAMENTALS

Caddo Sugar Maples

Sugar maples often have significant problems with our Kansas weather. Our hot, often dry summers and windy conditions can shorten the life of these trees. However, some sugar maples are better adapted to Kansas conditions than others. Our John C. Pair Horticulture Center has evaluated sugar maples for well over 20 years and has identified selections that are much better adapted to Kansas. Of particular interest are the Caddo sugar maples which originated from an isolated population in Caddo, County, Oklahoma. These are true sugar maples and are considered an ectotype and are more drought tolerant, better adapted to high pH soils and more resistant to leaf scorch and tatter than the norm. Just how resistant to scorch is impressive. The last three weeks of August in 2003 saw temperatures at our research station over 100 degrees each day with no rain for the month prior. All other sugar maples in the trial had severely scorched leaves. Not a single leaf of any of the caddo maples was scorched. Leaf water potential readings taken pre-dawn showed all other trees in the trial past the wilting point while the Caddo maples were barely stressed.

Another interesting characteristic of caddo maples is that they tend to retain their leaves in the winter and therefore have been suggested as screens or for use in windbreaks. Dr. John Pair, the late director of the Horticulture Center, selected and released two Caddo maples over 10 years ago. Both these selections color early and have consistent good red fall color. Drought tolerance and resistance to leaf scorch and leaf tatter are exceptional. However, neither will do well in a heavy clay soil that is frequently saturated. These trees can be damaged or killed if planted in wet sites.

The first selection, ‘Autumn Splendor’, has the traditional sugar maple growth pattern and needs plenty of room to mature. ‘John Pair’ is smaller and more compact and more likely to fit a residential landscape. This tree is also noted for a dense, uniform crown. If you are in the market for a sugar maple, consider these before making a final decision. (Ward Upham)
Conservation Trees from the Kansas Forest Service

The Kansas Forest Service offers low-cost tree and shrub seedlings for use in conservation plantings. Plants are one to two years old and sizes vary from 8 to 18 inches, depending on species. Two types of seedlings are offered; bareroot and container-grown. Container grown provide a higher survival rate and quicker establishment. Orders are accepted from now through May 1, but order early to ensure receiving the items you want.

Orders are shipped beginning in mid-March. Approved uses for these plants include windbreaks, wood lots, wildlife habitat, timber plantations and educational and riparian (streambank) plantings. They may not be used for landscape (ornamental) plantings or grown for resale.

All items are sold in units. Each single species unit consists of 25 plants. For example, a unit of Eastern red cedar has 25 trees per unit. Though a single species unit is most commonly purchased, four special bundles are also available including a songbird bundle, quail bundle, pheasant bundle and wildlife mast bundle.

Tree planting accessories are also available including marking flags, root protective slurry, rabbit protective tubes, weed barrier fabric and tree tubes. If there have been problems with deer browsing on young trees, the tree tubes are a must.

For details and an order form, go to: http://kfs.mybigcommerce.com/ Order forms are also available from local K-State Research and Extension offices. (Ward Upham)

MISCELLANEOUS

How to Tell Poison Ivy and Virginia Creeper Apart in the Winter

I have been thinning out trees in a draw on my home place that is infested with both Poison Ivy and Virginia Creeper. During the growing season, these plants are easy to tell apart as Virginia Creeper has five-leaflets per leaf and Poison Ivy has three. However, during the winter, distinguishing between the two vines can be more difficult as the leaves have dropped. The reason it is important to be able to tell the difference is that Poison Ivy causes a rash in most people but Virginia Creeper does not. First, let’s cover some facts about Poison Ivy.

- Urushiol is the oil present in Poison Ivy that causes the rash.
- Urushiol is present in all parts of the plant but especially in the sap.
- Urushiol can cause a rash from 1 to 5 years after a plant has died.
- The amount of urushiol that covers the head of a pin can cause a rash in 500 people. The stuff is potent.
- Poison Ivy can grow as a ground cover, a shrub or a vine. We are concerned with the vine in this article.
- Using a chainsaw on Poison Ivy in the winter can release sap which makes a rash more likely. This is worse on warm days where there is more sap rise.

So, how do you tell the two apart? This is actually easy once you know what to check. Look at the aerial roots on the vines of Poison Ivy and Virginia Creeper. They resemble hairs on Poison Ivy but are plumper on Virginia Creeper and are about the size of a pencil lead. (Ward Upham)

**Newer Lights Available for Indoor Gardeners**

Many gardeners use fluorescent lights to start young vegetable and flower plants during the spring or to grow certain houseplants all year long. In the past, we used fixtures with T-12 lamps suspended a few inches above the tops of the plants. However, T-12 lamps are fading away due to newer lamps that are a better choice for indoor gardens. These are known as T-8 and T-5 lamps. The number after the “T” refers to the diameter of the lamp in eighths of an inch. Therefore, a T-12 lamp is 12/8 or 1.5 inches in diameter and are what most people are familiar with. A T-8 is 8/8 or 1 inch in diameter, and a T-5 is 5/8 of an inch in diameter.

So, does a smaller diameter mean less light? Not at all. In fact, the T-5 can be the brightest of the three. Another advantage for these newer lamps is they use less electricity per lumen. The traditional 48-inch T-12 is rated at 40 watts. However, there are newer styles of T-12's that are 34 watts. The T-8 is rated at 32 watts and the T-5 at 28 watts.

This sounds too good to be true. Are there drawbacks? Maybe so or maybe not. First is cost if you have to replace T-12 fixtures to convert to a T-8 system. However, newer fixtures may be able to handle either T-12's or T-8's. Therefore, if you purchased fluorescent fixtures in the last few years, check to see if they are rated for T-8's before replacing them. Note that lamp costs are comparable between T-12's and T-8's. The T-5 lamps may be more expensive so check prices before converting.

The question becomes, is it worth it? If you have a T-12 fixture that is rated for T-12's only and are satisfied with your results, then maybe not. However, if you are investing in new fixtures or have fixtures that can use either T-12's or T-8's, then go with the T-8's. They will use less energy, last longer and provide more light. Prices for T-5's have been dropping so you may want to consider them as well.

The newest technology is LED lighting. LED’s have several advantages over other types of lighting including durability, long life, a cool running temperature and more latitude in choosing specific wavelengths of light. Traditionally, they have been very expensive but costs are dropping rapidly. We are starting to use LED’s as supplemental lighting in the University greenhouses but would suggest only using them on a trial basis at home until you see how they perform for you. (Ward Upham)
All-America Selection Winners for 2019

All-America Selections tests and introduces new flowers and vegetables each year that have done well in trials across North America. Others have done well in certain regions of the US. This year there were six vegetable winners and four flower winners that were either “National” or “Heartland” winners.

Descriptions and images below are taken directly from All-America Selection materials. For more detailed information including how to grow, see https://all-americaselections.org/product-category/year/2019/

Vegetables

**Melon Orange SilverWave F1**
2019 AAS Edible Winner

Orange SilverWave is an exotic melon bred in South Korea with an extremely sweet, orange flesh and unique rind color. Many foodie gardeners are looking to grow something different to “Wow!” their guests and this melon will do just that! The attractive 5” oval melons grow on vigorous producing up to six fruits per vine. Whether grown in a large container or in-ground, it’s best to grow the vines on a trellis (bracing the melons) for better disease control. This AAS Winner is great eaten alone, in a fruit salad, wrapped with prosciutto or mixed into a smoothie or margarita.

**Pepper Just Sweet F1**
2019 AAS Edible – Vegetable Winner

A unique snacking pepper with four lobes like a larger bell pepper, only smaller. Not only are the 3 inch fruits deliciously sweet with nice thick walls but the plants are vigorous growers (up to 36 inches tall and 15 inches wide) that don’t need to be staked because they’ve been bred to have a strong bushy habit. Many judges conduct consumer taste tests and reported back that this pepper won those tests, hands down. The Just Sweet peppers are exceptionally bright, shiny and a vivid yellow color with a flavor described as sweet with aromatic accents. Great lunchbox item for kids!

**Tomato Fire Fly F1**
2019 AAS Edible – Vegetable Winner

Similar to the Goldilocks story, this adorable newcomer is not as small as a currant tomato and not as large as a cherry tomato, but is a “just right” in-between size. The fruits produced are super sweet pale white to pale yellow round fruits less than 1 inch in size and weigh about 1/2 oz. Delicate, translucent skins offer a mild acid flavor that enhances the sweet taste. They’re small juicy fruits exploding with flavor, perfect for snacking and in salads. Indeterminate plants must be staked or caged as
they grow upward to 5-6 feet and have good disease resistance.

**Tomato Red Torch F1**  
2019 AAS Edible/Vegetable Winner

Red Torch is a striped oblong tomato with 1.5” long fruits that weigh about 1.5 ounces. This hybrid is a very prolific early-season producer. The combination of excellent flavor, great texture, and high yields make this hybrid better than other varieties in the trendy niche market of striped tomatoes. Plants have been bred with excellent tolerance to environmental stresses like heat and harsh growing conditions. Fruits are borne on indeterminate vines that grow 5-6’ tall and ripen 60-70 days from transplanting. Judges were pleased with both the earliness and yield of this variety in addition to the unique skin coloration.

**Tomato Sparky XSL F1**  
2019 AAS Edible-Vegetable Winner

Sparky is one of the few X-tended Shelf Life (XSL) cherry tomatoes available to home gardeners. Sparky brags about being early to mature, prolific and very flavorful. Fruits are well suited for market growers and produce a large number of usable fruits per plant. You’ll enjoy gardening with these plants that have excellent tolerance to environmental stresses like heat and harsh growing conditions. Very sweet fruits have an average Brix score of 8.5. Round fruits weigh 1 ounce and are 1inch in diameter. Indeterminate 5-6’ plants produce fruits 60-70 days from transplant.

**Flowers**

**Begonia Viking™ XL Red on Chocolate F1**  
2019 AAS Flower Winner

A brand new begonia with large, uniquely colored dark leaves has arrived! Judges were impressed with how the deep bronze/brown color remained sharp and intense throughout the season, no matter where they were located; north, south, east or west. The color tones shine through to give a stunning garden appearance. Covered with vibrant red flowers, the compact plant retains its shape well and does not become rangy. “Given the options, I would choose this variety for my landscape beds.” states a judge who plans beds for a public garden. “This year’s weather seemed unusually conducive to disease on large-leaf begonias but none of these plants were affected” states another judge. These extra-large (XL) mounded plants are perfect in both landscapes and containers.

**Marigold Big Duck Gold F1**  
2019 AAS Flower Winner

QUACK! There’s a new marigold in the pond! Big Duck Gold sports very large golden-yellow flowers that continue blooming throughout the season, much longer than the comparisons. These marigolds begin the
season putting energy into establishing a solid, healthy plant with clean, deep-green foliage. Then, when it starts blooming, watch out! Full, “plump” blooms top the 15” plants (which are slightly taller than the more compact comparison varieties) and continue blooming through the end of the season. You’ll want to use these marigolds everywhere: in beds and containers; in landscapes as mini hedges, back of the border plants, or even as a filler in new perennial beds.

**Nasturtium Baby Rose**
2019 AAS Flower Winner

Exciting news! The last nasturtium AAS Winner was back in the early days, in the 1930’s. Now it’s time to introduce a wonderful rose colored nasturtium perfect for today’s gardens. Baby Rose is a petite-flowered, mounding variety with healthy, dark foliage ideal for containers and small space gardens. AAS’ expert judges praised the uniformly compact plants that sported flowers with consistent coloration. Their compact habit means less “flower flopping” with their blooms remaining upright throughout the season. The rose color is uncommon in nasturtiums and contrasts beautifully with the dark-green foliage. Bonus: both the leaves and flowers are edible!

**Petunia Wave® Carmine Velour F1**
2019 AAS Flower Winner

This newest color of the popular Wave® petunias was one of the highest scoring plants in the 2018 trials! AAS judges enthusiastically came up with an array of ways to describe the unique carmine rose color: “Fabulous,” “Stunning,” “Intense,” “Vibrant,” “Lively,” “Great color,” “Bright,” “Non-fading,” “Outstanding,” “My favorite,” “Bright colors regardless of clouds or sun,” “Tough competition but this entry shined through,” and so on. You get the picture; the judges loved this entry!

Large 2-2.5 inch flowers literally cover the easy-care spreading plants that rarely need deadheading because new blooms continuously pop-up and cover the spent blooms. Wave® is an excellent landscape performer and does equally as well in containers or hanging baskets as it does in the landscape. (Ward Upham)

**Contributors:** Ward Upham, Extension Associate
nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

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