

Sycamore

Scientific Name: *Acer pseudoplatanus* **Irish Name:** Seiceamar

The sycamore tree is not native to Ireland. It was thought to have been introduced into Ireland centuries ago and has since naturalised here. It is native to central, eastern and southern Europe. The sycamore is species of maple tree, which are a group of trees known as Acer.

It is a large, fast-growing tree, reaching 25-30 metres in height, with a large domed crown that can spread about 16 metres. It is deep rooted and has a thick trunk, covered in a grey-brown scaly bark. Its branches are greyish and smooth and its crown has a dense covering of leaves.

Come the spring, it produces buds, which open up to produce leaves that are palmate. This means they have lobes which radiate out from a common point. The sycamore's five-lobed leaves have a serrated outer edge. When young, the stems of the leaves are red in colour but turn green as the tree matures. A deciduous tree, the leaves turn yellowish-orange in autumn and by wintertime the branch are bare.



The 5-lobed leaf of the sycamore.



Top: Its flowers. Bottom: Its fruits.

Tiny Helicopters!

In the spring, the sycamore tree produces hanging clusters of small, yellowish-green flowers. These are pollinated by the wind and by insects and go on to produce a pair of winged fruit (known as samaras). These fruits spread quickly, falling from the trees like tiny helicopters, spinning in the breeze. Some are eaten by wildlife and others find suitable conditions on the ground for the seeds to grow into new trees. Sycamore trees can be invasive as they spread so easily by seed.



The sycamore are a great source of timber.

A Hardy Tree

Sycamores will grow in almost any conditions. They are hardy and are tolerant of wind and are good for growing in coastal or other exposed areas. Because they also tolerate pollution, they grow well in cities. They can usually be found growing in woods, hedges and waste ground. They like a well-drained soil, which they prefer it to be acidic but will tolerate lime. They grow best in full sun or a little shade.

Sycamore can live for up to 400 years. It is a great source of timber, producing a light coloured wood that is used to make household utensils, doors, windows and flooring.



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