

Maidenhair Tree

Ginkgo biloba



GENERAL DESCRIPTION: A "living fossil" because it has been around for 225-280 million years, this tree was 'rediscovered' in a Chinese Buddhist temple garden and has become a very popular street tree. Unlike most other street trees Ginkgo is a gymnosperm which means it does not produce a fruit only a seed. As a young tree it is 'gauky' with branches springing out but as it ages it becomes fuller, developing wide and spreading with massive picturesque branches. The leaves have a unique fresh green, flutter in the breeze, have a special shape and turn a magnificent yellow in the fall, sometimes all falling in a single day. The bark is gray-brown with ridges and dark furrows, quite intriguing. Beware the female tree, the ripe seeds stink.

HABIT AND SIZE: so-So' high and 30-40' wide, eventually wider than high and as high as 100'. Sort of pyramidal when young and wide spreading with age but the branches come out at such acute angles and with such an interrupted pattern that the habit is hard to describe. Can be fast growing in youth but slows considerably -with age.

LANDSCAPE VALUE: Very tolerant of pollution and relatively fast growing initially. Used quite a bit as a street tree but generally good for public areas. Not much for shade but unique in form. Leaves very pleasing and comfortable green and fall color spectacular. Never plant a female because the soft outer layer of the seed smells like rancid butter.

LEAVES: Alternately arranged, simple clustered in 3's and 5's on spur branches, fan shaped and dichotomously veined, partially divided or incised at the broad end. 2-3" long and equally wide. Color a bright fresh green, hairless. Leaf blade tapers into a 1.5-3.5 " petiole.

FLOWERS: No true flowers but male and female reproductive systems borne on separate plants on short modified cones in March to April.

FRUIT: No true fruit, only a seed with a soft outer layer and a seed like inner layer. Very malodorous. Seed shaped like a plum 1-1.5" long and tan to orangish in color.

BUD: At the tips of spurs, overlapping scales pointed and brownish.

DISEASES AND INSECTS: Some leaf spot problems but otherwise disease free.

HARDINESS AND RANGE: Zones 3-9a. Native to China

CULTIVARS: 'Autumn Gold'- a handsome male, broad spreading, 'Fastigiata' a columnar form with 'Princeton Sentry' being a male cultivar.