

OUTDOORS

Sugar maple has benefits beyond just maple syrup



NATURE NOTES
TIM NOWICKI

While driving along I-96 near Novi last week I noticed a woodlot of sugar maples. I was able to identify them from the highway by their light, yellow-green flowers that dangle in small clusters. Thousands hanging from the trees created a hue that was distinctive. Sugar maple trees are noticeable during most seasons of the year.

In late winter they provide sap for making maple syrup. Native Americans showed early European explorers the technique for producing a sugary product from the watery sap of the sugar maple. As early as 1663 Europeans were aware of this new product.

Europeans had learned of the maple sugaring process before exploration of the New World, because sugar maple trees only grow in the north eastern quadrant of North America. In states like Vermont, their forests are primarily sugar maple.

After the March run of sap to make maple syrup, flowers start to appear. Packed in tiny buds all winter, hormones traveling in the sap initiate their development. Pollen blown from tree to tree without leaves to obstruct their passage, fertilize the flowers.

Though the flowers are not as spectacular as those of the tulip tree or magnolia, they do

serve the same function — they make seeds.

During the summer, sugar maple seeds, those one winged structures that float "cup" down to the ground in September and October, grow to maturity.

They wait until the following spring to germinate into a small maple seedling. Many will be food for mice and small animals that use the nutritious packed capsule as food.

If the seed can provide nourishment for a young growing tree, it certainly has some food value for animals.

In summer, the flat, broad, leaves of the sugar maple provide shade for the forest floor. They absorb the sunlight and convert it into food for the tree and for animals that may eat the leaves.

Maple wood, a product of this conversion of sunlight, is a strong durable wood. It's not as hard as some woods, but it is tough.

One author reported that a maple forest tree out before a hard maple wood floor. Fall is also the time when sugar maples attract our attention. The concentration of sugar in the sap is higher than many other trees — that is why we tap them in spring, they have more sugar than most trees.

Sugar is also what helps give these trees their intense colors. Reds in particular are caused by sugar getting trapped in the leaves after a warm day and a cold night.

Throughout the year sugar maples are just one kind of tree that we should be aware of because it provides products for us and for wildlife.

FUND-RAISERS

DUCKS UNLIMITED BANQUET
The Birmingham-Bloomfield-Troy Chapter of Ducks Unlimited is holding its 22nd annual Sportsman's Dinner and Banquet beginning at 6 p.m. Wednesday, May 12, at the San Marino Club in Troy. The evening includes an open bar, dinner, door prizes, raffles, a live auction and a silent auction. Prizes include hunting trips, fishing trips, golf trips, vacation packages, women's prizes (jewelry, High Tea for Four at the Townsend) and more. Tickets are \$60 (includes a DU membership) for couples and tables of eight are available for \$480. Reservations received before May 1 will be entered in a special raffle for a Mossberg Model 500 shotgun. For tickets call (248) 608-2949.

TOURNAMENTS

TOP BASS
Top Bass Tournament Trail, a series of open singles draw bass tournaments, kicks off the 1999 season on Saturday, May 29, on Saginaw Bay. Registration is \$60 and the pay back is one place cash for every seven contestants. Baiters and non-baiters are welcome and there is no pre-registration. Call Elmer Daniels at (734) 729-1762 or Steve Randless (734) 422-5813 for more information.

OAKLAND BASS MASTERS
Oakland Bass Masters will hold a two-man team open tournament beginning at 5:30 a.m. Sunday, May 30, on Kent Lake. Entry fee is \$80 per boat and there will be a \$5 late charge for entries received after May 26. To register and for more information call Roy Randolph at (248) 642-5254.

ST. CLAIR OPEN
The Backlashers Bass Club will hold its 12th annual Lake St. Clair Open two-person bass tournament beginning at 6 a.m. Saturday, June 19. Team entry fee is \$80 if paid by May 20, \$90 at the boat launch. To register and for more information call Roger Hayslip at (734) 763-5341, Steve Taraszkiewicz at (313) 538-1202

or Jeff Mangrum at (313) 937-2190.

CLASSES

MICHIGAN DESTINATIONS
Join former state park employee Jennifer Zaenglein for an overview of great Michigan hiking and camping destinations during this program, which begins at 7 p.m. Wednesday, May 12, at REI in Northville. Call (248) 347-2100 for more information.

WOMEN'S FLY FISHING
River Bend Sports Shop in Southfield is sponsoring a Women's Fly Fishing School on Sunday, May 23. Participants will spend a fun-filled day learning the basics of fly fishing including lessons in casting, knot tying, reading the water, playing, landing and releasing fish, entomology and fly selection and more. Cost is \$125 per person and class size is limited. Call Pat Rife at (248) 350-8484 for more information and to register.

FLY FISHING SCHOOL
The River Bend Sports Shop in Southfield is sponsoring several fly fishing schools in the upcoming months. Held at the Hunters Hunt Club in Dryden and Hunters Creek Hunt Club in Metamora, the schools include lessons in basic fly fishing techniques including casting, knot tying, reading the water, playing, landing and releasing fish, entomology and fly selection and more. Classes are scheduled for May 8 and 16, June 6 and 19, July 11 and 26, Aug. 15 and 29, and Sept. 12. Call (248) 350-8484 or (248) 591-3474 to register.

MORE FLY TYING
River Bend Sports Shop in Southfield offers fly tying classes for beginners, intermediate and advanced types. Classes will be held at various times in May, June and July. For more information and to register call (248) 350-8484 or (248) 591-3474.

CLIMBING CLASS
An introductory climbing course for the novice and first-time climber is offered at various times at REI in Northville. The class covers basic indoor climbing safety, technique, equipment and terminology. The course is free and available to adults and children. Call (248) 347-2100 for

current schedules.

ACTIVITIES

TIMBERLAND SANCTUARY
Tour the Timberland Sanctuary to see spring wildflowers in bloom during this program, which begins at 2:30 p.m. Saturday, May 15. The Timberland Sanctuary is located 12 miles northeast of Pontiac. Call Fred Dye at (248) 375-2956 for more information and directions to the Timberland Sanctuary.

ISLAND LAKE HIKE
Join members of the Southeast Michigan Group, Sierra Club on a five-mile hike through Island Lake State Park on Sunday, May 16. Participants are asked to meet at noon behind the Marathon Station at Telegraph and 12 Mile roads, or at 12:45 p.m. at the Riverbend parking lot at Island Lake State Park. Call Inge Bricio at (248) 557-6865 for more information.

COMMUNITY CLEANUP
REI is recruiting volunteers for the ninth annual National Trails Day community service project. Volunteers will maintain the hiking trails at Maybury State Park beginning at 10 a.m. Saturday, June 6. Call (248) 347-2100 for details and to volunteer.

SEASON/DATES

BASS SEASON
Bass season opens Saturday, May 29, on inland lakes and Great Lakes waters excluding Lake St. Clair and the St. Clair and Detroit rivers. The season opens Saturday, June 19, on Lake St. Clair and the St. Clair and Detroit rivers.

CLUBS

FLY TYING
The River Bend Sports Shop Fly Tying Club meets every other week in Southfield. Call (248) 350-8484 or (248) 591-3474.

METRO-WEST STEELHEADERS
Metro-West Steelheaders meets at 7:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month in the cafeteria at Garden City High School. There will be a salmon fishing seminar, covering trolling, doggers, spoons, down-riggers, Loran and GPS units at the June 1 meet-

ing. Call Dominic Liparoto at (248) 476-5027 for information.

MICHIGAN FLY FISHING
The Michigan Fly Fishing Club meets at 7 p.m. the first and third Wednesdays of each month at Livonia Clarenceville Junior High. Call (810) 478-1494.

FOUR SEASONS
The Four Seasons Fishing Club meets 7:30-9:30 p.m. the first Wednesday of each month at the Civic Park Senior Center, 1521 Farmington Road, in Livonia. Visitors are invited and refreshments will be served. Call Jim Kudej at (734) 691-0843.

AMETROPARKS

METROPARK REQUIREMENTS
Most Metropark programs are free while some require a nominal fee. Advanced registration and a motor vehicle permit are required for all programs. Call the respective parks toll free at the following numbers: Stony Creek, 1-800-477-7766; Indian Springs, 1-800-477-3192; Kensington, 1-800-477-3178.

1999 PERMITS
The 1999 Huron-Clinton Metroparks annual vehicle entry permits and boat launching permits are on sale at all Metropark offices. Vehicle entry permits are \$15 (\$8 for senior citizens). The annual boat launching permits are \$18 (\$9 for senior citizens). Call 1-800-477-PARKS.

COUNTY PARKS

COUNTY PARK REQUIREMENTS
Advanced registration is required for all nature programs at Oakland County Parks. Call (810) 625-6473 to register or for more information.

SIGNS AND SYMBOLS
Celebrate Michigan Week with stories about the state's official symbols, the Michigan trivia challenge, and enjoy a guided hike and a snack during this program, which begins at 1:30 p.m. Saturday, May 15, at Independence Oaks.

SPRING STAR PARTY
Discover spring constellations in the Starlab planetarium and enjoy an outdoor telescope viewing session during this program, which begins at 9 p.m. Saturday, May 22, at Independence Oaks.

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