

GINKGOACEAE: GINKGO FAMILY

This family includes a single species, which now survives in the wild in only a small area in sw. China. Ginkgo is a common ornamental in North America. Trees are dioecious.

GINKGO *Ginkgo biloba* L.

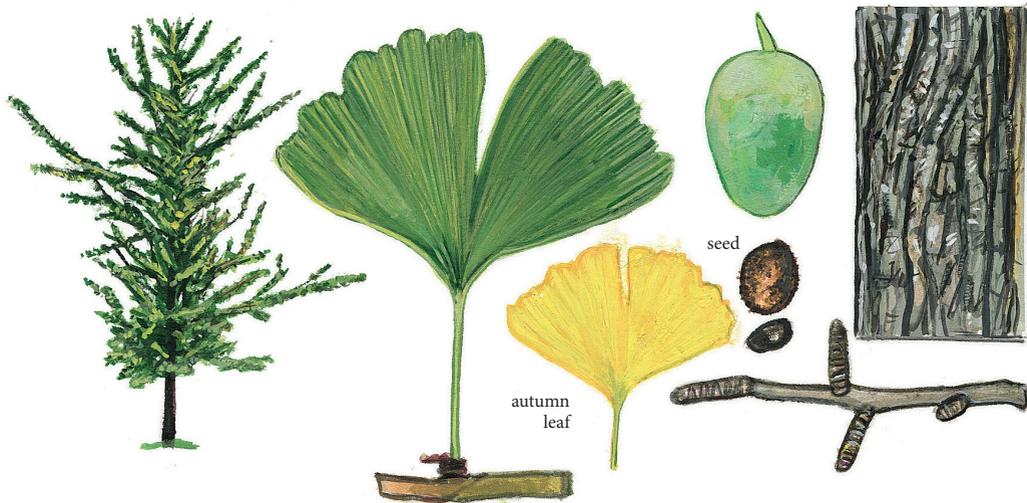
A.K.A. MAIDENHAIR TREE

QUICK ID The Ginkgo's fan-shaped leaves are unlike those of any other tree. The woody pegs covering the branches identify it in the winter.

Deciduous tree, usually with a single straight trunk, up to 30 m tall and 100 cm diam.; crown rounded or irregular. **BARK** Gray, with short, irregular furrows. **TWIG** Gray, bearing stubby, woody short shoots protruding up to 1 cm from the branch at regular intervals, each bearing a cluster of leaves and often a pollen cone or seed. **LEAF** Slightly leathery, fan-shaped, with a pattern of radiating veins (not seen in any other tree). Blade 5–10 cm broad, light green, turning golden and falling each winter. **POLLEN CONE** Borne on short shoots, catkin-like. **SEED** Naked, usually only 1, developing from a pair of ovules situated at the tip of a slender stalk borne on short shoots, appearing plum-like, almond-shaped, yellow to orange, about 2.5 cm long, the outer coating softening and giving off a foul odor when ripe.

HABITAT/RANGE Introduced; native to China. A common ornamental in temperate climates; there are unconfirmed reports of naturalization in the ne. U.S.

Notes: Millions of years ago members of the ginkgo family were common around the world, but they now occur in the wild in only a small area in sw. China. The name, meaning “silver seed,” is from Chinese. Various tissues of the plant are toxic or are used medicinally, primarily in naturopathic and Chinese traditional medicine. Apart from being attractive landscape trees in general, Ginkgos are very resistant to air pollution and are commonly planted in cities. Female plants are undesirable, due to the unpleasant odor given off by the ripe seeds. The oldest and one of the largest Ginkgos in North America was planted in 1789 and can be seen at Longwood Gardens in Pa.; its trunk exceeds 4 m in girth.



Ginkgo