

Hello Trees Resource Sheet

What to look for outdoors in Spring

Sycamore flowers to fliers



It is fun to follow the formation of the helicopter seeds we love to spin in Autumn.



Have a magnifying glass with you. There is interesting stuff to see up close.



'It's only a sicky,' says my friend. He helps in a near-by wood.



Why does he say 'only' about any tree?



And what is he calling a 'sicky'. It doesn't sound very nice.



He calls sycamore trees 'sickies'. We do pronounce sycamore 'sick-a-more' so, I suppose, it is inevitable that they should be nicknamed 'sickies'.



The 'only' is because he regards sycamore trees as weeds.
How can a tree be a weed?

One definition of a weed is 'A weed is a plant in the wrong place'.

You would think that a wood would be the right place for any tree! But sycamore trees are

- not native to Britain, so not as much wildlife depends on them;
- they grow quickly, not giving other species of tree a chance to get going;
- they grow into very big trees, shading out other species of tree;
- they reproduce abundantly, crowding out other species of tree.

So, if you don't keep 'weeding' them out, you soon have nothing but sycamores.



Sycamores are attractive in many ways, but we mustn't let them take over.



The scientific name for a sycamore is *Acer pseudoplatinus*.



That tells us that a sycamore is a kind of maple: the maples genus is *Acer*.

We now know to expect a maple-shaped leaf as on the Canadian flag.

(Not all maples have the typical maple-leaf shape, but it is what we expect of any *Acer*, and happens to be the case for a sycamore.)

The 'pseudo' in the specific name means 'false' or 'pretending to be'. We can say 'is like', too.

And what is the *Acer pseudoplatinus* pretending to be?

It is pretending to be, or is like, '*platinus*'.

Platinus is the genus of plane trees.



And in what way is a sycamore like a plane tree? Do you know? Can you guess?



Both plane trees and sycamore trees have

- maple-shaped leaves
- flaky bark.



I use flaky bark to spot a sycamore: its flakes are not as thin as a plain tree's flakes.

I would say that sycamore flakes are smaller, more rounded and thicker.

What would you say?



Find a sycamore and let me know.

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How do you find a sycamore? Look for a tree with

- dark green, maple-shaped leaves;
- flowers shaped like a flat-topped sausage, about the size of a sausage, yellow and hanging down OR seeds that are Y-shaped, hanging down in bunches where they formed from the sausage-shaped flowers;
- branching to form umbrella-shapes across the wide-spread crown;
- bark flaking in thick pink-grey-brown swirls.



Leaf: maple-shaped



Flowers: yellow, flat-topped sausages



Seeds: Y-shaped



Branching: umbrella-shapes across wide crown



Bark: swirls in thick brown-grey-pink flakes



[Let us know](#) all about your sycamore tree

– especially your words to describe its bark.