

Sweet Gum

(*Liquidambar styraciflus*)

Family: Hamamelidaceae

Distribution: Eastern United States; East Texas eastward to central Florida; Florida northward to southeast Connecticut; Connecticut southwestward to southeastern Illinois and East Texas; Absent from much of Appalachian region; Often cultivated in southern California.

Sweet Gum is a very distinct species that becomes a large tree under suitable growing conditions, which typically involve moist soils. The leaves are rather star-shaped with their five or seven lobes. Flowers develop in the early spring, with male flowers in small clusters that soon fall from the tree, and female flowers in rounded clusters that ripen into a prickly ball over an inch in diameter. The rather abundant pollen is spread bywind.

