

American Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*)

Sycamores are large (75 to 100 feet at maturity), fast growing trees. American Sycamore is found predominantly in the eastern half of the lower 48 states, but California and Arizona Sycamores are found in the states they are named after. All Sycamores in the genus *Platanus* cross-react allergenically to a great degree. The Sycamore Maple, found in the northeastern US is actually not a Sycamore at all, but rather a true Maple tree (with Maple tree allergens). While the flowers of Sycamore trees are very inconspicuous, the fruit of the Sycamore is very evident and identifiable. The spherical fruit (called an achene) is readily seen in the Fall and persists through the winter, almost appearing to be small Christmas ornaments on the then-barren large trees. One common name of the Sycamore is the Buttonball tree!

Sycamore trees bloom in March and April. The large trees can produce significant amounts of pollen, pollen which has been classified as a moderately severe allergen. Most clinical work has been done in Europe with the London Plane Tree (the same genus, *Platanus*, as Sycamore). Those studies have shown extensive cross-reactivity between different members of the *Platanus* genus, as well as the ability of Sycamore allergens to cause asthma and allergic rhinitis symptoms in susceptible patients.

