

INVASIVE OF THE MONTH

Trees can be invasive, too

From Brodhead Watershed Association

As you're raking the last leaves of fall, chances are you are gathering up some of the prolific Norway maple (*Ascer platantoides*).

Not as colorful as our beautiful native sugar maple, Norway maple has escaped from its early use on this continent as an easy-to-grow tree for cities. Like so many plants that have become invasive, the Norway maple was brought here on purpose — John Bartram of Philadelphia imported seedlings from London in 1756.

Over those long years, it has spread widely throughout the United States, from the Canadian border to the Carolinas.



Norway maple leaves are as wide as they are long, so the leaf is close to circular, compared to sugar maple leaves, which are longer than they are wide. (Photo courtesy Andrew Conboy)

It produces enormous numbers of seeds, with wings that allow it to spread on every breeze. Importantly, it is extremely tolerant of dense shade. This means it can germinate even in our dark native forests, and it grows quickly, shading out many native plants, such as wildflowers.

IDENTIFYING NORWAY MAPLE

It's easy to confuse Norway maple and sugar maple — the leaves are very similar. A way to tell the difference is to crush a leaf or twig. Norway maple will "ooze a milky sap when cut or torn," according to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

ERADICATING NORWAY MAPLE

Pulling seedlings out by the roots is easy when the soil is wet. For larger trees, you can girdle them in spring by cutting deeply into the bark all the way around the trunk.

For information about eradicating Norway maple, go to www.elibrary.dcnr.pa.gov. For information on invasives in the Brodhead watershed, go to www.brodheadwatershed.org.