

Sweetgum



GARDEN EARTH
NATURALIST

ECO-SERVICE CARDS

SWEETGUM

Liquidambar styraciflua L.

FAMILY: Hamamelidaceae

IDENTIFICATION CLUES



SIZE: large tree, 80 - 100 feet tall



LEAF: simple, 4 -5 inch long star-shaped leaves; fragrant when crushed; deciduous; yellow, red or maroon fall color



FLOWER: male and female flowers. Male flowers green, in groups of small clusters at end of branch; female flowers in single cluster



FRUIT: round and prickly with a long stem; green, turning brown



BARK: gray with long, narrow ridges



Where to Look

Sweetgum is found throughout Georgia but prefers moist bottomland forests. It produces abundant seed and can be invasive in hardwood and pine plantations.

Importance to Humans

Sweetgum is an important commercial hardwood in the South and is used for furniture, plywood, pianos, and pulpwood.

Importance to Wildlife

Mice and rabbits eat immature stems. Birds, squirrels and chipmunks eat the seeds.