

Saratoga Horticultural Research Foundation, Inc.
15185 Murphy Avenue
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Ginkgo biloba 'Autumn Gold'

Ginkgo biloba is regarded by arboriculturists, landscape architects, park superintendents, nurserymen, and others as one of the most attractive and durable deciduous trees for streetside, park, and garden planting in the United States.

This remarkable species is the sole living representative of a group of gymnospermous trees that flourished in an early geological era. Now, it is presumably unknown in the wild state. Fortunately, it was preserved in the temple gardens of the Orient. From there it was taken to Europe in the 18th century. About 1786, the first plants were brought to the United States from England. At least one of these is still living and is in a vigorous condition.

Though the flowers of the ginkgo are insignificant, the leaves have a unique fan shape and retain a healthy deep green throughout the season. These turn to a rich golden yellow in late autumn, perhaps as bright a golden yellow as that of any cultivated tree in America. In the opinion of the writers, the aspen, Populus tremuloides, is the only tree in the west to surpass the ginkgo in autumn beauty, especially as it grows in large colonies at the higher elevations.

All tree specialists agree that the ginkgo is a long-lived tree and has a relatively low maintenance cost. Pests do not seem to bother it, and it casts a minimum of litter. In the industrial cities, it appears to be indifferent to amounts of smog to which some plants are quite sensitive. It is hardy throughout most of the

United States, and thrives under conditions of average to good soil, adequate nourishment, and occasional deep watering. The average annual growth of vigorous young trees observed in parts of the west has been from 1 1/2 to 2 feet.

The somewhat limited use of this species to date in the United States has been due chiefly to the fleshy, foul-smelling fruits of the pistillate (female) tree. Fortunately, this undesirable characteristic can be readily eliminated by propagating only the staminate (male) form of the species by vegetative means. Another disadvantage of ginkgo for streetside planting is the wide variation in habit of growth of individual trees when propagated by seeds. A good example of seedling variation may be seen in a plantation on Roosevelt Boulevard (U.S. Route 1) on the northeast side of Philadelphia. According to Walter B. Satherthwaite, Principal Arboriculturist, Fairmount Park, Philadelphia, these seedling ginkgoes were propagated at the Park Nursery from seeds collected from two fastigiata trees growing in Fairmount Park. It is obvious that uniformity in conformation is desirable in any tree used for avenue planting.

Ginkgo fruits ripen in early fall. At the Saratoga Horticultural Foundation in California, seeds are cleaned and stored in damp sand at a moderately cool temperature. They are sowed in early January in shaded seedbeds out of doors. Seedlings are dug the following December and replanted in #12 containers and grown on under lath. Budding in late summer is preferred at Saratoga. A modified chip bud is used, making a cut 1 1/4 inches to 1 1/2 inches

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Ginkgo biloba 'SARATOGA'

Among the most useful and popular tree selections by the Saratoga Horticultural Foundation have been Ginkgo biloba 'Autumn Gold' and G.b. 'Fairmount'. Under observation for over ten years is a third male form which we are offering as Ginkgo biloba 'Saratoga'. Supplies are limited, but we think it may prove useful because of its limited stature and upright habit, and attractive because of the unique character of the leaves.

Main branches are ascending; smaller branches are ascending or horizontal but short, forming a full, dense tree of pyramidal outline. Growth has been slow, and we estimate eventual size to be one-half to two-thirds that of the cultivar "Autumn Gold" grown under similar conditions.

The very abundant drooping leaves are triangular and elongated with a fimbriated or sometimes deeply cut lower end, resembling those of the Fish-tail Palm. Fall color is like all Ginkgoes--bright yellow--with the leaves falling quickly to make a colorful pattern on the ground.

Resistant to insect pests, Armillaria root rot, and smog, it is also adaptable to various soil conditions. It does require a reasonably good degree of soil moisture.

We would like to see it planted in residential gardens and as a street tree where small to moderate size is a requirement.