

GREEN THUMB GARDENING



By CHRISTINE COLE

SPRING SAP

Does the approach of warm spring weather make you think about Maple Syrup? It is no longer a common practice. But it used to be. Our native Indians and the early settlers used to make it an annual festive event. Maple Syrup and Honey were their main sweeteners, so making their own Maple Syrup was a necessity. Now it is just an enjoyable hobby.

Sugar, Silver and Red Maples all produce sap that can be reduced to a sweet syrup. However, Sugar or Hard Maples sap contains twice the sugar content of the other Maples. That means that the sap from Sugar Maple trees boils down to syrup much faster. It takes approximately 33 gallons of sap to produce 1 gallon of syrup. That equates to a lot of boiling to drive off the excess moisture. As the sap boils down you keep adding more sap to replace the lost moisture and/or to cool down the mixture from boiling over. Boiling over can be a major crisis, not to mention the loss of the syrup - that tasteless sap that turns into a golden, sweep syrup.

The average sap run is from early March to early April, with the heaviest flow at the beginning of the season, and in healthy well branched trees. Trees with few or dead branches should not be tapped. The spiles are usually inserted into small holes drilled into the bark when the right temperatures fall below zero and the days are warm and sunny. That's when the sap will start flowing. If done too soon the holes will dry up before the sap starts moving. It is not recommended to tap trees that are less than 10 inches in diameter, and only put two spiles in a tree that is 20 inches in diameter.

Each week Christine Cole of Tuitman's Garden Centre and Landscaping, Highway 25, 1 mile south of Acton, 853-2480, will be presenting helpful tips and information to assist you in creating your garden show-place!

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