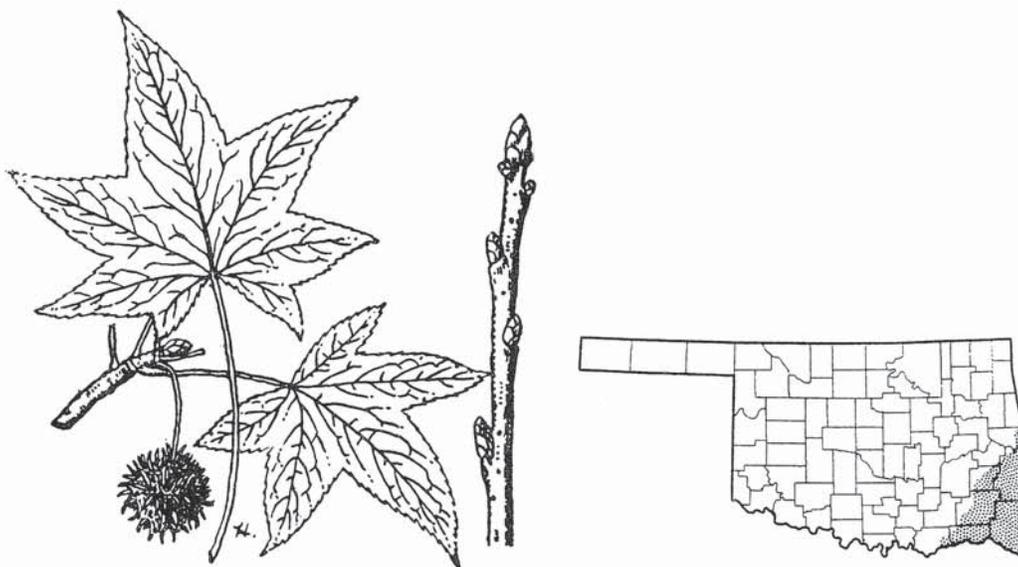


## 82. SWEETGUM

*Liquidambar styraciflua* L.; redgum.

Large aromatic trees 60-100 ft (18-30 m) high, with straight trunk 2½ ft (0.8 m) in diameter and conical to cylindrical crown. Twigs stout, green to light brown and gray, hairy when young, some forming corky wings. Buds long-pointed, shiny brown, covered by several scales.



Leaves long-stalked, *star-shaped* or maplelike, 3-6 in (7.5-15 cm) long and wide, with 5, sometimes 7, long-pointed finely saw-toothed lobes and 5 main veins from notched base, *shiny dark green* above, beneath light green with tufts of rusty hairs at base, with resinous odor when crushed, turning reddish in autumn.

Flowers tiny, male and female in separate greenish yellow ball-like clusters (heads) ½ in (13 mm) in diameter in early spring.

Fruits (multiple) long-stalked hard *brown balls* (heads) 1-1¼ in (2.5-3 cm) in diameter, remaining attached into winter, composed of many individual fruits each ending in 2 long *curved prickly points* and each with 1-2 long-winged brown seeds.

Bark gray or brown, thick, deeply furrowed into narrow scaly ridges.

Wood with reddish brown heartwood ("redgum") and pinkish white sapwood ("sapgum"), diffuse porous, medium-textured, heavy (sp. gr. .44), moderately soft to hard, the heartwood moderately durable. A leading wood for furniture and cabinets. Principal uses are lumber, veneer, plywood, pulpwood, barrels, and boxes and crates.

Common and dominant in sweetgum-blackgum flood plain forests and pine-sweetgum forests, also a common pioneer in abandoned fields, se. Okla. from Sequoyah Co. sw. to Bryan Co. (7 cos.). Common to abundant in moist soil of valleys and lower slopes in hardwood forests and scattered with pines, e. third of U.S. except n. border; a variety from Mexico s. to Nicaragua. Zone 4.

Sweetgum is an important timber tree, ranking second to oaks in production among hardwoods of U.S. A handsome shade tree with odd star-shaped leaves turning reddish in autumn. The gum "sweetgum" or storax, from the trunks of this and related Old World species, has served in perfumes and medicines.