

Sassafras Tree



A deciduous tree (or shrub) native to North America, growing sassafras trees can grow to 30 to 60 feet tall by 25 to 40 feet wide with a rounded canopy made up of short layered branches.

Long grown for its medicinal properties as well as file powder (powdered leaves), the leaves of growing sassafras trees are initially a vibrant green, but come autumn they turn glorious colors of orange-pink, yellow-red and scarlet-purple. These eye-popping colors make it a lovely tree specimen for the landscape, while its canopy habit creates a cool shaded oasis during the hot summer months.

Along with providing flavorful leaves used to make drinks and cure meats, Sassafras trees have a natural aroma, similar to root beer, that naturally sweetens the landscape during warm summer days.

The Sassafras tree's 4- to 8-inch leaves emit a fragrant aroma when crushed, as do the showy yellow spring blooms. The flowers of the sassafras tree give way to dark blue fruit, or drupes, favored by a variety of birds. Leaves and twigs of the tree are eaten by other wildlife such as deer, cottontails and even beaver. The bark of the tree has a wrinkled appearance. While the tree has a propensity for multiple trunks, it can easily be trained into a single trunk.

Once the vibrant leaves drop, they reveal the Sassafras Trees' stunning wrinkled white bark that stands out amongst the winter landscape with eye-catching beauty.

Grow Sassafras Trees anywhere in the country. Cold temperatures and ice up north, and humidity and heat down south, pose no threats to this low maintenance, hardy tree.

It's Easy to Plant & Care for Your Sassafras Tree

Sassafras Tree is a source of flavors, texturizers and spices for foods. This variety, known as (*Sassafrax variifolium*) performs their best in USDA growing zones 4 through 9.

Sassafras trees are moderate growers, maturing to a height of 30-60 feet tall and 30 feet in width.

Location: When planting a Sassafras tree, find a location that offers full to partial sun. Sassafras trees will grow in part shade to part sun and are soil tolerant. They will grow in clay, loam, sand and acidic soils, provided there is adequate drainage. The tree will do best in partial shade with a balanced soil with sand to aid in drainage. Also, choose a spot that is sheltered from heavy winds.

This moderate grower has a surface root system, which does not cause any problems; however, it has a very long and deep tap root that makes transplanting larger specimens a challenge.



Planting Instructions:

- 1) Dig your hole 3 times the width and slightly shallower than the root ball.
- 2) Loosen the soil, in and around the hole so the roots can easily break through.
- 3) Use your fingers to separate the roots of your Sassafras Tree and gently position downward in the hole. The top of the root flare (where the roots end and the trunk begins) should be about an inch above the surrounding soil.
- 4) Hold the tree straight as you begin to backfill the site, tamping down the soil as you go.
- 5) When finished, apply water to settle the soil and remove any air pockets that may have formed.

Mulching: Protect the roots in the cold of winter by applying a thick layer of pine needles, bark or wood mulch. To avoid fungus and rot, keep the mulch about 2 inches from the trunk. Mulching will also help with keeping the soil moist as well as to deter weeds and grasses from growing.

Watering: Water your Sassafras Tree 2-3 times a week during the summer and fall, only when the soil becomes dry on top. Watering in winter is rarely necessary. When you water, give it a good, deep soaking to ensure it penetrates down to the deepest roots. Avoid over watering, as these trees do not like sitting in water.

Fertilizing: Little or no fertilizer is needed during the first growing season. Too much fertilizer when the tree is young can stunt root growth and possibly injury the tree. You can fertilize established trees twice a year - in February and again in mid-June.

Pruning: Sassafras Trees don't really need much pruning, except initially to develop a strong structure. Pruning should be done in late winter or early spring before the tree starts leafing out.

