

# American Sweetgum

*Liquidambar styraciflua*

Thanks to the generosity of the **Friends of the Pittsburgh Urban Forest (FPUF)** and some intrepid volunteers, Lawrenceville now has a new sweetgum tree in Arsenal Park. The tree was planted as part of a May 3rd Lawrenceville Tree Care Day, organized by Lawrenceville's Tree Tender group.



Matt Erb of **Friends of the Pittsburgh Urban Forest** admires the sweetgum tree planted in Arsenal Park

Although the tree is just a sapling now, before long it will be providing a lot more shade. Sweetgum trees can grow to be 60' to 75' tall and have a 45' to 50' spread. The tree grows at a moderate to fast rate, so we can expect the one in the park to grow anywhere from 1 to 2-1/2 feet a year, depending on conditions. The site is well-suited to the tree: it will get a lot of sun, yet the soil should remain moist because of the shady canopy of nearby trees. Here the new tree will be the third in what is now a row of sweetgums.

Native to our area, the American Sweetgum has distinctive star-shaped, toothed leaves with 5 to 7 lobes. Both male and female flowers usually grow on the same tree, but are not showy. Seed pods are small spiny globes that would be great for art projects, but you'll have to contend with the song birds and squirrels that will be after the seeds. Wild turkeys like them, too. Deeply-grooved gray bark is another way to identify a mature sweet gum, but the tree is most stunning in the fall when its leaves turn yellow, orange, red, or purple – sometimes all on the same tree.

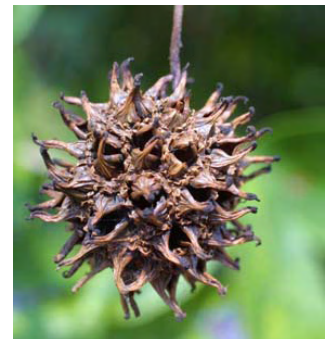
The sweetgum is beautiful as a live tree, but it's also highly valued for furniture and other wood products because the wood veneer can take a high polish. The name "sweetgum" derives from its sap that can harden into clumps that some people chew.

- L. Anderson

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**Tree-of-the-Month** is published by Lawrenceville Tree Tenders, an all-volunteer organization with a mission to maintain existing street trees, educate residents, and re-forest the neighborhood. The group meets monthly to discuss current projects, including a tree park, a street tree master plan, and tree care days.

E-mail <lvreetenders@gmail.com> with comments or for more information about the group.



## Get Involved!

The next **Lawrenceville Tree Care Day** is July 12th, in partnership with the Lawrenceville Corporation and Lawrenceville United. Contact <Nadia@lawrencevillecorp.com> for information.

You can sign up for 4 upcoming **Tree Tender Courses** at <www.pittsburghforest.org>.