



Project BudBurst

A National Phenology Network Field Campaign for Citizen Scientists



www.budburst.org

Common Name: Box elder, Ash-leaf maple, California boxelder, western boxelder, Manitoba maple

Scientific Name: *Acer negundo*

Plant Family: Aceraceae

Identifying Characteristics:

Size: Box elder reaches 6 to 20 m (18 to 65 ft).

Leaves: Leaves opposite are pinnately compound; the entire leaf is 13 to 20 cm (5 to 8 in) long. There are 3-5 leaflets per leaf, with the central leaflet being the largest. Leaflets are 5 to 12 cm (2 to 5 in) long with 3-5 lobes and toothed margins.

Flowers: The flowers are small and yellow-green, with no petals. They are borne in hanging, drooping clusters. The flowers develop into pairs of reddish, finely hairy fruits that are 2.5 to 4 cm (1 to 1.5 in) long and hang in long clusters; they are easily-recognized due to their similarity to small pairs of "helicopter blades" which spin through the air as they disperse from the parent tree.

Bark: On young trees, the bark is smooth, but it develops ridges and furrows in older trees.

Habitat: Box elder trees favor streamsides and river bottoms at elevations of 1800 m (5900 ft) and lower. They particularly favor heavy and wet soils that are seasonally flooded.

Bloom time: Early spring

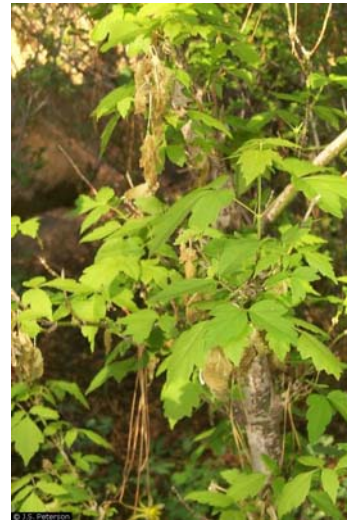
Information sources:

The Jepson Manual. 1993. University of California Press; http://maple.dnr.cornell.edu/kids/tree_box.htm; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Did you know? Box elder trees are *either* male or female, although occasionally you may find a bisexual flower that has both anthers (male) and a stigma (female). No individual tree produces both pollen and seeds.



Photograph by USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database /
Herrman, D.E. et al. 1996. North Dakota tree
handbook. USDA NRCS ND State Soil
Conservation Committee; NDSU Extension and
Western Area Power Admin. Bismarck, ND



Photograph by J.S. Peterson. USDA NRCS NPDC.
USA, AZ, The Arboretum at Flagstaff. July 14, 2001

Phenological observation:
First Flower, Seed or Fruit Dispersal

Distribution Area:

