

ABNORMAL LEAF RETENTION ON INTRODUCED TREES  
IN AUTUMN 1971

In autumn of 1971 native trees in the Boston area exhibited a good display of colored foliage. In keeping with the normal course of events, these trees went on to shed their leaves. Some exotic trees, however, did not follow this customary pattern. Norway (*Acer platanoides*) and Japanese maples (*A. palmatum*) and European linden (*Tilia europaea*) among other subjects, did not form abscission layers and retained their leaves until long after the native trees had shed theirs.

Autumn foliage of *Acer griseum* (Paper bark maple) is usually brilliantly tinted from yellow through orange to deep red. In 1971 its leaves did not undergo color change and remained on the trees until November 22nd when they were pulled from the branches by a four-inch fall of wet, clinging snow.

The extraordinary leaf retention on trees not native might be explained by the exceptionally mild autumn weather that prevailed in 1971. Figures kept at the United States Weather Bureau in Boston reveal the following: Summer of 1971 proved to be the sunniest in 14 years and the warmest in 16 years. Temperatures for September and October exceeded normal by 3 and 5 percent respectively. In fact, the third warmest October in the 142-year history of the Boston Weather Bureau occurred in 1971.

In December of 1971, the author visited Longwood Gardens, Kennett Square, Pa., Kingsville Nurseries, Kingsville, Md., the U.S.D.A. National Arboretum, Washington, D.C. The phenomenon of abnormal leaf retention similar to that seen in Boston was noted at these locations, as well as in other parts of the northeast.

The trees which retained their leaves went through the usual stages of hardening in preparation for surviving the cold of winter. All those under observation foliated in a normal manner with the advent of spring.

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Right: *Acer griseum*. Photo: P. Bruns

