

Fall Color Report

29 Sept. 2021

Cool nights and warm, sunny days along with the dry weather have started fall color development in our area. The intensity, brightness, and longevity of the color display will depend on our upcoming weather, the health of the individual plant, and the amount of soil moisture available to it. Areas to start visiting are Maples (P7 & P14), East Woods (P8 to P16), Sumacs, Asian maples, and ginkgoes (P18), and Schulenberg Prairie (P25).

Color has continued to develop slowly in our collections, gardens, and woodlands more due to dryness, than to normal fall color development. Stressed Freeman maples in the Visitor Center parking lot and Children's Garden are developing a dull red color with hackberries turning yellow and dropping some leaves already. The view down Frost Hill across the river valley shows various shades of green with some sumacs turning red near P2, and with a few sugar and black maples starting to turn a pale orange tint.

On our east side: American elms are continuing to lighten and turn a yellowish-green, hackberries, catalpas, Kentucky coffee-trees, some tuliptrees, redbuds, some pawpaw and cork-trees are turning yellow and starting to drop scattered leaves. Most ginkgoes are still green, but a few stressed trees near P18 are turning yellow. Scattered flowering dogwoods are turning a dark reddish color. Crabapple fruits are beginning to change color and appear as leaves turn and drop. Buckeye leaves have mostly turned and dropped exposing their large tan fruits. Walnut leaves are turning yellow, and their large nuts are beginning to drop. Sumacs, poison-ivy, and Virginia creeper are turning red. Oak acorns are dropping in the Oak Collection and woodlands. Silver and Freeman maples are turning color in our Maple Collection.

Overall our woodland ground layer still has late asters blooming while goldenrods and white snakeroot are at the end of their bloom. While most of the canopy trees in our woodlands are generally still green, sugar maples in sunny areas are showing early pale-orange colors, especially in their sunny tops and sun-exposed sides.

The Schulenberg Prairie is in its fall glory with grasses setting seed and beginning to turn color with highlights of blue and purple provided by asters and gentians.

Now is a good time to start regular fall walks through your favorite Arboretum gardens, collections, and natural areas to watch the full range of fall colors as they develop.