

Fall Color Report

Friday, Oct 21 2021

Fall continues to develop in collections and natural areas. The cool nights and sunny days should help increase the intensity, brightness, and longevity of the color display. Much will depend on upcoming weather, the health of the individual plant, and the amount of soil moisture available to it. Areas to visit include the Maples (P7 and P14), East Woods (P8 to P16), sumacs, Asian maples, ginkgoes (P18), Thornhill area and gardens (P21), and the Schulenberg Prairie (P25).

Color has continued developing in the collections, gardens, and natural areas. Stressed plants in the Visitor Center parking lot and Children's Garden are showing reds and yellows. The American elms in the Elm Collection are beginning to show yellow as is the large yellow buckeye and patch of pawpaw near P18. The Midwest Collection (P2 and P5) has gold color developing on bitternut and shagbark hickories, and yellows on sugar and black maples, redbuds, and American elm. The view down Frost Hill across the Northern Illinois collection and the river valley shows various shades of green with sumacs near P2, a few sugar and black maples turning a pale yellow-orange tint, and gold developing on hickories.

On the East Side: American elms are continuing to lighten and turn yellow. Catalpas, some tuliptrees, redbuds, and some pawpaw are turning yellow as well. Coffeetree and hackberry are dropping their yellow leaves. Most ginkgoes are still green, but a few trees near P18 are turning yellow. Scattered flowering dogwoods have turned a dark reddish color and have dropped stressed leaves. Crabapple fruits (P4 and P5) are changing to yellow and red, and they are more noticeable as leaves turn and drop. Buckeyes have dropped their leaves and fruits, except for Japanese buckeye and bottlebrush buckeye, which are turning yellow. Walnuts are turning yellow and dropping their large nuts. Sumac, poison-ivy, and Virginia creeper are turning red (yellow in the shade). Silver and Freeman maples have turned color in the Maple Collection (P7 and P14). The Oak Collection (P8) is still mostly green. Good color has developed on the sugar maples near Big Rock Visitor Station (P13) and the large sugar maple near P14 is slowly changing color.

The woodland ground layer is starting to turn brown with seeds developing. Our woodlands (P9, P10, P13, and P15) are turning yellowish, with sugar maples showing early pale-yellow and pale-orange colors. Hackberries, lindens, ash, black walnuts, and ironwoods are continuing to turn yellow.

On the West Side, the woods near P20, P23, and Sterling Pond are turning yellowish with linden, ironwood, black walnut, and redbuds providing most of the color. Spotty color is developing on sugar maples near Sterling Pond and Lake Marmo. The Freeman maple on the north shore of Lake Marmo is turning a purple color. The Schulenberg Prairie is in its fall glory with grasses turning color and setting seed, and with highlights of blue and purple provided by asters and gentians.

Visit often if you can, because the colors will be changing rapidly!