

# Maple Galls

In the summer, many homeowners notice bumps or fuzzy red patches on their maple or boxelder tree's leaves. These lesions, called galls, are caused by a small mite or midge that overwinters in the cracks and crevices of the bark. Once spring warms up, they emerge and begin feeding on the unfurling leaves; the leaves closest to the trunk are usually affected first. Once the feeding starts, the foliage forms extra plant tissue and envelopes the mites. In the galls, the mites lay their eggs, and continue feeding on the newer growth of the tree. Feeding on the foliage usually ceases in July.

**Maple Bladder Galls:** This gall looks like warts on the foliage of the maple leaf. They are first green like the rest of the plant tissue, then turn red, and eventually turn black at the later part of summer. At times, the foliage may crinkle, curl, or even fall off the tree early in the season. The most commonly affected trees include soft maples, silver maples, and the new hybrid maples (such as 'Autumn Blaze').



**Maple Spindle Gall:** This unsightly gall looks like small insects reaching toward the sky, or short hairs sticking straight up off the leaf. They are typically green or yellow in color, all season long. They don't usually deform the foliage. The mites that cause these galls to form only attack sugar maple trees.

**Felt or Erineum Gall:** These are less noticeable than other galls, mainly because they tend to lay flat along the undersides of the maple leaves. The galls are red in color and look like a velvet cover on the leaf. The top side of the leaf usually has indentations where the galls are located underneath. Silver maple is most affected by this mite, but other maple trees, such as sugar or red maple, have been known to be affected.



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**Control for Gall Mites:** Control isn't necessary. The damage done to the leaves is mostly aesthetic, but won't hurt the vigor of the tree. If you want to try and eradicate the mites from feeding on the foliage, a systemic insecticide with carbaryl as the active ingredient may work. Another option is to spray the trunks of trees with dormant oil in March to kill the overwintering mites. Please note these methods don't always work, or if they do, it may take several years.

### **Other Maple Galls: Eyespot Maple Gall**

Eyespot maple gall is caused by a midge (small fly) that lays its eggs on the underside of the leaf. Once the small maggot hatches, it injects a growth hormone into the leaf, which causes the red and yellow rings in the leaf. The galls usually turn brown in July. The maggot lives inside the gall for about ten days and then drops to the ground to become the adult fly. The maple trees most affected are red maples, but this insect has been found on silver and sugar maples as well. Control methods are not necessary to control this gall either, partially because the window to spray or apply the insecticide is so short. The midges do not affect the vigor of the tree.



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