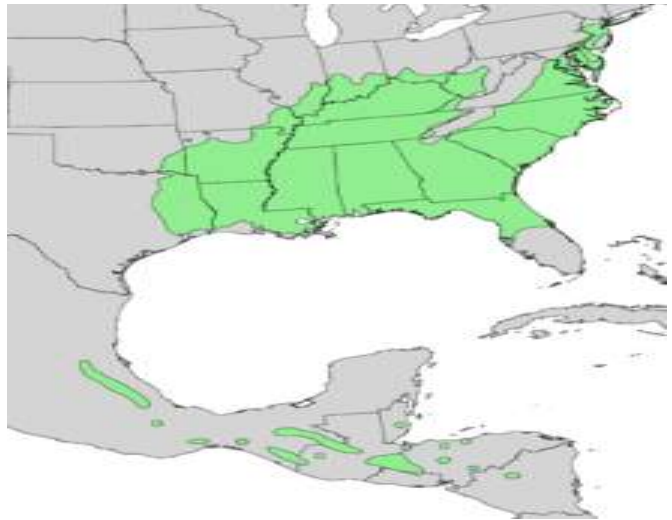


Sweetgum

Liquidambar styraciflua

The sweetgum is a large hardwood that grows in forests and bottomlands and along streams and lakes. It is sometimes known as a “pioneer” tree, because seedlings will grow fast and can take over an area where other trees have died or been removed. The sweetgum has large star-shaped leaves that have a pleasant aroma when crushed. In fall, the leaves turn colors ranging from bright yellow and orange to deep maroon, making the sweetgum one of our most beautiful fall trees.

Many birds and animals depend on the sweetgum for shelter. And each spiky “gumball,” the sweetgum’s fruit, can hold more than 50 tiny seeds, which are eaten by at least 25 kinds of birds, and by squirrels also. Sweetgum is an important commercial timber tree as well. Its wood is used in making plywood, veneer, furniture and musical instruments among other things.



The sap of the sweetgum was used by Native Americans and settlers to make a kind of chewing gum. The sap is not sweet, but is sweeter than that of other types of gum trees. Native Americans also made medicinal teas from the bark and roots of the sweetgum.

